

# PROTECTED AREAS in France

A diversity of tools for  
the conservation of biodiversity





# Acknowledgements

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# Foreword

Protected areas are an essential part of biodiversity, geodiversity and landscape conservation strategies. Established to preserve significant natural heritage sites, they also contribute to the ecological quality of natural habitats and the territories surrounding them, and help maintain the goods and services that ecosystems provide to people. In view of these multiple benefits, the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity have pledged to set aside 17% of land areas and 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020, through networks of ecologically representative and efficiently managed protected areas (Aichi Biodiversity Targets).

In France, protected areas of all categories cover nearly 20% of land area and involve numerous institutional stakeholders. Our country has set itself the goal of placing at least 2% of its continental land area under a high degree of protection and protecting 20% of its entire maritime domain by 2020. As we achieve this quantitative expansion, we must endeavour to integrate these areas into dynamic ecological networks interacting closely with planning and

economic development policies and actions. To do so, we will need to strengthen ecological knowledge, ensure that the system of protected areas is fully representative in ecological terms, and enhance the coherence of the various technical and legal conservation tools as well as the efficiency of management and local governance.

This brochure describes the French system of protected areas. We hope it will help the reader better understand the essential contribution of these mechanisms to the protection of our natural heritage, land management and, more broadly, sustainable development. It was produced by the Protected Areas Commission of the IUCN French Committee in collaboration with the entire network of protected natural areas in France and the National Museum of Natural History. It was supported by the Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development and Energy. We warmly thank the Ministry for its support.

**François LETOURNEUX**

*Chairman of the Commission on Protected Areas of the IUCN French Committee*







# The French system of nature conservation



## Heritage

*France's global responsibilities regarding biodiversity conservation*

6

## History

*From the preservation of landscapes to the construction of ecological networks*

10

## Organization

*A wide variety of approaches and protection tools*

14

## Challenges

*Five major challenges for the future*

18



# France's global responsibilities

## regarding biodiversity conservation



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France is home to a rich natural heritage, on land and sea, particularly in its overseas territories, but one that is subject to significant degradation.

## A natural heritage of global significance

### METROPOLITAN FRANCE, A BIOGEOGRAPHICAL CROSSROADS IN EUROPE

Its geographical position and the great diversity of its climate and geology puts metropolitan France at an ecological crossroads spanning four of Western Europe's five major **biogeographic regions** (Atlantic, alpine, continental and Mediterranean).

France is accordingly home to a large diversity of species and ecosystems, as well as a mosaic of natural landscapes. It occupies the leading place in Europe for the diversity of amphibian, bird and mammal species. It is also home to 40% of European plant species and more than half of the EU's Habitats of Community Importance.

### A UNIQUE BIODIVERSITY IN THE OVERSEAS TERRITORIES

France also has a number of territories outside continental Europe. They cover a wide geographical area, from the Antarctic to the North Atlantic, as well as the Pacific Ocean, the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean and the Amazon. The rich biodiversity of these areas is unique, and gives France a place among the **megadiverse** countries: its territories belong to 16 marine **ecoregions** and include 10% of the world's coral reefs and lagoons, and 20% of its atolls. The fact that most of these territories are islands results in a very high level of fauna and flora endemism. For instance, the island of Rapa in French Polynesia is home to at least 300 endemic species in an area of approximately 40 km<sup>2</sup>.



Source: European Environment Agency  
Legend: Biogeographic regions in Western Europe  
■ Atlantic ■ Mediterranean ■ alpine ■ continental

### ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST MARITIME DOMAINS

The French maritime domain covers 11 million km<sup>2</sup>, which is 19 times the size of metropolitan France and represents more than 3% of the world's seas and oceans. The biological diversity of this vast area is unique. It includes 55,000 km<sup>2</sup> of coral reefs stretching along 5,000 kilometres of coastline. These ecosystems are home to about a third of known marine biodiversity on Earth!

With a land area of 551,500 km<sup>2</sup>, France is the largest country in Western Europe. Its territories span two continents (Europe and the Americas) and three oceans (Atlantic, Pacific and Indian). The country boasts the world's second-largest maritime domain after the United States (10.3 million km<sup>2</sup>), ahead of Australia, Canada and Russia. Its overseas territories account for 97% of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). France shares 4,082 km of land borders with 11 countries – eight of which in Europe – and has maritime borders with 30 countries.

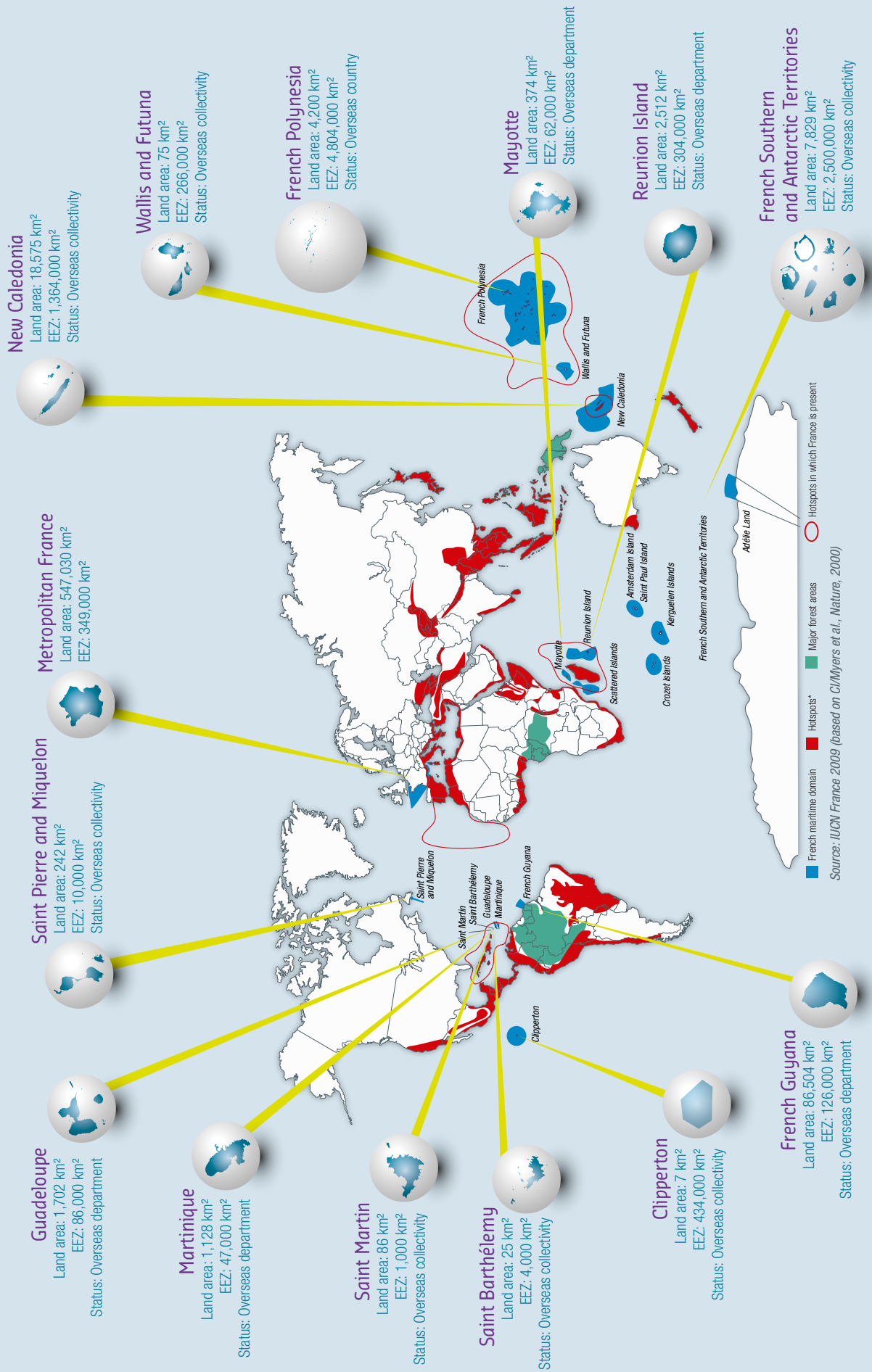


 **Glossary: go to page 41**





MAP SHOWING THE 34 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOTS HIGHLIGHTING FRANCE'S PARTICULAR SITUATION, PRESENT IN FIVE OF THESE AREAS.






## Many threats to ecosystems and species

But this natural heritage is vulnerable. At the global level, biodiversity is threatened by the fragmentation and loss of ecosystems, anthropogenic impacts on and pollution of natural habitats, introduction of invasive species, overexploitation of resources and, increasingly, the impacts of climate change. Of all countries, France is home to one of the greatest numbers of endangered species. In total, it hosts 983 globally endangered species in its territories, both metropolitan and overseas.


Metropolitan France is home to 75% of priority threatened habitat types in Europe, and has lost half of its wetlands in the last 30 years. It is estimated that between 6% and 28% of the species of the

main groups assessed in the national Red List  are endangered. Some iconic species such as the Pyrenean ibex and the Mediterranean monk seal are now extinct.

The overseas territories are particularly vulnerable, as they are located in five of the 34 biodiversity hotspots. Island flora and fauna are under particular threat: 49 of the 100 species considered to be the most invasive in the world occur in these areas, and more than 106 species have become extinct in the wild since 1500. For instance, more than a third of birds and native vascular plants are endangered or already extinct on Reunion Island.

### Did you know that...?



- Guyana has the largest block of unfragmented rainforest in the world.
- The Crozet and Kerguelen Islands are home to the most diverse bird communities in the southern part of the world.
- New Caledonia is an area of bird endemism, a centre of plant diversity and a biodiversity hotspot . It includes four ecoregions. The territory boasts the world's second-largest barrier reef.
- The archipelago of French Polynesia has 118 islands and nearly 12,800 km<sup>2</sup> of coral reefs.
- The lagoon on the island of Mayotte is one of only a handful in the world to have a double-barrier coral reef.



## The need to preserve natural capital

Given the importance of its natural heritage, France bears leading global responsibility for curbing the trend towards biodiversity loss. One of the most effective strategies is to establish a representative network of protected areas, and to incorporate it into national land-planning policies that strive to preserve ecological connectivity.

The network of protected areas is an essential component of future national ecological infrastructure. It will no doubt play a major role in the response to environmental challenges, notably because it helps to mitigate the impacts of global change and to maintain the quality of many ecosystem services.

