



MAL012 - Is-Simar

Description

Is-Simar wetland (limiti ta' San Pawl il-Baħar) is found on the north-east coast of Malta. It is part of the St Paul's Bay locality boundary and covers an area of approximately 0.6 km². The site is found close to Xemxija and is in the Pwales Valley. To the east, the site borders Xemxija Bay whilst the west borders the Pwales agricultural area. To the south there is the Wardija Ridge escarpment and to the north there is the Bajda Ridge. The seaward area of the site borders Il-Grigal ta' Malta Marine Protected Area. The site incorporates various features including an artificially created wetland habitat, which is fenced off and is located behind Xemxija Bay. It is a coastal site with brackish water pools. The wetland is surrounded by agricultural land that stretches west of the wetland. Is-Simar wetland falls within a Special Area of Conservation, a Special Protection Area, a Bird Sanctuary, Area of Ecological Importance and a Site of Scientific Importance. It is also one of two Ramsar listed sites in the Maltese Islands. The main hydrological feature is the Pwales Valley that is a fertile valley dominated by agricultural land. The hydrological and hydrogeological features comprise: 1) the semi confined aquifer of Wied tal-Pwales; 2) the watercourse and catchment of Wied tal Pwales and its tributaries; 3) private extraction in Wied tal-Pwales; 4) saline marsh at is-Simar which is a Wetland Reserve; and 5) diffuse discharge along the coastline into the bay away from the beach (Terracore 2013). The wetland provides an important habitat for several migratory bird species as well as wintering and breeding species. Species breeding at the site include the Reed Warbler, the Moorhen, the Common Coot, the Zitting Cisticola, and the Sardinian Warbler. The wetland also supports a good population of the Maltese Killifish, a species that tolerates extreme changes in its environment including temperature and salinity. The area provides important foraging ground for bats and certain cultural heritage features are known to provide suitable roosting habitat for the Lesser Horseshoe Bat. The only native amphibian species in the Maltese Islands, the Painted Frog, is present at the reserve. Is-Simar Wetland Reserve supports the most extensive Phragmites reed bed in the Maltese Islands. It is an ideal habitat for several marshland species, providing shelter and food for waterfowl, herons, rails and passerines. It also provides a unique breeding habitat for reed warblers, Little Bittern and moorhens. An old olive grove is located at the eastern part of the reserve, part of which is not, however, enclosed as part of the reserve. This grove naturally regenerates, the fruits are eaten and the seeds dispersed largely by the Common Starling. A few Mastic trees are also found growing naturally as undergrowth. This is an important habitat for migratory passerines and wintering species. The Pwales valley is a natural corridor through which birds are funneled during their passage over Malta. The presence of the wetland habitat together with the overlying Miżieb woodland upgrades this passageway into an invaluable feeding, resting and roosting stopover for all avifauna in both migration periods. The woodland habitat of Miżieb lies in a strategic place overlooking the valley and wetland and thus it is particularly valuable as a roosting site for raptors including Marsh Harrier, Honey-Buzzard, Black Kite and European Hobby, as well as herons. The woodlands also hold an array of other migratory species, including Turtle Dove, Golden Oriole and other species such as flycatchers, thrushes and warblers. The Miżieb woodland is also important for several breeding bird species. These include Sardinian Warbler, Zitting Cisticola, Blue Rock Thrush, Spanish Sparrow and Tree Sparrow. Several locally rare species also regularly attempt to breed in the woods, including Serin, Chaffinch, Turtle Dove, Collared Dove and Common Cuckoo. A number of activities exert pressure on the ecology of the site. The wetland is in the urbanised and frequented area of Xemxija, St Paul's Bay and the Miżieb area resulting in pressure from recreational activities, vehicles (the reserve is close to a road), and development. The Miżieb woodland above the wetland is used and managed as a hunting reserve. As described above the site is of immense ornithological value and as a result, poaching is a factor that affects this site.

General information

Basic information

Wetland location:	Marine/Coastal
Wetland type:	Natural
Natural / Artificial:	Wetland system
Area (Ha):	4.10
Hydrological interaction with other wetland:	No -
Water salinity:	Brackish (5.0-18.0 g/l)
Fresh water entry:	Catchment area (precipitation)
Surface water runoff:	Outflow controlled by pipeline
Open water area (%):	51 - 75
Hydroperiod:	Permanent

Geographic information

Census district:	Northern
Island:	Malta
Local council:	San Pawl Il-Bahar
Coordinates (WGS84):	14.381780 E - 35.945590 N

Wetland condition

Wetland condition:	
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Ramsar wetland types

Ramsar type	Coverage (%)
J -- Coastal brackish/saline lagoons; brackish to saline lagoons with at least one relatively narrow connection to the sea	

Property status

Public

Protection statuses & other designations

Protection status

Protection status category	Protection status subcategory	Site name	Code	Coverage (%)	Legislation
National	Area of Ecological Importance/Site of Scientific Importance	L-inhawi tas-Simar mit-Triq tal-Mizieb sa Xatt il-Pwales, limiti ta' San Pawl il-Bahar	346036	100	Development Planning Act (Act VII of 2016)
National	Bird Sanctuary	Il-Madwar tas-Simar, fir-Ramla tal-Pwales, San Pawl il-Bahar	14794	100	Environment Protection Act (Act I of 2016)
International	Special Areas of Conservation - International Importance	Is-Simar (l/ta' San Pawl il-Bahar)	330720	100	Environment Protection Act (Act I of 2016)
International	Special Protection Areas	Is-Simar (limiti ta' San Pawl il-Bahar)	555552402	100	Environment Protection Act (Act I of 2016)
International	Ramsar Sites	Is-Simar		100	
International	Transitional waters	Is-Simar	MT TW 04	100	Water Framework Directive

CDDA protection status

CDDA code	Category
MT02	Area of Ecological Importance/Site of Scientific Importance
MT03	Bird Sanctuary
MT11	Special Areas of Conservation - International Importance
MT13	Special Protection Areas

Ecosystem Services, Activities & Impacts

Ecosystem Services

Type of Ecosystem service	Ecosystem service	Scale of Benefit	Importance
Cultural services	Cultural heritage		
Cultural services	Recreation and tourism		
Regulatory services	Flood hazard regulation		
Supporting services	Provision of habitat		

Activities on wetland

Activities	Intensity
010 = Habitat conservation	High
020 = Resource conservation	High
030 = Species conservation	High
610 = Interpretative centres	High
853 = management of water levels	High
952 = eutrophication	Medium

Activities on drainage basin

Activities	Intensity
010 = Habitat conservation	High
020 = Resource conservation	High
030 = Species conservation	High
100 = Cultivation	High
110 = Use of pesticides	High
120 = Fertilisation	High
130 = Irrigation	High
230 = Hunting	High
243 = trapping poisoning poaching	Low
430 = Agricultural structures	Medium
502 = roads motorways	High

Impacts

Impact type	Intensity
EB- = Increase in aesthetic qualities	
ER- = Increase in flow regulation	
ES- = Increase in water supply	
EU- = Increase of tourist/recreation potential	
EW- = Increase in wilderness/wildlife values	

Habitats & Vegetation

Habitat types

Habitat types	Coverage (%)
1150 * Coastal lagoons	26 - 50

Species

References

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Representative Image & Map

