

# PRESS KIT



## The Teich Bird Reserve

*Wild birds at close quarters*

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A white egret stands on a dark, textured log in the foreground. The background is a soft, misty landscape with a body of water and distant hills under a pale sky. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Introduction

Natural habitats

The pace of nature

A bit of history

One reserve, several missions

The reserve tour

Contacts

# Introduction

Teich Bird Reserve is a protected nature reserve, managed with a view to attracting wild birds so that they can be seen at closer quarters by the public.

110 hectares of wooded areas, reed beds, meadows, saltmarsh and water stretch out between the mainland sector right up to the coastline of the Arcachon Basin. This wide variety of natural habitats is suitable for many different bird species, which will either make these areas their permanent home or alternatively, a temporary resting place.

The birds found here are entirely wild and behave in exactly the same way that they would outside of the reserve's boundaries. They are not given additional food or kept in a semi-captive state. Some of them, used to the discreet presence of members of the public, allow humans to come much closer than would be the case outside the reserve. However, they remain just as alert to any sudden movement or perceived threat.



318 species and sub-species have been seen here since 1972, with 91 species having bred on the reserve at one time or another.

The role played by the reserve in the conservation of some rarer species is recognized as being of international significance.

# Natural habitats

Three main types of natural habitat can be seen in the reserve. These different habitats are to be found side-by-side, sometimes gradually merging together. The presence of water is a constant – it covers more than 75% of the reserve's surface area.

## **Wooded areas**

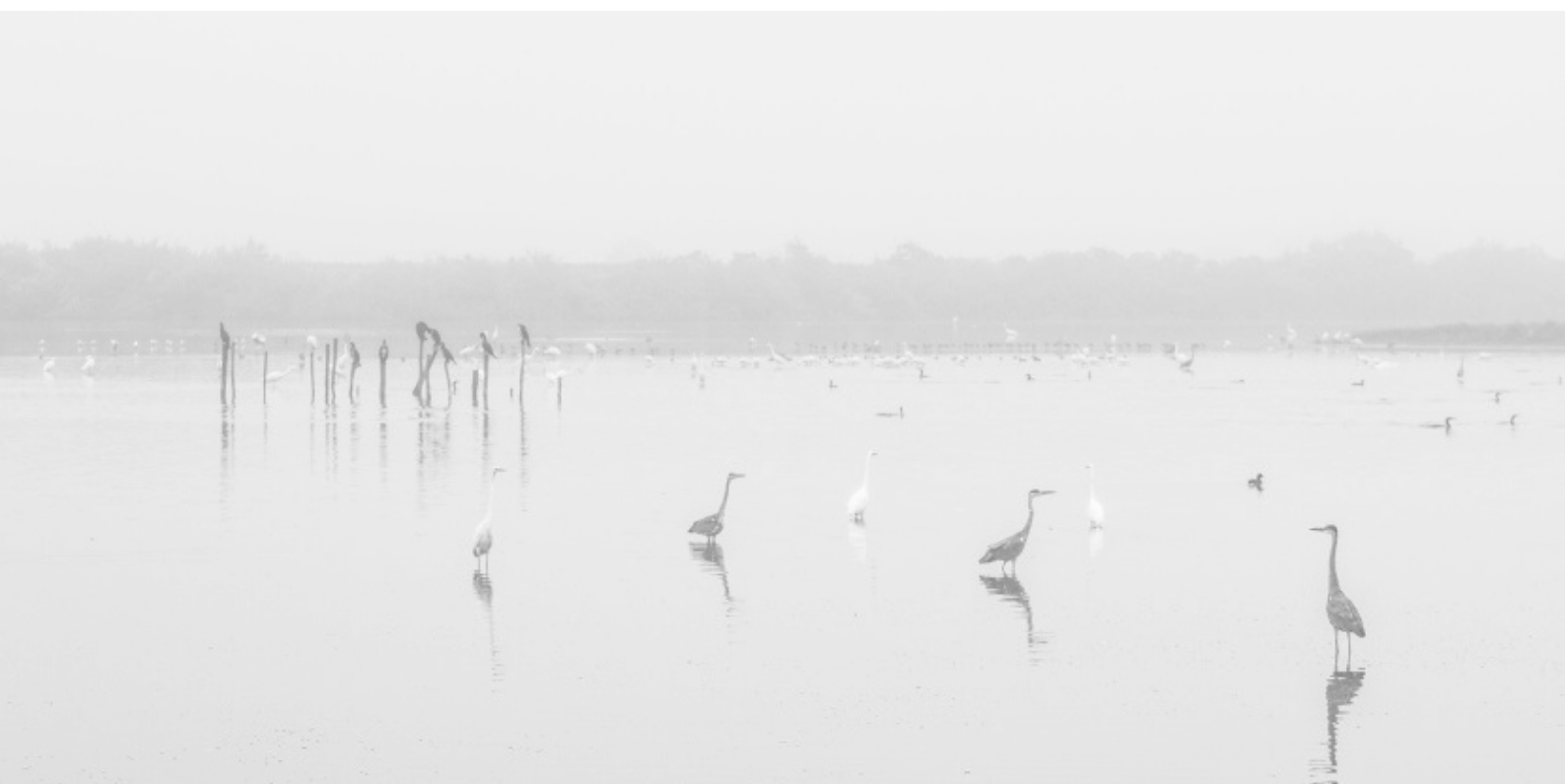
Both deliberately planted (old pine plantations) and naturally-occurring wooded areas cover the entire southern edge of the reserve. The pedunculate oak and the grey willow are the most locally widespread species, depending on how moist the soil is. These wooded areas are left to develop naturally rather than being managed in any way. This ensures that this habitat looks 'natural' and unspoilt and is partly responsible for their biodiversity. On hot days, the trees' shade helps keep visitors cool as they stroll along the pathways.