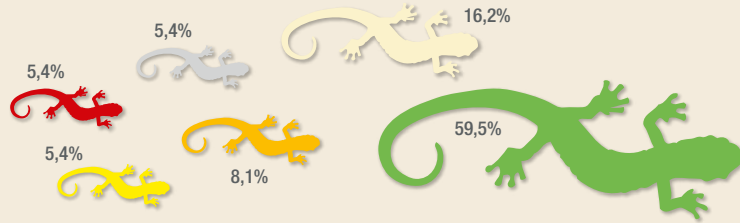
## ENDANGERED SPECIES IN METROPOLITAN FRANCE

Percentage of species

Source: IUCN France and MNHN (2008, 2009 & 2011). The Red List of Threatened Species in France.

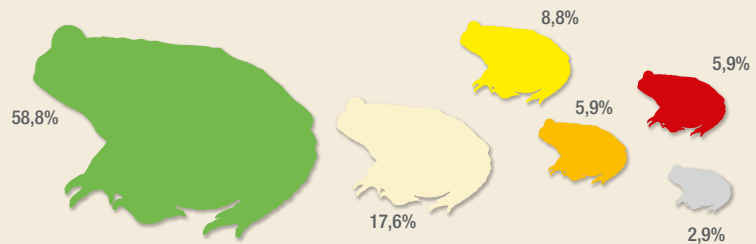
### Reptiles

Breakdown of the 37 reptile species in the Red List categories



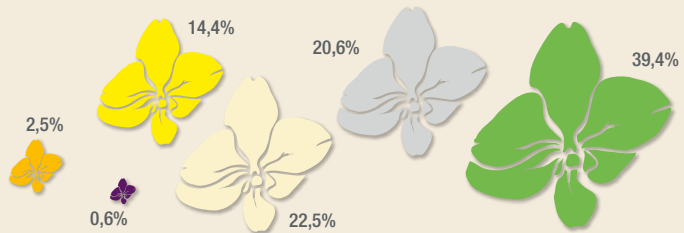
### Amphibians

Breakdown of the 34 amphibian species in the Red List categories



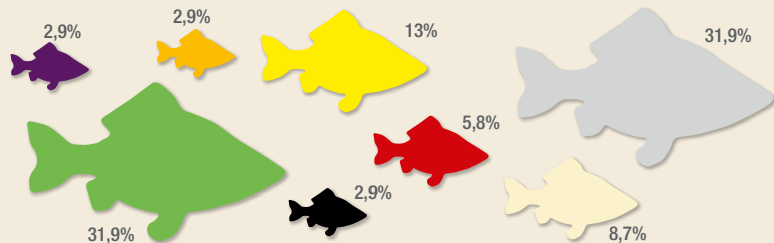
### Orchids

Breakdown of the 160 orchid species in the Red List categories



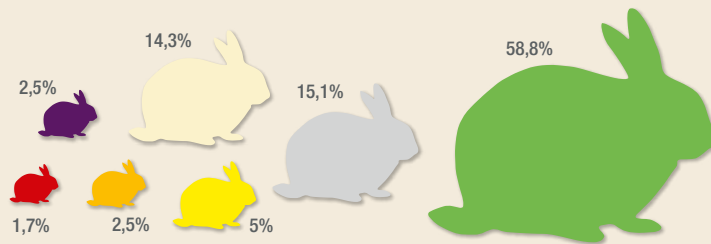
### Freshwater fish

Breakdown of the 69 freshwater fish species in the Red List categories



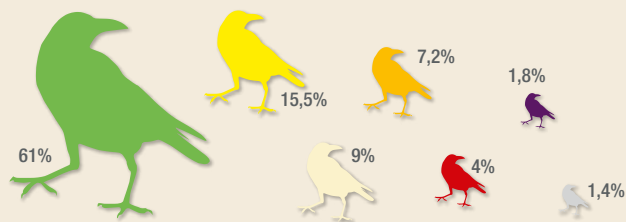
### Continental mammals

Breakdown of the 119 continental mammal species in the Red List categories



### Breeding birds

Breakdown of the 227 breeding bird species in the Red List categories



EX : Extinct

CR : Critically Endangered

VU : Vulnerable

LC : Least Concern

EW : Extinct in the Wild

EN : Endangered

NT : Near Threatened

DD : Data Deficient



# From landscape conservation

## to the construction of ecological networks



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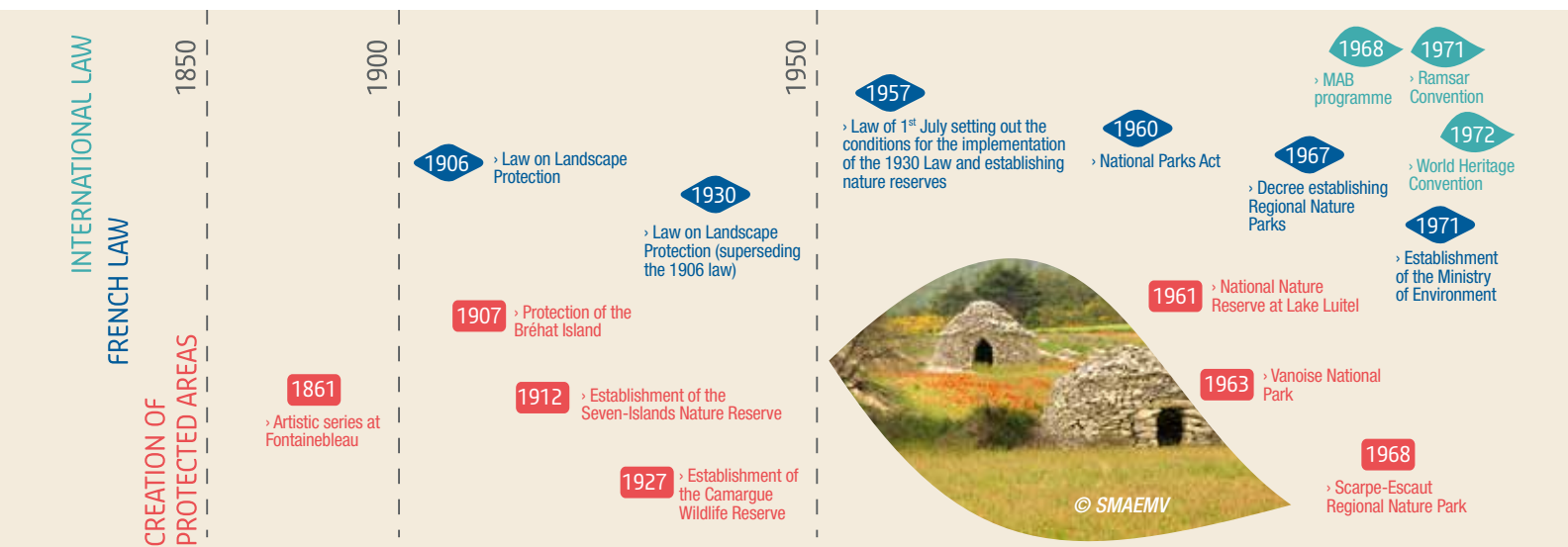
Nature conservation has recently been structured in France. It has developed from landscape conservation to the broader relationship between humans and their environment.

## Pioneering initiatives for the conservation of landscapes and iconic species

The first actions in the field of nature conservation were launched by associations of naturalists and artists, who contributed to raising awareness of the heritage value of landscapes and iconic species. The earliest example of this concern was the creation, by an Imperial Decree in 1861, of a reserve in the forest of Fontainebleau, at the initiative of the painters of the Barbizon school, who were keen to preserve this picturesque site. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, forestry associations and other NGOs established

protected areas, the status of which was devoid of any legal basis (creation of the Parc du Pelvoux in 1913, the Seven-Island Bird Sanctuary in 1912 and the Camargue Wildlife Reserve in 1927). At the same time, government took action to ensure the conservation of landscapes, with the 1906 Law on the Protection of Natural Sites and Monuments, reinforced in 1930, which provided the first legal foundations for nature conservation in France.

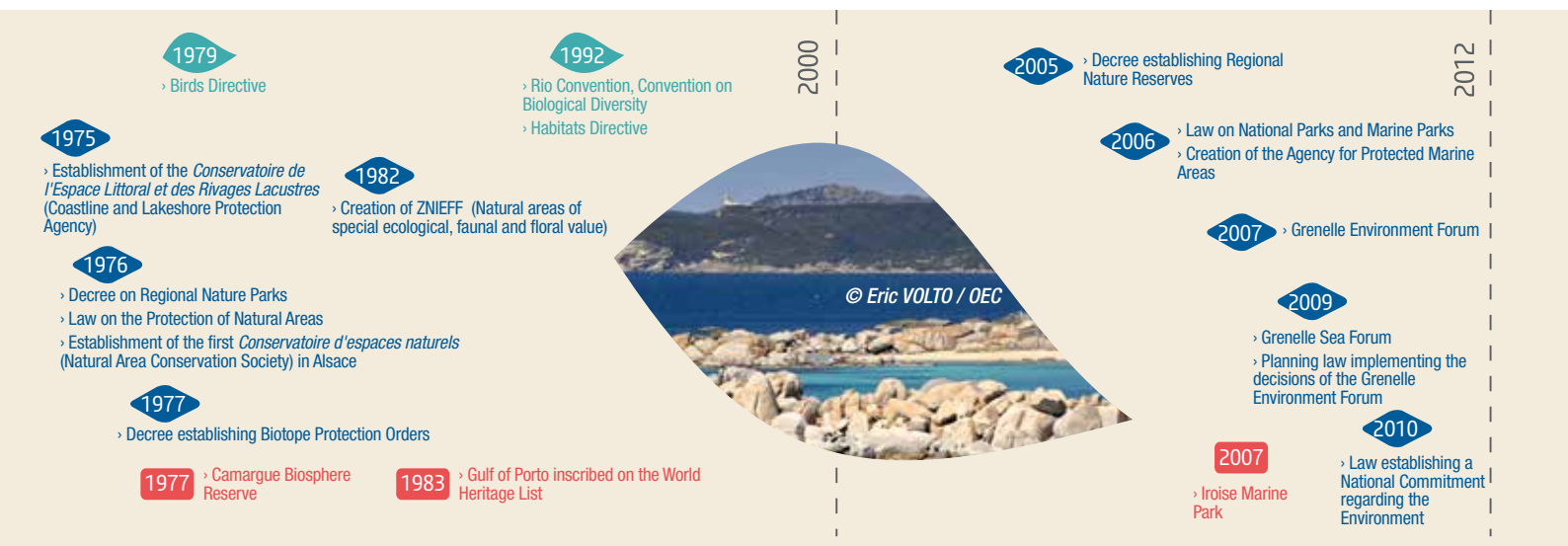
### AN OVERVIEW OF NATURE CONSERVATION DEVELOPMENT



# The development of nature conservation law


The development of conservation law in France actually began after the Second World War, in conjunction with the emergence of environmental concerns at international level. Most of the regulatory instruments used for the protection of natural areas were developed during this period, especially nature reserves (1957) and national parks (1960). Lawmakers also created regional nature parks (1967), which foreshadowed

the concept of sustainable development, and the *Conservatoire du Littoral* (Coastline and Lakeshore Protection Agency), a unique institution dedicated to the acquisition of coastal areas, was created in 1975. The Law of 10 July 1976 provides an overview of these legal developments, declaring the conservation of species, habitats and landscapes to be of public interest.







