



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

U.S. Wetlands of International Importance

Under the Ramsar Convention



Wetlands listed under the Ramsar Convention receive global recognition for their value as important habitat. Migratory species benefit because Ramsar identifies wetlands at an international level, with the possibility of sustaining their habitats and linking participating countries in a coordinated conservation effort. Communities enjoy enhanced tourism to well-publicized sites, and local property values have increased in proximity to Ramsar sites. There are 18 U.S. sites listed as follows:



Izembek National Wildlife Refuge

1) Izembek National Wildlife Refuge and State Game Area

Alaska. April 1987. This was the Nation's first Ramsar List designation. The area was selected because of the extraordinary number and diversity of waterfowl. The area features the largest eelgrass beds in North America.

2) E.B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge

New Jersey. April 1987. Public resource education and scientific research make this wetland very important. Forsythe is habitat for several endangered species and the Bald Eagle. Annual waterfowl use is very high, and the area is very popular with bird enthusiasts.

3) Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge

Georgia and Florida. April 1987. This "land of the trembling earth," as it was known to local native Americans, represents an outstanding example of a large regional wetland complex, with



a significant diversity of habitats. Long noted for its great array of plant and animal species, the refuge offers areas for public education, outdoor recreation and scientific research.

4) Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge

Nevada. April 1987. This unique ecosystem is a genuine North American desert oasis. It has high species diversity and great importance to several endangered species, including the Ash Meadows pup fish.

5) Everglades National Park

Florida. June 1987. Despite problems of drought, pollution, and contested water flow regimens, this area remains synonymous with the term "wetlands" for many Americans. It has continuing values to scientific research as well as species diversity.

6) Chesapeake Bay Estuarine Complex

Maryland and Virginia. June 1987. The Chesapeake Bay, especially valued for its shellfish, has long been one of America's foremost fisheries, as well as a vitally important wintering and staging area for migratory birds.

7) Cheyenne Bottoms State Game Area

Kansas. October 1988. This is an extremely important high plains

wetlands complex. The area has exceptional numbers and diversity of shorebirds, and demonstrates well the practicality of conservation and wise land use management.



8) Cache-Lower White Rivers Joint Venture Area

Arkansas. November 1989. This is an outstanding regional complex of wetlands. It features some of the larger remaining tracts of Mississippi bottomland hardwood forest. The site is valuable for endangered species conservation, scientific research and as a wintering area for tens of thousands of migrating waterfowl.



Jack Bartholmat

9) Horicon Marsh

Wisconsin. December 1990. The largest cattail wetland in the Nation, this managed wetland contains an excellent representation of flora and fauna of wetland habitats of the upper Midwest. The marsh serves as habitat for endangered species and provides an important staging and feeding area for the Mississippi valley population of Canada geese.

10) Catahoula Lake

Louisiana. June 1991. This area is subject to seasonal water level fluctuations that support large numbers of migratory waterfowl. This area was selected because of its special

value for maintaining the ecological diversity of Louisiana lowlands. The refuge hosts both the bald eagle and the American alligator.

11) Delaware Bay Estuary

Delaware, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. May 1992. These estuarine wetlands provide critical resting and feeding habitats for migratory shore and wading birds. This area affords exceptional opportunities for scientific research and wetlands associated recreation.

12) Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge

Florida. March 1993. This was the first National Wildlife Refuge designated by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903 as a “preserve and breeding grounds for native birds.” In addition, the lagoon of the Indian River has special importance as a nursery for juvenile endangered marine turtles.

13) Caddo Lake

Texas. October 1993. This is one of Texas’ most important and unique inland freshwater wetlands. Caddo Lake provides significant and regionally critical habitat for a variety of migratory and resident wildlife species, including waterfowl, raptors, colonial waterbirds, and neotropical migrant songbirds.

14) Connecticut River Estuary and Tidal Wetlands Complex

Connecticut. October 1994. This complex is centered among the shifting sandbars at the mouth of the Connecticut River, where it enters the Long Island Sound. Here the largely rural character of the regional landscape has been preserved. The shifting landscape has helped maintain the river’s extraordinary assemblage of natural and relatively undisturbed biotic communities.

15) Cache River-Cypress Creek Wetlands

Illinois. November 1994. This large wetlands complex lies near the confluence of the Mississippi and the Ohio Rivers and provides an invaluable breeding and stopover area for over 230 species of migratory

birds that include waterfowl, shorebirds, and neotropical songbirds. The area has two National Natural Landmarks and 11 state champion trees in a rich biological community.

16) Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge

South Dakota. August 1998. This diked backwater of the James River is an exemplary large freshwater cattail marsh in the Prairie Pothole region. It supports millions of birds, including the world’s largest colony of nesting Franklin’s gulls. This 21,500 acre refuge is also important for the conservation of reptiles, amphibians, fish and mammals.

17) Bolinas Lagoon

California. September 1998. This open water, mudflat, and marsh complex at the south end of the Point Reyes peninsula provides productive and diverse habitats for marine fishes, waterbirds, and marine mammals. Its geographic location along the Pacific Flyway makes the lagoon an ideal staging ground and stopover site for thousands of migratory birds.



18) Quivira National Wildlife Refuge

Kansas. February 2002. Quivira contains a freshwater and inland salt marsh complex of 22,000 acres, including wetlands, grasslands, and some croplands. The salt marshes provide critical nesting, migration, and wintering habitat for over 311 bird species and literally millions of individual birds. The area is vital habitat for the endangered interior least terns and whooping cranes.

For more information about the Ramsar Convention, go online: <http://international.fws.gov>

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