## **Marshland**

This is usually of the 'saltmarsh' variety, in other words, shaped by the presence of saltwater. An interlocking series of large basins fringed with vegetation run the entire length of the path. Some areas of marsh, ponds and other bodies of freshwater are also dotted here and there throughout the reserve, all playing host to their own particular range of fauna and flora.

## **Areas of water**

These areas tend to be largely composed of open water. These shallow and very brackish aquatic habitats are characterized by a scattering of low-growing vegetation which has adapted to this environment ('salicornia' or salt-tolerant plants), presenting visitors with a very open, somewhat bleak landscape. Here, as in the saltmarshes, there is no escape from the sun and the heat of the summer-time.



# The pace of nature

## *Season by season*

Some birds are resident, others are wintering species, migrants or partial migrants - there's something for everyone in the world of nature... A species like the Grey Heron, for example, may be considered to be a 'resident' species, because it can be found all year round on the reserve and breeds there too. If we look more closely, however, we will see that there are also individuals from Scandinavia, who stop off here before continuing to Africa, as well as those who arrive from northern Europe to spend the entire winter in the Arcachon Basin area. Thus the Grey Heron is simultaneously a resident, a migratory and a wintering species...

As a result, the composition of the reserve's bird population changes almost every day, especially during migration, so the list of birds present on the reserve changes with it.

All seasons have something of interest for the visitor, because every season has its own special sights which are specific to that particular time of year and no other.

## *The rhythm of the tides*

The reserve borders the Arcachon Bassin, notably the part of the Bassin which is covered by a huge expanse of mudflats that are exposed at low tide. This geographical location is ideal as it enables thousands of birds to take shelter in the reserve when the tide is high, before setting off for the mudflats as soon as the tide retreats. This regular mass movement of birds takes place by day and by night, as a full tidal cycle lasts for around twelve hours and occurs about an hour later with every 24 hour period that passes...

From August to May the visitor must pay particular attention to the tide cycles in order to make the most of their visit. A highly-detailed tide table for the current year is available in the 'Visiting the reserve' section.

## *By day or by night*

The alternation of night and day is a phenomenon which influences the behaviour of the vast majority of bird species. Most birds are active during the day and sleep during the night-time. However, other species are not dictated to by the time of day, but by the ebb and flow of the tides. A small number of species are mostly nocturnal (Night Heron).

The fall of night brings changes to bird behaviour – frequently they will group together in 'dormitories' or communal roosts until the morning. There are some remarkable sights that can only be seen in the reserve at morning or evening twilight, such as gatherings of Spoonbills, Cormorants and Great Egrets. Holders of passes can access the reserve outside of normal opening hours on a few days of each year, enabling them to share in these special moments.



# A bit of history

## *First half of the 18th century*

The land on which the reserve stands was reclaimed from the sea from the first half of the 18th century onwards. Clay dykes were gradually constructed on the salt meadows, both to protect the village from the winter floods and above all to allow for the establishment of a kind of non-intensive form of fish-farming: 'fish reservoirs'.