## The emergence of biodiversity and sustainable development

France has gradually integrated the guidelines of international conventions and European law into a broader vision of land-planning, linking environmental protection and economic development. Subsequent to the Rio Convention of 1992 and the establishment of the European Union's Natura 2000 network, it has developed a large-scale policy of contractual management of biodiversity, enhancing the involvement of local stakeholders. The **decentralization**  process undertaken in the 1980s has contributed to this

development: the Law on Local Democracy (2002) provides for closer involvement of local authorities in the management of protected areas, and gives regional authorities the power to create nature reserves. This development was strengthened by the Law of 14 April 2006, which gives local authorities a greater role in the governance of national parks. It also creates a new protected status, the natural marine park, the management of which involves all users of the sea.



## Strategies for the establishment of land and marine protected areas

More recently, France has established a national consultation process on environmental issues – known as the **Grenelle Environment Forum**  and the **Grenelle Sea Forum**  – setting national commitments for the protection of biodiversity. In this context, it has defined an ambitious strategy for the development of a coherent network of ecologically representative protected areas, which aims to:

- put at least 2% of the land area of metropolitan France under a high degree of protection by 2020,
- protect 10% of marine waters under national jurisdiction by 2012 and 20% by 2020, half of which as fishery reserves.

The implementation of these strategies will enable

France to go beyond the targets set by the Convention on Biological Diversity, namely to protect at least 17% of land areas and 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020. Furthermore, a national ecological network known as the “**green and blue belts** ” has been established; it aims at restoring ecological connectivity between natural habitats.







# A wide variety

## of approaches and protection tools



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France has developed a wide variety of tools for the protection of its natural areas, which may be established and managed by various stakeholders and different government levels. This diversity is an asset, because it allows tools to be adapted to local conditions and relevant conservation objectives.

## A network with an international focus

France's actions to protect its natural areas are consistent with its international commitments and the policies of the European Union. France is a Party to major global treaties on biodiversity conservation (Convention on Biological Diversity), specific ecosystems (Ramsar Convention on Wetlands) and species (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, International Whaling Convention, Convention on Migratory Species).

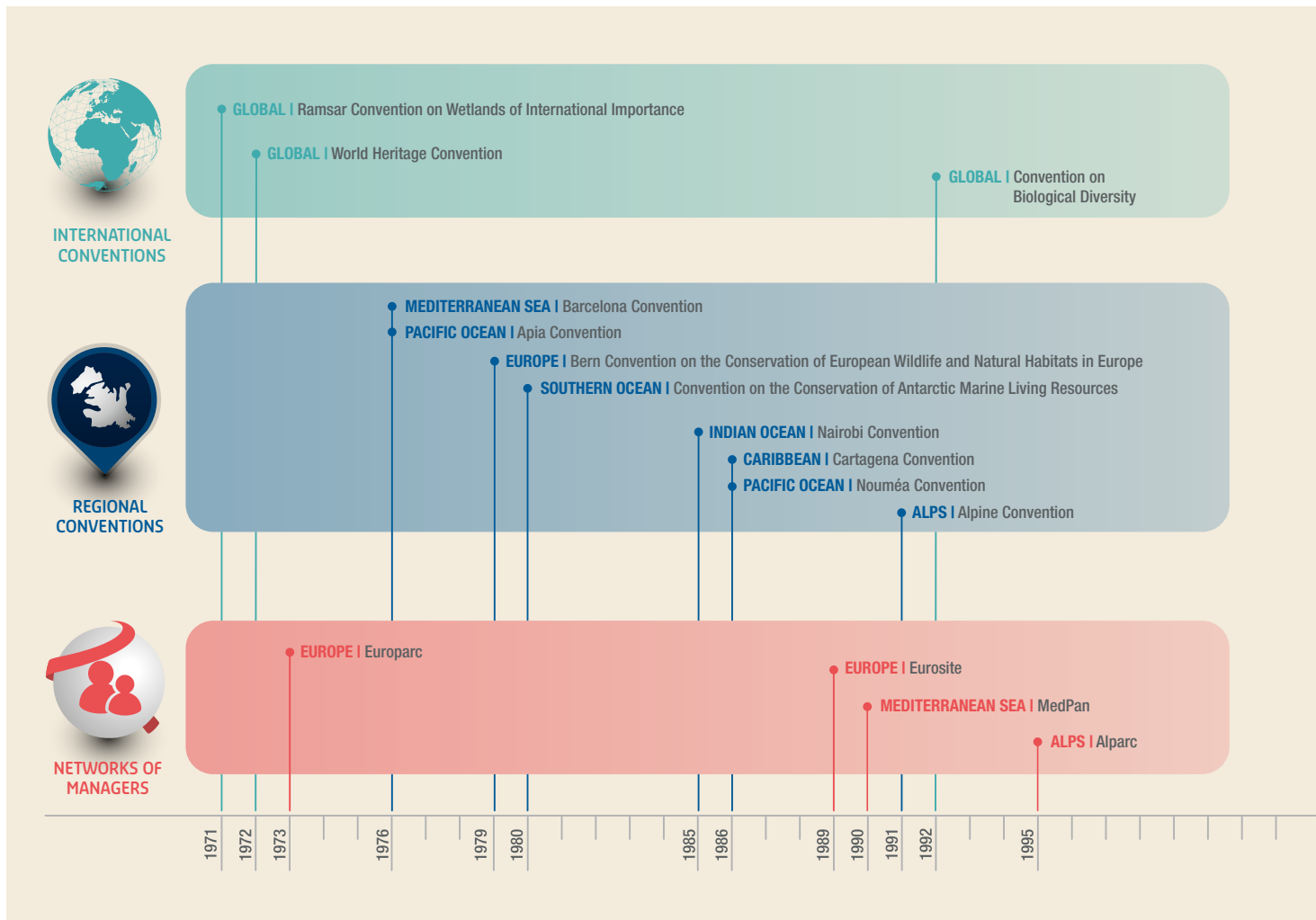
Due to its territorial presence on several continents and seas, it is also Party to many regional agreements

for the protection of land (Bern Convention, Alpine Convention) and marine (Regional Seas Conventions) biodiversity. France also takes part in multilateral programmes for the protection of natural heritage, such as the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), and is involved in the main European networks of managers of protected areas. Lastly, France has land and maritime borders with 35 countries around the world, and many protected areas on international boundaries have undertaken cooperation programmes leading to the gradual establishment of transboundary protected areas.



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## FRANCE'S INVOLVEMENT IN CONVENTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS OF PROTECTED AREAS



## The main forms of protection

Protection of natural areas falls under three legal forms in France:

- Land purchase and management, which involves acquiring land in order to ensure permanent protection of a unique natural habitat. This approach is preferred in areas threatened by urban development or, conversely, marked by the abandonment of agricultural and grazing practices that support biodiversity.
- Regulatory protection, which aims to prohibit or regulate human activities liable to have a negative impact on natural environment. It results in the establishment of strict regulations on the management of fauna, flora and ecosystems.
- Management agreements, which involve delegating management of a natural area to a third party for a given period, as part of an agreement regulating land use.

Furthermore, a number of international labels and certifications aim to protect and enhance species, habitats and landscapes classified as unique in view of global criteria.

The various protection tools are complementary; they can overlap to strengthen the level of protection. A single tool can also fall under two different approaches. This is the case for instance when a natural protected area is established by decree (regulatory protection) and its management is based on agreements with local stakeholders (contractual protection).



## A wide range of stakeholders involved in management

In France, a wide range of institutional stakeholders is involved in the management of protected areas, although most types of protection are under the direct responsibility of the central government or local authorities. This is the case for national parks, which are solely managed by public entities under the authority of the Ministry of Environment. However, the management of some protected areas, such as nature reserves, can also be delegated to a privately run third party (NGO, foundation, landowner).

In carrying out their tasks, the entities in charge of protected area management base their decisions on the work of scientific and technical institutions in areas as diverse as natural science, the pooling of biodiversity data, knowledge dissemination, and professional training:

- The Technical Workshop for Natural Areas is a network spanning all natural areas, created to foster managers'

professional development. It operates in France (metropolitan and overseas territories), Europe and internationally, offering training programmes, advising on management methods and tools, and facilitating technical exchange between managers;

- The National Botanic Conservatories are responsible for conducting inventories of wild flora and natural habitats;
- The National Museum of Natural History (Natural Heritage Service) provides overall expertise regarding biodiversity, and manages the National Natural Heritage Inventory, which includes the protected area reference database.



© Emmanuelle RIVAS

## An increasing involvement of local stakeholders

Initially focused on State intervention, the establishment and management of protected areas in France now uses increasingly integrated approaches, taking into account the conceptual input of international conventions. This is reflected by the growing involvement of local stakeholders in the governance of protected areas.

### IN THE ESTABLISHMENT PROCESS

Depending on its status, the establishment of a protected area can be submitted to a local consultation process or to a public inquiry to inform the public and obtain its views on the proposal. This is the case for the development of national park and regional nature park charters, and for the creation of marine parks.

### IN THE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

French conservation law has developed many mechanisms for the governance of protected areas that are open to local stakeholders. For instance, the **advisory committee** of a nature reserve works as a local parliament, bringing together all stakeholders and issuing opinions on any decision related to the area. Local councillors also have seats on the **management boards** of national parks and natural marine parks. In each Natura 2000 site, an advisory local steering committee is appointed, responsible for the planning and follow-up of management activities.

### How the protection of natural areas is organized

The State has set up a specific organization for the management of the various types of protected areas under its jurisdiction:

- The central government (Ministry of Environment, working with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries for some protection types) has direct responsibility for most types of protected areas. It is represented in the regions by the Regional Directorates for Environment, Planning and Housing (known under their French acronym DREAL) and the prefects;
- Several public entities have been created within the framework of specific protection tools. Depending on the circumstances, they may perform management tasks, share resources or be in charge of external communications;
- Advisory bodies provide advice and guidance on draft legislation and regulations, as well as on the establishment of protected areas (National Council for Nature Conservation and, in the regions, Regional Natural Heritage Scientific Councils).



## MORE INFORMATION



MINISTRIES

**Ministry of Environment** | [www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr](http://www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr)  
**Ministry of Agriculture** | [www.agriculture.gouv.fr](http://www.agriculture.gouv.fr)



NETWORKS OF PROTECTED  
AREA MANAGERS AND  
TECHNICAL SUPPORT

**Conservatoire du Littoral et des Rivages Lacustres** | [www.conservatoire-du-littoral.fr](http://www.conservatoire-du-littoral.fr)  
**(Coastline and Lakeshore Protection Agency)**  
**Shores of France (Rivages de France)** | [www.rivagesdefrance.org](http://www.rivagesdefrance.org)  
**National Forestry Office** | [www.onf.fr](http://www.onf.fr)  
**Agency of Marine Protected Areas** | [www.aires-marines.fr](http://www.aires-marines.fr)  
**National Office of Hunting and Wildlife** | [www.oncfs.gouv.fr](http://www.oncfs.gouv.fr)  
**National Parks of France** | [www.parcsnationaux.fr](http://www.parcsnationaux.fr)  
**National Federation of Regional Nature Reserves of France** | [www.parcs-naturels-regionaux.tm.fr](http://www.parcs-naturels-regionaux.tm.fr)  
**Nature Reserves of France** | [www.reserves-naturelles.org](http://www.reserves-naturelles.org)  
**Federation of Conservatoires d'espaces naturels de France** | [www.reseau-cen.org](http://www.reseau-cen.org)  
**Network of major sites in France (Grands Sites de France)** | [www.grandsitedefrance.com](http://www.grandsitedefrance.com)  
**Natural Areas Technical Workshop** | [www.espaces-naturels.fr](http://www.espaces-naturels.fr)  
**TeMeUm** | [outremer.espaces-naturels.fr](http://outremer.espaces-naturels.fr)  
**Forum of Managers of Marine Protected Areas** | [www.forum-aires-marines.fr](http://www.forum-aires-marines.fr)  
**National Museum of Natural History – Natural Heritage Service** | [www.mnhn.fr/spn](http://www.mnhn.fr/spn) - <http://inpn.mnhn.fr>  
**Federation of Botanical Conservatories** | [www.fcbn.fr](http://www.fcbn.fr)



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## OBJECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE



TERRESTRIAL

Confer a high degree of protection to **2 %** of metropolitan land territory by 2020, including two new national parks



MARINE

Protect **20 %** of marine waters under national jurisdiction in 2020, dedicating **50 %** to marine reserves and **5** new marine parks



COAST

Ensure the **PROTECTION** of the “Third wild” of the French coastline by 2050



# Five major challenges

## for the future




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The diversity of tools and stakeholders involved in the protection of natural areas in France is an asset and a treasure. It provides many possibilities for adapting to local ecological contexts and the expected conservation goals. However, several challenges remain for the future, as outlined by the Convention on Biological Diversity.

### 1 | ENHANCING KNOWLEDGE TOOLS FOR A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF NATURAL HERITAGE

Many networks of protected-area managers have scientific data on biodiversity that need to be centralized at national level. France's National Museum of Natural History has undertaken a National Inventory of Natural Heritage (NINH), working with scientists, local authorities, naturalists and conservation societies, in order to provide an overview of France's natural heritage.

### 2 | EXTENDING THE COVERAGE OF THE PROTECTED AREAS NETWORK TO ENSURE ITS ECOLOGICAL REPRESENTATIVENESS


Conservation of outstanding biodiversity is far from complete, particularly for the 15% of natural heritage sites identified as being of particular value (Natural areas of special ecological, faunal and floral value – type 1 ZNIEFF ) in metropolitan France. The strategies for the establishment of protected areas currently being implemented in land- and seascapes should contribute to strengthening the protection of these priority ecological areas, significantly enhancing their coverage.

### 3 | IMPROVING MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS IN PROTECTED AREAS

Protected areas should be efficiently managed; this would help to demonstrate their contribution to the conservation of natural heritage. Most protected areas in France have management plans, and sometimes they also have evaluation tools to assess plan implementation. However, we still need to define methods for assessing management efficiency, diversifying funding mechanisms, improving monitoring and ensuring follow-up on the basis of

shared indicators. The Grenelle Environment Forum strategies have promoted thinking and discussion on these aspects. In addition, the use of IUCN categories  will allow us to assess whether tools are consistent with management objectives, and, ultimately, to improve the international readability of the French system.

### 4 | INTEGRATING PROTECTED AREAS INTO LAND-PLANNING POLICIES

France has developed a network of protected areas without systematically considering the landscapes connecting these areas. It has become imperative to improve ecological connectivity at all levels (local, national, European and global), in accordance with other land-planning and sectoral policies. Significant progress has been made in this direction, including the decision to create a national ecological network known as the “green and blue belt ”, in which protected areas will constitute core biodiversity areas (biodiversity reservoirs).

### 5 | PROMOTING THE INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

The interaction of protected areas with their social environment is too limited, and their contribution to sustainable development remains poorly understood. It is necessary to raise public awareness through communication campaigns and educational programmes in order to enhance the benefits and services provided by these areas at the human, social, economic and cultural levels. In terms of governance, significant progress has been made in recent years to strengthen the involvement of local populations in the establishment and management of protected areas. These efforts must continue in order to ensure social support and acceptability of these tools.









# A plurality of tools for biodiversity conservation

## Map

*Distribution of protected areas in metropolitan France and French overseas territories*

22

## Status

*Overview of biodiversity conservation tools used in France*

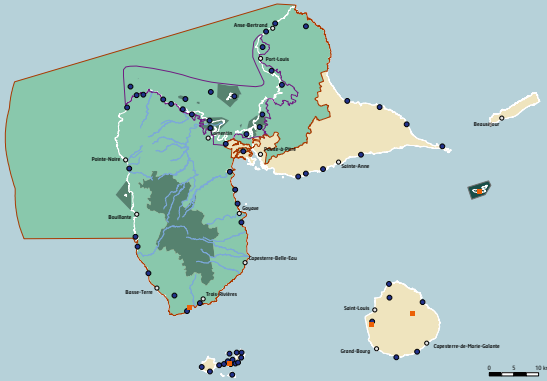
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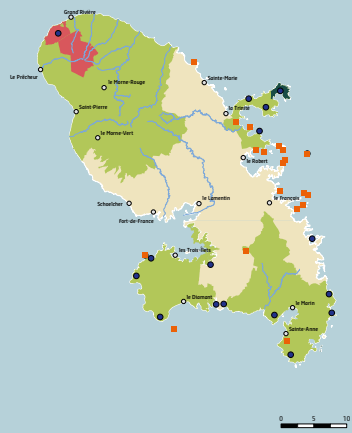
Atlantic Ocean



## Guadeloupe



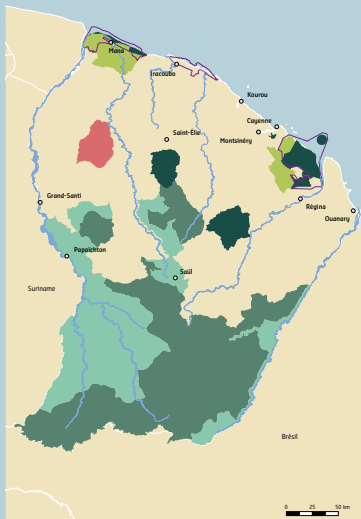
## Martinique



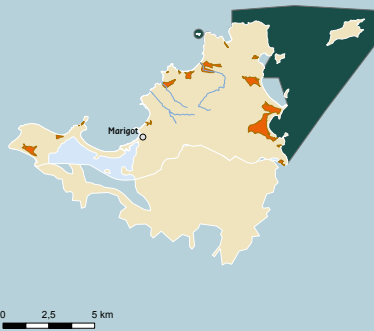
## Saint Pierre and Miquelon



## French Guyana



## Saint Martin



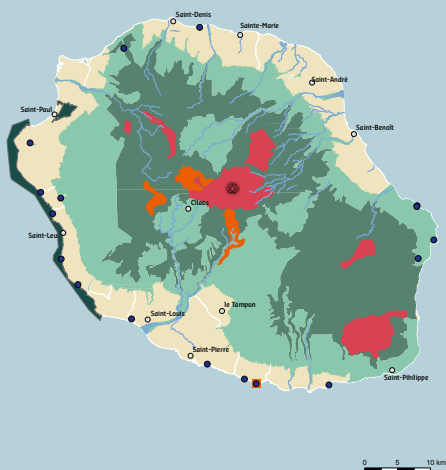
## Saint Barthélemy



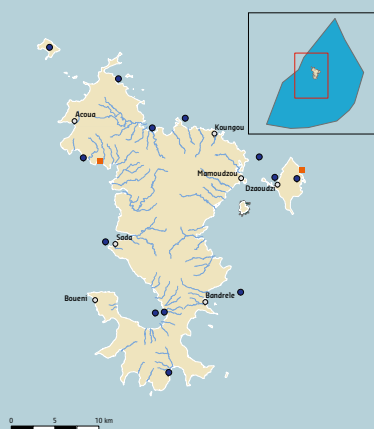
Indian Ocean



## Réunion Island



## Mayotte Island



Note: The territories of New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna and French Polynesia are not represented on this map: see pages 37-38 for more information

## French Southern and Antarctic Territories



# areas in metropolitan overseas territories

## Metropolitan France



### INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

- World Heritage Site
- Biosphere Reserve
- Ramsar Site
- Marine Mammal Sanctuary

### EUROPEAN LEVEL

- Natura 2000

### NATIONAL LEVEL

- National Park, core area
- National Park, peripheral zone ("area of adherence")

- National Nature Reserve
- Biological Reserve
- National Hunting and Wildlife Reserve
- Natural Marine Park
- Coastal Conservation Area