## *End of the 60's*

At the end of the 1960s, a group of local ornithologists came to the conclusion that the bassin d'Arcachon was potentially a very attractive environment for birds, but could not fulfil its potential because of the absence of protected habitat along its shoreline. They contacted the Mairie du Teich and put forward the idea of creating a bird reserve along the lines of that which had already been established at Zwin in Belgium.

## *From 1972*

The municipality took ownership of the reserve, and thus of part of the municipality's coastline, in exchange for municipal forestry plantations. Work began on making the site a better environment for wildlife and improving public accessibility and the Parc ornithologique du Teich came into being.

## *1989 - 1990*

The town of Teich still owns the reserve, which it runs in tandem with the Parc Naturel Regional des landes Gascogne according to a bipartite agreement.



# One reserve, several missions

## *Ecotourism*

Teich Bird Reserve is first and foremost a place for members of the public who are interested in taking a closer look at the natural world. The reserve and its facilities have been designed in such a way so as to make it easier for visitors to observe wild birds at close quarters. Numerous information panels offer an additional aid to understanding, revealing the secrets behind the everyday events and dramas of the natural world, sometimes as they are played out right before visitors' eyes.

## *Education*

Thousands of schoolchildren visit the reserve every year, all year round. Under the supervision of the schools, events and activities department at the Maison de la Nature du bassin d'Arcachon (an annex of the Parc Naturel Régional des landes de Gascogne, the Landes of Gascony Regional Natural Park), they will discover all about the close-knit web of relationships connecting all living creatures, enabling them to successfully coexist. These activities can be scheduled to run for anything from a few hours up to several days. As well as adding to their theoretical knowledge base, students of all ages will also learn how to adopt more eco-friendly attitudes and behaviours in their everyday lives.



# The reserve tour

## *Conservation*

The reserve has a highly pro-active approach with regard to the conservation and protection of the wild birds that use it. This is especially the case for species that are rare or declining in numbers and for which specific conservation measures at national or European-wide level have been put in place. The reserve is recognized as being an internationally important site for several species of wader (hosting 1% or more of the local or global bird species population of a given species). It is also home to endangered mammals such as the European mink and the otter and contains habitat types of Community interest.



## *Management*

As it is open to the public for more than 3,000 hours each year, the reserve's facilities – and the reserve itself - must be constantly maintained and monitored. Vegetation grows more quickly here than elsewhere, because parts of the reserve are artificially-created habitats. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the introduction of invasive plant species. As we want the reserve's habitats to remain 'bird-friendly' and the reserve itself to be aesthetically pleasing to people, controlling the growth of vegetation is at the forefront of our concerns.

The presence of various types of aquatic habitats (freshwater, brackish water and saltwater habitats), requires the performance of certain management tasks on a day-to-day basis. Lastly, the birds are monitored, observed and counted on a very regular basis in order to keep track of any changes in their numbers and to keep the public and wildlife conservation bodies abreast of any such developments.



# La visite de la Réserve

The reserve is open all year round and offers great opportunities for bird-watching and enjoying the beauty of the natural environment, whatever the time of year. We therefore cannot tell you when the 'best' time of year for your visit is, as this will depend on your personal interests, preferences and familiarity with wildlife. The best solution is to visit the reserve during each of the four seasons in order to maximize your chances of seeing the site's full range of wildlife spectacles...

The reserve is visited on foot along a 6 km-long circular path.

Visitors with reduced mobility or visitors with young children can take a shorter route (approx 2.5 km).

The path is flat and level and suitable for most types of footwear, including formal or dress shoes. You should allow at least 3 to 4 hours to complete the circuit (including time spent bird-watching).

## *Teaching*

To help you explore the reserve and its birdlife, special activities and guided walks are held throughout the year. These are suitable for both beginners and more knowledgeable wildlife enthusiasts.

## *Photography*

The reserve is internationally renowned in the field of nature photography. In the space of a few years, it has become a Mecca for many photographers, both professional and amateur, novices and experts, all of whom find plenty of material here from which to fashion original or striking images, and above all, to enjoy themselves!



# Contacts

If you have any request, please contact :

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LA MAISON DE LA NATURE  
DU BASSIN D'ARCACHON