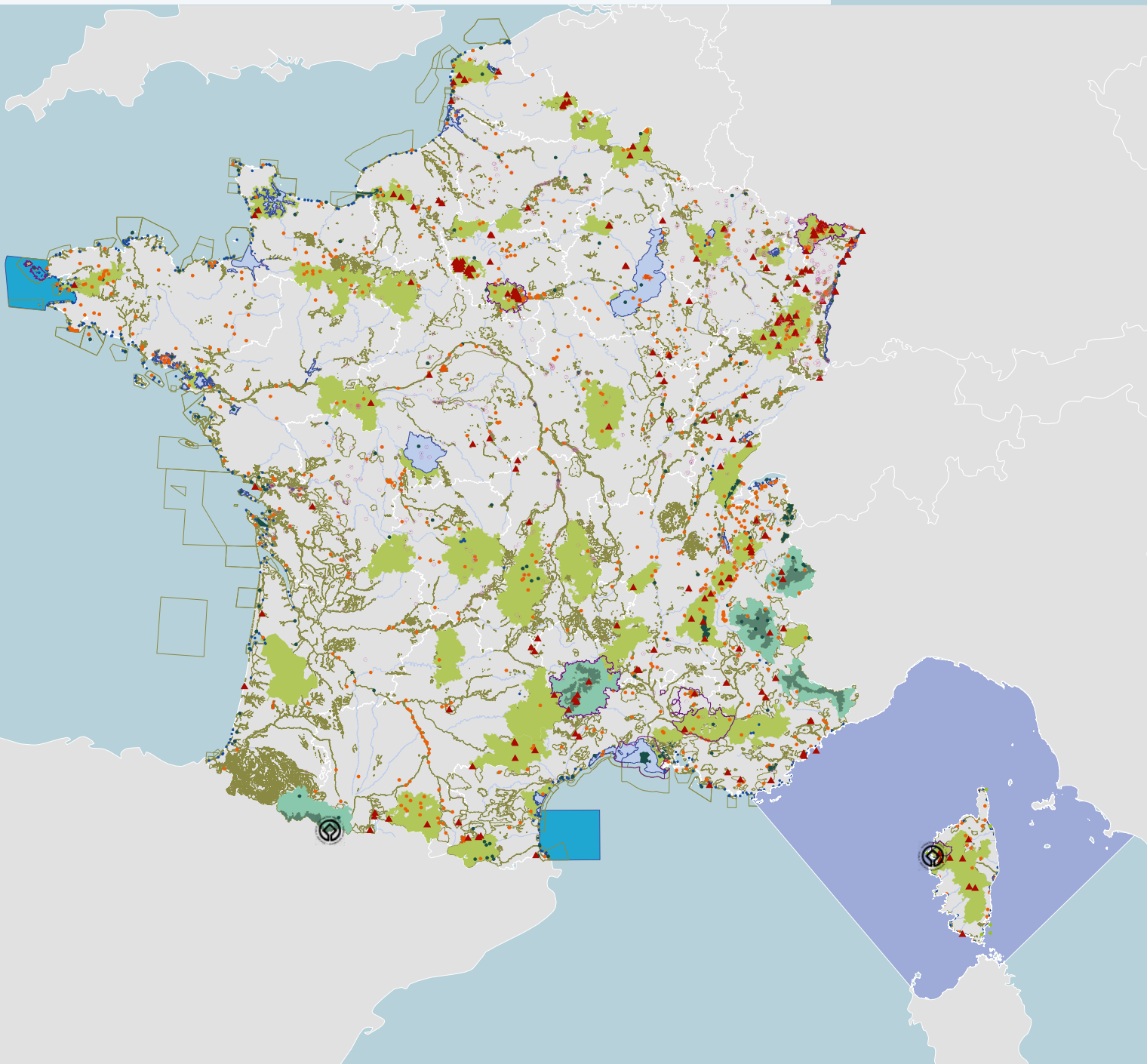
### REGIONAL LEVEL

- Regional Nature Park
- Corsican Nature Reserve

### DEPARTMENT LEVEL

- Biotope Protection Orders

Source: INPN





# Overview

## of protection tools

France has a wide range of tools for the protection of natural areas, corresponding to different management and governance systems. This diversity is an asset and a treasure: it offers the possibility of adapting the choice of tool to local circumstances and protection goals. In addition, many interactions between different tools are possible in order to enhance protection effectiveness.

© Déclic bleu Méditerranée

## Establishment at different levels

Historically, the State has had the power to grant most types of protection, and remains the leading player regarding the establishment of protected areas. However, many local authorities and international organizations have been devolved powers in the environmental field in recent decades, and have developed their own mechanisms and tools to protect natural heritage.

In metropolitan France, depending on the tool used, a protected area can be created at any of six different administrative levels, from global to local:



Specific protection mechanisms also exist for the overseas territories.

### IUCN protected area categories

*In this publication, IUCN categories are given only for information purposes and are subject to further studies*

- I Strict Nature Reserve or Wilderness Area
- II National Park
- III Natural Monument or Natural Feature
- IV Habitat management area / Species Management Area
- V Protected Landscape / Protected Seascape
- VI Protected Area with sustainable use of natural resources (Managed Resource Protected Area)



### Protection approaches

- International designation / agreement
- Contractual management
- Regulatory
- Land purchase and management



### France's administrative divisions

France has 101 departments grouped into 26 regions. They are administered by deliberative assemblies and have environmental responsibilities delegated by the central government. Corsica's territorial status gives it wider powers than other regions. France's overseas territories include five departments (French Guyana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Réunion Island, Mayotte), six collectivities (French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, Saint Martin, Saint Barthélemy), a territory administered by a prefect (French Southern and Antarctic Territories) and a possession (Clipperton).



## International level

France is a signatory to international conventions and is part of networks and multilateral programmes designed to protect unique landscapes, habitats and species in accordance with criteria defined at global level. These instruments may be legally binding or simply provide international recognition. In all cases, some or all of the targeted areas are protected by regulatory and/or convention-based mechanisms.



### Natural or mixed World Heritage site



**Number:** 4

**Area:** from 118 km<sup>2</sup> (Gulf of Porto) to 15,743 km<sup>2</sup> (lagoons in New Caledonia)

**Manager:** Government department, public entity, local authority, NGO

#### PURPOSE

The "Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage" was adopted in Paris in 1972 by UNESCO's General Conference, in order to assist States in identifying, preserving and promoting cultural and natural sites recognized for their outstanding universal value.

#### ESTABLISHMENT

To be inscribed on the World Heritage List, a property must meet at least one of the 10 criteria defined by the Convention (four natural and six cultural), be in good condition (integrity) and benefit from protection and management measures. Nominations are reviewed by IUCN and examined by the World Heritage Committee.

#### MANAGEMENT

Each site must have adequate protection and an appropriate and effective long-term management plan. A buffer zone must be provided in the property's immediate vicinity to ensure its conservation.

#### GOVERNANCE

The management of a World Heritage site is primarily the responsibility of the relevant State.

#### SITES

France currently has three natural properties on the World Heritage List (Gulf of Porto in Corsica, Lagoons and coral reefs of New Caledonia, Pitons, cirques and remparts of Reunion Island) and one mixed property (Pyrénées-Mont Perdu). There are many possibilities for further site listing, particularly in its overseas territories.



### Site RAMSAR



**Number:** 42

**Aera:** from 2,07 km<sup>2</sup> (salt ponds in Martinique) to 22,700 km<sup>2</sup> (French Southern Territories)

**Manager:** Local authority, NGO, *Conservatoire du Littoral* (Coastline and Lakeshore Protection Agency)

#### PURPOSE

A Ramsar site is an area designated under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (1971), which aims to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

#### ESTABLISHMENT

The States Parties to the Convention voluntarily designate wetlands for inclusion on the List of Wetlands of International Importance. To be listed, a site must meet at least one of five ecological criteria defined by the Convention.

#### MANAGEMENT

The listing of wetlands under the Convention is an international recognition that rewards and promotes actions for the sustainable management of these sites, and commits and encourages relevant stakeholders to continue their work. When proposing listings, States give priority to sites that are already subject to management measures, charters or management plans.

#### GOVERNANCE

For each site, it is recommended that a monitoring committee, a coordinator and a focal point be appointed.

#### SITES

France is a signatory to the Convention since 1986, and currently has 42 sites across its metropolitan and overseas territories.





## Biosphere Reserve



© Lubéron regional nature park

**Number:** 11

**Area:** from 205.98 km<sup>2</sup> (Iroise) to 24,000 km<sup>2</sup> (Basin of the Dordogne)

**Manager:** Public entity, local authority or NGO

### PURPOSE

A biosphere reserve is an area of land or sea established within the framework of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme, which aims to promote a balanced relationship between man and nature. It performs three basic and mutually reinforcing functions: biodiversity conservation, economic development and support for research. Biosphere reserves are "living laboratories" of sustainable development, and contribute significantly to the Millennium Development Goals, Agenda 21 and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

### ESTABLISHMENT

Biosphere reserves are created on the initiative of the relevant States, in accordance with criteria set out in a statutory framework approved by UNESCO's General Conference in 1995. They constitute an international network representing the planet's main ecosystems.

### MANAGEMENT

A biosphere reserve is divided into three interrelated areas that allow a spatial organization of management objectives (core area, buffer zone, transition zone). In France, biosphere reserves have no specific legal status, but they partially or completely overlap with protected areas recognized by national law.

### GOVERNANCE

Each biosphere reserve is a specific framework for territorial coordination and cooperation. In France, governance may fall to a joint committee, a national park administration or a management committee, and involves local stakeholders.

### SITES

Since 1977, UNESCO has designated 11 biosphere reserves in France, nine in metropolitan France and two in the overseas territories (Polynesia, Guadeloupe).



## Marine Mammal Sanctuary



© Office for the Environment of Corsica

**Number:** 2

**Area:** from 87,500 km<sup>2</sup> (Pelagos) to 138,000 km<sup>2</sup> (Agoa)

**Manager:** International Secretariat/State

### PURPOSE

A sanctuary for marine mammals is a special category of marine protected area that aims to protect targeted species and their habitats from human disruption (fishing, pollution, bycatch, disturbance) in an extensive maritime area.

### ESTABLISHMENT

The instrument of creation varies depending on the situation. A sanctuary can be established by a decree issued after mandatory advisory consultation with the Conseil d'Etat (the highest administrative court) or as the result of an international agreement.

### MANAGEMENT

The management of a sanctuary is based on an integrated approach associating socio-economic development activities and the protection of marine mammal habitats. In the Mediterranean, the Pelagos Sanctuary has a management plan that includes a wide range of actions, including awareness-raising, monitoring of human activities and promotion of scientific programmes. When it results from an international agreement (Pelagos), a sanctuary provides a framework for cooperation between the signatory States in order to harmonize actions aimed at protecting targeted species.

### GOVERNANCE

The State is in charge of the implementation of protection measures. Management is based on a consultation process between all stakeholders (government authorities, elected officials, sectoral trade organizations, scientific organizations, conservation NGOs).

### SITES

France takes an active part in the implementation of these sites in cooperation with neighbouring countries. It has established a sanctuary in conjunction with Monaco and Italy in the Western Mediterranean between Corsica, Tuscany and Sardinia (Pelagos), and launched the establishment process for another sanctuary in the Caribbean (Agoa).

## Regional Seas Convention site



© Boris DANIEL / Marine protected areas agency

- Number:** -  
**Area:** -  
**Manager:** State, public entity, local authority, NGO

### PURPOSE

Several conventions for the protection of regional seas provide, through specific protocols, the possibility of establishing protected areas in order to restore, preserve and maintain natural resources providing socioeconomic benefits, habitats of endangered or endemic species, and representative marine and coastal ecosystems.

### ESTABLISHMENT

The establishment initiative belongs to the States Parties. Protected areas are designated on the basis of common criteria set out in each Convention.

### MANAGEMENT

Protection and management measures are defined in the designation proposals. Depending on the Convention, the goal may be to regulate trade in specific species, to regulate human activities, and in some cases to restrict access to the protected area.

### GOVERNANCE

The State is responsible for the implementation of protection and management measures, in consultation with local stakeholders.

### SITES

Several French marine protected areas have been recognized under Regional Seas Conventions, including three Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI) under the Barcelona Convention, an Antarctic Specially Protected Area (ASPA), and two sites protected under the Protocol to the Cartagena Convention on Protected Areas and Wildlife. France also contributed to the establishment of the Charlie-Gibbs Marine Protected Area within the framework of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment in the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR).



© M. VERDUCCI



## European level

European level provides a significant intervention framework aimed at building and protecting a coherent and representative network of outstanding habitats and species, irrespective of national borders. France plays a role in the implementation of two major European instruments for the protection of natural areas, the Natura 2000 network under the responsibility of the European Union and the network of biogenetic reserves of the Council of Europe.



**Number:** 35

**Area:** from 0.015 km<sup>2</sup> (Saint-Nicolas-des-Glénan) to 131 km<sup>2</sup> (Camargue)

**Manager:** -

### PURPOSE

Established in 1973 by the Council of Europe, the network of biogenetic reserves aims to conserve representative examples of Europe's flora, fauna and natural areas.

### ESTABLISHMENT

Each State designates, within its territory, biogenetic reserves that must meet at least one of four criteria established by a Council of Europe Resolution (typical, unique, rare, and endangered). If the relevant natural areas are already protected at the national level, they are directly integrated into the network.

### MANAGEMENT

A biogenetic reserve must benefit from legal status guaranteeing the effective and long-term protection of habitats, biocenoses and ecosystems. The terms of protection may differ, but any action liable to degrade the environment must be avoided.

### GOVERNANCE

The management of biogenetic reserves is the responsibility of the designating State.

### SITES

The 35 biogenetic reserves designated in France all correspond to National Nature Reserves.



**Number:** 1,753

**Area:** the smallest sites are church steeples, Pertuis is the largest marine site (8,192 km<sup>2</sup>) and Sologne the largest land site 3,461 km<sup>2</sup>)

**Manager:** Local authority, public entity, NGO, State

### PURPOSE

Natura 2000 is Europe's main ecological network and the largest network of protected areas in the world. It aims to maintain or restore natural and semi-natural habitats and species facing major conservation issues in Europe, taking into account the economic and social requirements of the areas concerned.

### ESTABLISHMENT

Natura 2000 sites are designated by Ministerial Order under two European Directives (Birds and Habitats), the Annexes of which list the most outstanding and/or threatened species and habitats. The network includes Special Protection Areas (SPA), which aim to protect species of wild birds listed in Annex I to the Birds Directive, and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) for the conservation of species and habitats listed in Annexes I and II to the Habitats Directive. Natura 2000 sites may overlap with other regulatory or convention-based protected areas.

### MANAGEMENT

A site's designation involves obligations for the Member State, which must implement a management plan (known as the Statement of Objectives) and measures to prevent habitat degradation.

### GOVERNANCE

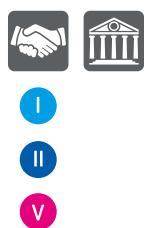
France has chosen a contractual and voluntary management approach for the implementation of this system. A steering committee comprising all local stakeholders (elected officials, landowners and right-holders, farmers, foresters, hunters, users, NGOs) develops the Statements of Objectives, which are then approved by the Prefect and implemented by an appointed operator.

### SITES

Due to its geographical location, France plays a special role in the establishment of this network, which now covers almost 12% of its land area and 2% of its European maritime area.

## National level

In France, the Ministry of Environment is the main driver of the establishment of protected areas. It is in charge of managing most of the regulatory protection tools and systems through relevant public entities or management associations.



**Number:** 10

**Area:** from 19,880 km<sup>2</sup> (Port-Cros/Reunion Island) to 33,850/13,590 km<sup>2</sup> (Guyana)

**Manager:** Administrative public entity

### PURPOSE

The purpose of a national park is to protect large land and marine ecosystems, as well as unique cultural heritage and landscapes. From a regulatory point of view, national parks consist of two distinct components: a “core” area (IUCN Category II), where the State ensures maximum protection of the natural heritage and strictly regulates human activities; and peripheral zones known as “areas of adhesion” (IUCN Category V), where local municipalities voluntarily undertake sustainable development policies aimed at helping to protect the national park’s core. Wilderness areas (IUCN Category Ia) may be established in the core area to provide strict protection of flora and fauna for scientific purposes.

### ESTABLISHMENT

National parks are designated by a decree issued after mandatory advisory consultation with the *Conseil d'Etat* (the highest administrative court).

### MANAGEMENT

The main management document is the National Park Charter, which establishes a partnership between the State and local stakeholders for a maximum of 15 years.

### GOVERNANCE

The management of a national park is entrusted to an administrative public entity with regulatory powers. Local stakeholders, including elected officials and local authorities, play a major role and they are a majority on parks’ management boards.

### SITES

France has 10 national parks, covering approximately 8% of its surface area (mainland France and overseas territories).



**Number:** 165

**Area:** from 0.0061 km<sup>2</sup> (Toarcian nature reserve) to 22,700 km<sup>2</sup> (French Southern Territories Nature Reserve)

**Manager:** NGO, public entity, local authority, public interest group, foundation, private landowner (as appropriate)

### PURPOSE

The purpose of a national nature reserve is to provide long-term protection for unique, functional and ecologically representative natural habitats, as well as species of exceptional heritage value, or geological or paleontological sites.

### ESTABLISHMENT

National nature reserves are designated by decree (a simple decree or a decree issued after advisory consultation with the *Conseil d'Etat*). The establishment or amendment decree may include the establishment of a buffer zone around the reserve.

### MANAGEMENT

The reserve’s management plan defines the required environmental conservation, maintenance or restoration measures. Any activities liable to affect environmental integrity are strictly prohibited.

### GOVERNANCE

The sites are managed by a local agency in consultation with local stakeholders. The agency develops and implements the management plan. Management is carried out under the authority of the Prefect.

### SITES

The 165 national nature reserves are home to a significant portion of rare and endangered habitats and species in France. The largest national nature reserve covers 22,700 km<sup>2</sup> in the French Southern Territories.





V

VI

## Marine National Park



**Number:** 5  
**Area:** from 110 km<sup>2</sup> (Picard Estuaries and Opal sea) to 68,313 km<sup>2</sup> (Mayotte)  
**Manager:** Public entity

### PURPOSE

The purpose of a marine park is to protect extended areas of particular interest regarding marine biodiversity, to enhance knowledge and understanding of the marine environment and to foster sustainable management of natural resources.

### ESTABLISHMENT

Marine national parks are designated and their boundaries set by decree after a public inquiry amongst concerned local communities.

### MANAGEMENT

The management of a marine national park is based on the principles of the ecosystem approach. The establishment decree sets out general guidelines, including the promotion of human activities compatible with biodiversity conservation and natural habitats' integrity.

### GOVERNANCE

A public entity, the Marine Protected Areas Agency, is in charge of management, in consultation with all users of the sea. Each marine park has a management board, a governance and consultation body comprising representatives of the central government, local authorities, NGOs, experts and sectoral trade organizations. It rules on any matter concerning the park, and develops its management plan.

### SITES

France has established five marine parks, and several proposals covering all of France's coastlines are currently under review.



I

IV

## Biological Reserve



**Number:** 233  
**Area:** from 0.0025 km<sup>2</sup> (Bassy Managed Reserve) to 693.73 km<sup>2</sup> (Lucifer Dekou-Dekou Forest Strict Reserve)  
**Manager:** Public entity

### PURPOSE

The purpose of a biological reserve is to protect outstanding or representative species or habitats, in forest- or forest-associated habitats, such as peat bogs, coastal dunes and heathland.

### ESTABLISHMENT

Designation by a decree of the Ministries in charge of Environment and Agriculture for an indefinite period.

### MANAGEMENT

Depending on management goals and habitat types, there are two types of biological reserves: strict biological reserves, where the forest is left to grow freely, and managed reserves, where proactive ecosystem conservation management is pursued. There are also mixed biological reserves, combining strict protection and managed sections.

### GOVERNANCE

This regulatory protection tool applies only to publicly-owned forests, and is under the sole responsibility of the National Forestry Office (ONF).

### SITES

More than 200 sites have been protected under this tool, in metropolitan France and in the overseas territories.



## National Hunting and Wildlife Reserve



IV



© Philippe MASSIT – ONCFS

**Number:** 9

**Area:** from 17 km<sup>2</sup> (Caroux-d’Espinouse) to 73 km<sup>2</sup> (Gulf of Morbihan)

**Manager:** Public entity, NGO

### PURPOSE

The purpose of a national hunting and wildlife reserve is to protect wildlife species with significant heritage value. Created in 1968 to facilitate the breeding of big game for restocking, national hunting and wildlife reserves are selected for their scientific interest or because of the occurrence of rare or outstanding species.

### ESTABLISHMENT

National hunting and wildlife reserves are created by ministerial decree, on the initiative of the National Office of Hunting and Wildlife or any other public entity involved in their management.

### MANAGEMENT

Hunting is not allowed in national hunting and wildlife reserves, the purpose of which is to promote species and habitat conservation, scientific research and to receive visitors. Migratory bird reserves are dedicated to the protection of wintering sites, while big game reserves are mostly dedicated to educational and research programmes.

### GOVERNANCE

National hunting and wildlife reserves are mainly managed by the National Office of Hunting and Wildlife, in conjunction with the French National Hunting Federation.

### SITES

The network currently includes nine national hunting and wildlife reserves, representative of the diversity of natural habitats in mainland France.



GRAND SITE



DE FRANCE



III

## Classified site Registered site



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**Number:** 2,687 (classified sites)

**Area:** 9,339 km<sup>2</sup> (classified sites)

**Manager:** Local authorities, private sector

### PURPOSE

Since 1930, France has enacted specific legislation to preserve natural monuments, landscapes and sites of general public interest from an historical, legendary, artistic or scientific point of view. This law provides two levels of protection, “classification” and “registration”, which use different management tools.

### ESTABLISHMENT

Listing decisions are made by an Order of the Minister in charge of the relevant sites. In Corsica, decisions are taken by the Corsican Regional Assembly after consultation with the representative of the central government. Classification decisions are taken by decree or by order, depending on whether or not the landowners consent to the listing.

### MANAGEMENT

“Classification” provides strong protection; any change in the condition or appearance of the site is subject to special authorization (given by the Minister in charge or the Prefect, as appropriate), while “registration” is an acknowledgement of the quality of a site, justifying the monitoring of its changes by means of consultation with the architectural review board (*architecte des Bâtiments de France*) on any work undertaken. Sites may be placed under management, but this is not automatic. Sites with a high profile and substantial numbers of visitors can claim the label “Grand Site de France”, under which central government and local authorities implement specific restoration, conservation, management and enhancement approaches.

### GOVERNANCE

The Ministry in charge of the sites is responsible for management.

### SITES

France has more than 7,000 registered and classified sites across its metropolitan territory.







IV

V

## Conservatoire du littoral Site



**Number:** 667  
**Area:** 1,420 km<sup>2</sup> and 1,200 km of coastline protected  
**Manager:** Local authorities, public entities, NGOs

### PURPOSE

Since 1975, the *Conservatoire du Littoral* (Coastline and Lakeshore Protection Agency) has acquired vulnerable and threatened coastal and lakeshore areas to ensure their permanent protection. This land-purchasing policy aims at safeguarding natural areas of ecological and landscape value on the coastline and lakeshores, while ensuring public access.

### ESTABLISHMENT

The land is acquired amicably, by pre-emption, and only in exceptional cases by expropriation. Once incorporated into the public domain, it becomes virtually inalienable.

### MANAGEMENT

Numerous planning operations aimed at receiving visitors and restoring natural habitats, as well as daily management interventions, are performed in order to restore often degraded ecosystems and regulate public visits and use.

### GOVERNANCE

Inspired by the British National Trust, the Conservatoire sets up management partnerships, primarily with local communities, to promote a local sense of ownership of the sites.

### SITES

Today, nearly 12% of the French coastline is protected under this system. The aim is to protect a third of the coastline of metropolitan France and the overseas territories by 2050, including, in addition to the Conservatoire sites, the coastline protected by national parks, nature reserves, classified heritage sites, state-owned forests and sensitive natural areas.

## Regional level

The regional authorities are in charge of several regulatory and contractual tools for the protection of natural areas. These tools enable them to implement an effective nature protection policy, in consultation with local stakeholders. They establish regional biodiversity strategies and **regional ecological consistency schemes** , which are used to identify the components of the national **green and blue belts** .



V

### Regional Nature Park



- Number:** 48, of which 2 in the overseas territories
- Area:** from 243 km<sup>2</sup> (Chevreuse Valley) to 3,973 km<sup>2</sup> (Auvergne volcanoes)
- Manager:** Regional authorities (joint management board)

#### PURPOSE

A regional nature park is a rural or peri-urban area whose natural, cultural and landscape value is outstanding and consistent, but also vulnerable and threatened, and where local stakeholders join forces around a project aimed at reconciling the protection and enhancement of natural heritage with local development.

#### ESTABLISHMENT

The classification of a regional nature park operates by decree of the Prime Minister on the proposal of the Minister of Ecology.

#### MANAGEMENT

Management guidelines and measures are set out in a contractual document known as a "Charter", which commits all signatories for a period of 12 years; land-use plans must comply with the Charter.

#### GOVERNANCE

Regional Nature Parks are managed by a joint management board, which implements the Charter and coordinates actions taken by local stakeholders in areas such as land-use planning, agriculture, management of natural habitats, environmental awareness and education, management of water resources, energy and tourism.

#### SITES

The 48 Regional Nature Parks are inhabited areas covering more than 4,000 municipalities and 3.5 million inhabitants. They are evenly spread across approximately 14% of metropolitan France, as well as in some overseas departments (Martinique, French Guyana).



I

III

IV

### Regional Nature Reserve Corsican Nature Reserve



- Number:** 119 | 6
- Area:** 304 km<sup>2</sup> | 834 km<sup>2</sup> (from 0.03 km<sup>2</sup> to 794 km<sup>2</sup>)
- Manager:** NGO, public entity, local authority, public interest group, foundation, private owner (as appropriate)

#### PURPOSE

Regional or Corsican nature reserves have the same purpose and features as national reserves. Their purpose is to provide long-term protection to unique, functional and ecologically representative natural habitats, as well as species with outstanding heritage value.

#### ESTABLISHMENT

The establishment of a nature reserve involves a decision by the Regional Council or territorial authority in the specific case of Corsica. The decision may include the establishment of a buffer zone around the reserve.

#### MANAGEMENT

The reserve's management plan defines the required measures to ensure conservation, maintenance or restoration of the natural heritage. Any activities liable to affect environmental integrity are strictly prohibited.

#### GOVERNANCE

Nature reserves are under the sole responsibility of the regional authorities (Regional Council or territorial authority in Corsica), but their management can be delegated to third parties by means of an agreement.

#### SITES

The 119 regional nature reserves cover a total area of 304 km<sup>2</sup> in metropolitan France, with significant differences in size. Corsica has currently 6 nature reserves covering a total area of 834 km<sup>2</sup>.



Selon  
les cas :



## Area managed by the *Conservatoires d'espaces naturels* (Natural Area Conservation Societies)



© Programme Loire Nature - Julien SAILLARD - CEPA

**Number:** 2,374

**Area:** 1,316 km<sup>2</sup>

**Manager:** NGO

### PURPOSE

The *Conservatoires d'espaces naturels* (Natural Area Conservation Societies, CENs) help to preserve natural and landscape heritage through the management of a coherent and functional network of natural sites, thus actively contributing to the conservation of the green and blue belts. They are particularly involved in the implementation of the Natura 2000 network and the implementation of local authorities' "biodiversity" policies.

### ESTABLISHMENT

The CENs work through land acquisition and use control and management (lease and management agreements).

### MANAGEMENT

Management is based on scientific and technical expertise, on the basis of which a management plan or guidelines are developed. Most protected areas require regular management interventions, but some are left to natural dynamics corresponding to IUCN's Category I.

### GOVERNANCE

Management is conducted by CENs themselves or delegated to third parties. Socioeconomic stakeholders and users are consistently consulted upstream, and often involved in management. Departmental CENs have also been established. The 29 *Conservatoires* (21 regional and 8 departmental) are grouped together in a Federation created in 1989.

### SITES

CENs manage a coherent and functional network of nearly 2,400 sites with a wide variety of natural habitats, including wetlands (38% of sites), dry grasslands (22%) and grasslands (13%).



## Departmental level

There are two types of tools for the protection of natural areas at the departmental level: sensitive natural areas, under the authority of **General Councils** , and biotope and geotope protection orders, which are issued by the Prefects representing central government. These tools are interrelated with other networks of protected areas and contribute to the implementation of national biodiversity protection goals.



IV

V

### Sensitive Natural Area



**Number:** 3,050  
**Area:** 1,700 km<sup>2</sup>  
**Manager:** Local authority

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of a sensitive natural area is to preserve natural habitats and landscapes, and to equip them in order to provide recreational facilities for the public, where the site features and condition allow public access.

#### ESTABLISHMENT

Upon deliberation, the General Council acquires land, amicably, by pre-emption, or by expropriation.

#### MANAGEMENT

Acquired land is protected from alienation liable to adversely impact natural resources. Based on an inventory of the department's natural and landscape heritage, the General Council establishes a departmental network of sensitive natural areas, setting out short- and long-term goals and action plans.

#### GOVERNANCE

This land protection tool is implemented by the departments. Management may be conducted directly by the department and/or entrusted by agreement to third parties, from either the public or private sectors.

#### SITES

There are more than 3,000 sensitive natural areas, across nearly all French departments.



IV

### Biotope or Geotope Protection Order



**Number:** 715  
**Area:** from a few square metres (church steeples) to 257 km<sup>2</sup> (White Sands of Mana)  
**Manager:** None

#### PURPOSE

A biotope or geotope protection order is a regulatory protection tool that aims to conserve habitats of protected species or, in the near future, sites of geological interest, in order to prevent their loss. They may, for instance, include feeding, resting or breeding sites, as well as sites critical for the survival of key protected species.

#### ESTABLISHMENT

This protection regime is established, following an initiative of the central government, by the departmental Prefect or the Minister in charge of marine fisheries if it applies to the public maritime domain.

#### MANAGEMENT

A biotope or geotope protection order basically involves regulation of activities that may have a negative impact on biotope and/or geotope conservation, and can also provide for ecological restoration measures.

#### GOVERNANCE


Biotope and geotope protection orders do not imply a designated manager, as they are administrative measures. In practice, however, the Prefects often set up monitoring committees comprising regional representatives of the Ministry in charge of Environment, NGOs and local authorities.

#### SITES

More than 700 biotope or geotope protection orders have been issued in metropolitan France and its overseas territories. They play a vital role in the conservation of plant and animal species, and will soon be extended to sites of geological interest.



## Municipal and inter-municipal level

France's 36,682 municipalities and inter-municipal groupings have powers regarding the protection of natural areas in the framework of their land-use planning documents, which set out general rules governing land-use and are enforceable against third parties. Since the Grenelle Environment Forum, they must take into account ecological connectivity, and their protective measures may be structural components of the **green and blue belts** .



### Protected Wooded Area




**Manager:** Local authority

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of a protected wooded area is to protect or create woodlands and green areas, notably in urban or suburban areas.

#### ESTABLISHMENT

A protected wooded area may be created as part of the municipality's **local land-use plan** , or by an Order of the President of the General Council if the municipality does not have such a plan..

#### MANAGEMENT

This protection regime prevents changes in land-use or occupancy which may adversely impact the conservation, protection or creation of woodlands. Clearing is also prohibited.

#### GOVERNANCE

Municipalities are in charge of site conservation, development and maintenance.

#### SITES

This protection regime may be applied to individual trees, woods, forests and parks, under or outside forest regime. There are no national statistics on protected wooded areas.



### Natural and Forest Area (N zone) under local land-use plans



**Manager:** Local authority

#### PURPOSE

The establishment of a natural and forest area (N zone) aims to protect areas within a municipality, due to the quality and value of the relevant sites, natural habitats and landscapes, notably from an aesthetic, historical or environmental point of view.

#### ESTABLISHMENT

A natural and forest area is created under the local land-use plans of a municipality or inter-municipal grouping.

#### MANAGEMENT

Urban development is prohibited or allowed only to a small extent. Relevant regulations provide for a great number of tools, ranging from simple technical building requirements to the prohibition of any land use.

#### GOVERNANCE

The municipality is responsible for the implementation of the natural and forest area regulations.

#### SITES

N zones allow to protect a wide variety of areas, such as forests, scrub or wetlands. There are no national statistics on natural and forest areas under local land-use plans.

## Protected areas in overseas territories

The overseas territories complete the range of French protected areas by adding other categories, with interesting features demonstrating the innovation potential of the legal framework governing conservation and governance of natural areas.



© Territory of the French Southern and Antarctic Lands

There are two distinct territorial status applicable to French overseas territories:

- the Overseas Departments are subject to national and European Union law. Therefore, they apply the same protection regimes as in metropolitan France, subject to some adjustments;
- the Overseas Communities have legislative autonomy and their own powers in the field of environmental protection. They have developed their own systems of protected areas, which may incorporate national tools according to legal provisions.



Specific Environmental Code

### EUROPEAN STATUS

OCT : Overseas Countries and Territories

OMR : Outermost Regions



OCT

## New Caledonia



© Martial DOSDANE

Geographical area:	Pacific
Land area:	18,575 km <sup>2</sup>
Marine area:	1,364,000 km <sup>2</sup>
Protection decision:	Territorial Assembly
Categories of protected areas:	6
Number of protected areas:	57 (PS) 4 (PN)





## French Polynesia



OCT



© Jean-François BUTAUDE

Geographical area: Pacific  
 Land area: 4,200 km<sup>2</sup>  
 Marine area: 4,804,000 km<sup>2</sup>  
 Protection decision: Council of Ministers  
 Categories of protected areas: 6  
 Number of protected areas: 42



## Wallis and Futuna



OCT



© Xavier Pinaud

Geographical area: Pacific  
 Land area: 75 km<sup>2</sup>  
 Marine area: 266,000 km<sup>2</sup>  
 Protection decision: Territorial Assembly  
 Categories of protected areas: 1  
 Number of protected areas: 0



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## Saint Pierre and Miquelon

OCT



© Jean-Philippe SIBLET

Geographical area: North Atlantic  
 Land area: 242 km<sup>2</sup>  
 Marine area: 10,000 km<sup>2</sup>  
 Protection decision: -  
 Categories of protected areas: -  
 Number of protected areas: 1



## French Southern and Antarctic Territories

OCT



© Samuel Blanc

Geographical area: Southern Indian Ocean  
 Land area: 7,829 km<sup>2</sup>  
 Marine area: 2,500,000 km<sup>2</sup>  
 Protection decision: STATE  
 Categories of protected areas: -  
 Number of protected areas: 1



## Saint Barthélemy



OMR



© STARUS



## Saint Martin

OMR



© Marion PEGUIN

Geographical area: Caribbean  
 Land area: 25 km<sup>2</sup>  
 Marine area: 4,000 km<sup>2</sup>  
 Protection decision: Territorial Council  
 Categories of protected areas: -  
 Number of protected areas: 2

Geographical area: Caribbean  
 Land area: 86 km<sup>2</sup>  
 Marine area: 1,000 km<sup>2</sup>  
 Protection decision: -  
 Categories of protected areas: -  
 Number of protected areas: 19



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# Glossary and acronyms





## 🕒 BIOGEOGRAPHIC REGION

A biogeographic region designates an area of animal and plant distribution having similar or shared characteristics in terms of vegetation and temperature. There are six major biogeographic regions within the European Union: Atlantic, continental, Mediterranean, alpine, macaronesian and boreal.

## 🕒 DECENTRALIZATION

Decentralization is a process that involves the transfer of administrative responsibilities from the central government to local governments. It ensures a better balance of power throughout the country and brings the decision-making process closer to citizens.

## 🕒 ECOREGION

Designed by the WWF as a tool for prioritizing conservation actions, an ecoregion is a relatively large land or water unit hosting geographically distinct assemblages of natural communities. These communities share a large majority of their species, ecological dynamics and environmental conditions, and interact in ways that are critical for their long-term sustainability.

## 🕒 GENERAL/REGIONAL COUNCIL

The deliberative and administrative assemblies of France's departments/regions.

## 🕒 GREEN AND BLUE BELTS

Stemming from the Grenelle Environment Forum (2009), the green and blue belts represent the future national ecological network, the aim of which is to contribute to halting biodiversity loss. It is defined as a belt of ecological connectivity, a "living fabric" composed of biodiversity reservoirs connected by ecological corridors. Thanks to this structuring approach, it is possible to integrate actions for the preservation and restoration of ecological connectivity in land-planning decisions.

## 🕒 GRENELLE ENVIRONMENT FORUM

The Grenelle Environment Forum is a consultation process initiated in 2007 between French government and representatives of civil society to define a roadmap for ecology, development and sustainable land-planning. Between 2008 and 2010, the French Parliament adopted the laws required for the legislative enactment of the commitments of the Grenelle Environment Forum (Grenelle Laws 1 and 2, Law on Environmental Liability, Law on GMOs, Law on the Organization and Regulation of Rail Transport).

## 🕒 GRENELLE SEA FORUM

The Grenelle Sea Forum, launched in 2009, complements the commitments made at the Grenelle Environment Forum; it tackled marine issues and the sea contribution to the development of sustainable activities. This consultation process has helped define a national strategy for the sea and coastal areas, identifying short-, medium- and long-term objectives and actions, including a strategy governing the establishment and management of marine protected areas.

## 🕒 HOTSPOTS

Biodiversity-rich areas severely threatened by human activities. To qualify as a hotspot, a region must contain at least 1,500 species of endemic vascular plants, and have lost at least 70% of its primary vegetation.

## 🕒 IUCN PROTECTED AREA CATEGORIES

IUCN has developed an international system of categories to classify protected areas according to their management objectives. Six categories of protected areas were established in 1994. They correspond to the degree of human intervention in natural areas, from strict reserves or wilderness areas where all activities are banned to strategies for the sustainable use and management of biodiversity and natural resources:

- I Strict nature reserve or wilderness area
- II National park
- III Natural monument or feature
- IV Habitat/species management area
- V Protected landscape/seascape
- VI Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources

## 🕒 LOCAL LAND-USE PLAN

The local land-use plan is a planning document that, at the level of a municipality or an inter-municipal grouping, establishes an overall planning and development project, and accordingly sets out the general rules of land-use for the relevant area.

## 🕒 MEGADIVERSE COUNTRIES

The megadiverse countries are a group of 17 countries considered as the richest in the world in terms of biological and cultural diversity: Australia, Brazil, China, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, France, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, South Africa, United States and Venezuela.

## 🕒 NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

The National Biodiversity Strategy embodies the French commitment under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It states a shared goal: conserving, restoring and enhancing biodiversity, ensuring sustainable and equitable use, and promoting the involvement of all sectors.

## 🕒 RED LIST OF THREATENED SPECIES

The IUCN Red List is the world's most comprehensive inventory of the conservation status of plant and animal species. It relies on a series of criteria to assess the extinction risk of thousands of species and subspecies, based on the best available scientific knowledge. Its main aim is to identify conservation priorities, to provide a consistent basis for public policy, to raise public and decision-maker awareness on the urgency and scope of conservation issues, and to encourage all stakeholders to take action to curb the rate of species extinction.

## ◉ REGIONAL ECOLOGICAL CONSISTENCY SCHEME

A regional ecological consistency scheme is the tool governing the regional implementation of the green and blue belts. It must include 1/100,000-scale mapping of regional ecological connectivity and an action plan.

## ◉ “THIRD WILD”

The “third wild” is the target set by the *Conservatoire du Littoral* to protect one-third of French coastlines by 2050. In addition to *Conservatoire du Littoral* sites, this scheme includes coastlines protected by national parks, nature reserves, public-owned forests and sensitive natural areas.

## ◉ ZNIEFF (NATURAL AREAS OF SPECIAL ECOLOGICAL, FAUNAL AND FLORAL VALUE)

A ZNIEFF is an area of high ecological value within the national territory that “contributes to the maintenance of ecological balance or hosts rare animal and plant species that are characteristic of the regional biodiversity”. Established in 1982 on behalf of the Ministry of Environment, the ZNIEFF inventory is the main source of knowledge on natural habitats, flora and fauna, and serves as a reference for the development of nature conservation policies. ZNIEFFs fall into two categories: type I (area corresponding to one or more similar ecological units) and type II (natural habitats forming one or more units with high cohesion and strong interaction among themselves).

## ACRONYMS

<b>AEIB</b>	Area of European interest for birds
<b>ASPA</b>	Antarctic Specially Protected Area
<b>BPO</b>	Biotope Protection Order
<b>CNR</b>	Corsican Nature Reserve
<b>COM</b>	Overseas Collectivity
<b>DOCOB</b>	Natura 2000 management plan
<b>DOM</b>	Overseas Department
<b>DREAL</b>	Regional Directorates for Environment, Planning and Housing
<b>EEZ</b>	Exclusive Economic Zone
<b>FSAL</b>	French Southern and Antarctic Lands
<b>ICRI</b>	International Coral Reef Initiative
<b>IUCN</b>	International Union for Conservation of Nature
<b>MAB</b>	Man and Biosphere
<b>MBR</b>	Managed biological reserves
<b>MNP</b>	Marine National Park
<b>NHWR</b>	National Hunting and Wildlife Reserve
<b>NINH</b>	National Inventory of Natural Heritage
<b>NMNH</b>	National Museum of Natural History
<b>NNR</b>	National Nature Reserve
<b>NSPA</b>	National strategy for Protected areas
<b>OCT</b>	Overseas Countries and Territories
<b>OMR</b>	Outermost Region
<b>RNP</b>	Regional Nature Park
<b>RNR</b>	Regional Nature Reserve
<b>SAC</b>	Special Area of Conservation
<b>SBR</b>	Strict biological reserves
<b>SCI</b>	Site of Community Importance
<b>SNA</b>	Sensitive Natural Area
<b>SPA</b>	Special Protection Area
<b>SPAMI</b>	Specially Protected Area of Mediterranean Importance
<b>SRCE</b>	Regional ecological consistency scheme
<b>WWF</b>	WorldWide Fund for Nature
<b>ZNIEFF</b>	Natural areas of special ecological, faunal and floral value



## For a just world that values and conserves nature

Established in 1992, the IUCN French Committee is the network of organizations and experts of the International Union for Conservation of Nature in France.

It associates, within a unique partnership, two government departments, 13 public bodies, 40 NGOs and more than 250 experts meeting in specialized committees and thematic working groups.

Thanks to this inclusive membership, the IUCN French Committee provides a unique platform for dialogue and expertise on biodiversity issues, which also involves local authorities and private sector businesses.

### **The IUCN French Committee has two main tasks:**

- respond to biodiversity issues in France, and
- promote French expertise internationally.

To fulfil its two tasks, the IUCN French Committee has established seven thematic programmes on biodiversity policies, protected areas, species, ecosystem management, environmental education and communication, overseas territories and international actions. Their implementation builds on the active involvement of its member organizations, experts and partners, working in five commissions and eight working groups.



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