physical environment

1

The San Pedro salt marshes are the result of the transformation of an old lacustrine zone generated by the contribution of the Las Siete Higueras watercourse. It is sutated in the northern part of the Mar Menor, separated by the Mediterranean Sea by a narrow strip of fixed dunes (anchored by the vegetation)

The gradient of saline condition rises from the north to the south. In the saline ponds to the north limit of the Park, the giant reed grows because of the coming of fresh water. The dunes in the beach Torre Derribada are more than three metres high. Saltbushes and rushes are located between the dunes and the saline ponds. The beach is subject to continuous changes due to the materials coming with the weaves and the wind.

The Encañizadas (a natural channel of water exchange between the Mediterranean Sea and the Mar Menor) is a zone of superficial waters and muddy seabed, with abundance of seaweeds and sea plants. Its pseudotidal character, very scarce in the Mediterranean Sea, is due to the masses of water because they are regulated by the wind pattern.

The beach is subject to continuous changes due to the materials coming with the weaves and the wind.

suggestions for visitors

- You are in a protected area of beautiful landscape and great natural value, which we attempt to preserve for the future generations. So during your visit try not to forget...
- Use authorised roads and footpaths.
- Domestic animals must be hold.
- Camping and/or caravanning are not permitted in the area.
- Respect private propriety.
- Do not disturb neither harm animals and plants.
- Do not light fire unless authorised to do so.
- Please, use the garbage bins.
- For emergency, call number 112.

more information

• Consejería de Desarrollo Sostenible y Ordenación del Territorio
(Council of Sustainable Development)
Tel.: 968 22 89 37/38 • Fax: 968 22 89 38
• Sistema de Información Geográfica y Ambiental (SIGA)
(Environmental and Geographic Information System)
www.carm.es/medioambiente/
• Queries and Suggestions:
medioambiente@listas.carm.es

Región de Murcia
Consejería de Desarrollo Sostenible y Ordenación del Territorio
Dirección General del Medio Natural

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Regional Park
Salinas de San Pedro

information

on the protected natural areas

Región de Murcia

4

introduction

The San Pedro salt marshes Regional Park lies on the Mediterranean coastal fringes and it is about 6 kilometres long. Together with the Encañizadas (a natural channel of water exchange between the Mediterranean Sea and the Mar Menor) they cover a surface area of about 856 hectares and are located between the municipalities of San Pedro del Pinatar (saltmines and sandlands) and San Javier. Its boundaries are the Mojon in the north and the beginning of La Manga in the south.

Due to his high natural value, this wetland belongs to the Ramsar Convention (The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance) since 1994. In 1998 it was declared a Special Protection Bird Area, being part of the European Natura 2000 Network. It has also been proposed as Site of Community Importance.

fauna

2

In this area there is a great variety of animals, being birdlife the most outstanding and above all, the sea birds. Some species are in danger of extinction, such as the Spanish toothcarp, an endemic fish species in the Mediterranean coast, and the Bug Scarites eurytus, inhabiting the dunes.

Kentish plover

Some other interesting species are the Bedriaga's skink and the red-tailed lizard amongst the reptiles and the Spanish shrew, the pygmy white-toothed shrew and the least weasel amongst the mammals.

The nesting colonies of avocets, black-winged stilts, Kentish plover, little tern and gull-billed tern are of a great importance and that is the reason why the area has been declared a Special Protection Bird Area. There is a profuse diversity of migratory species that winter here. Flamingos, curlews, godwits, redshanks, plovers, herons, shelducks, cormorants, grebes and sea gulls stand out because of their wealth and brightness.

Plover

Flamingos

Besides waterbirds, other species that complete the richness in this Regional Park are the osprey, the kingfisher and the lesser short-toed lark.

Black-winged stilt

Pink Flamingo

vegetation

3

From the Mediterranean Sea, with its meadows of *Posidonia oceanica*, to the Mar Menor, the park biotopes offer a great diversity. Running parallel to the beach, the plants are adapted to the mobility, porosity and shortage of nutrients in this system of dunes, the sea rocket and the variegated thistle occupy the areas most exposed to the sea. Behind these, the marram grass, the Cretan bird's foot trefoil and the sea daffodil serve to anchor the dunes because of their deep roots. In the most stable dunes there are the typical Mediterranean thickets such as mastic tree or the small buckthorn, because the presence of nutrients and the protection from the salt air off the sea. It is worth mentioning the coast savine in the Coterillo pinewood. Saltbushes are located in the lowest and flooded areas, where species such as sea lavenders and the glasswort grow since they are adapted to a high saline concentration. In those places where water stays permanently is easy to find three different rush species. In the Encañizadas and the most north-eastern sector of the park there are wider, more homogeneous saltbushes. This wide range of vegetation in the park is enriched by the presence of some masses of giant reeds inside the limits of the protective band.

Pinewood

Mastictree

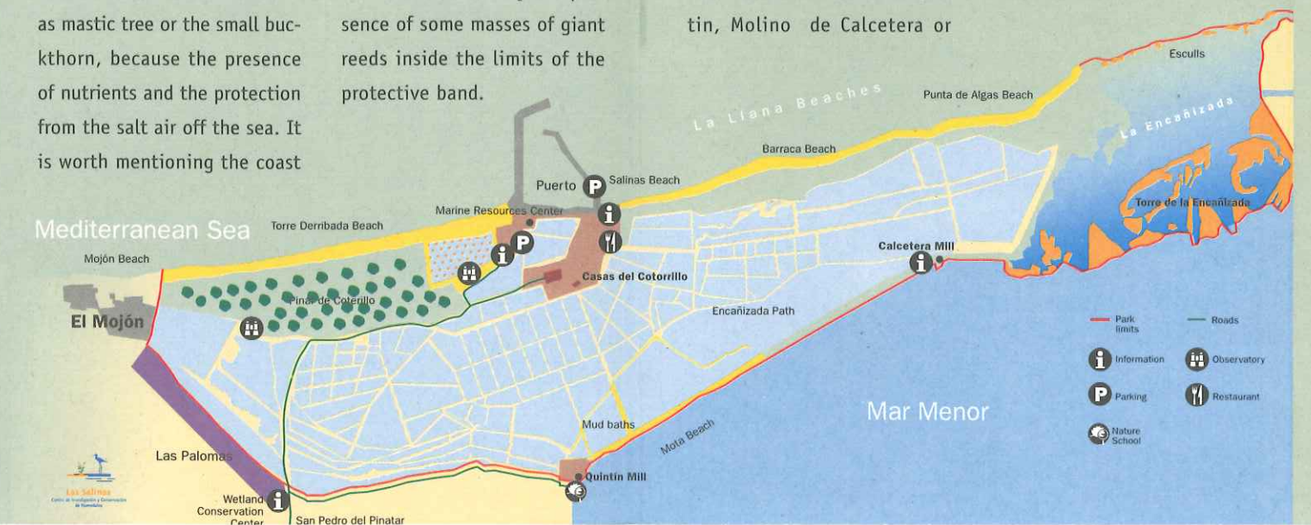
men and landscape

4

What we know today as the Salinas (saltmines), used to be a small lake called Patnía in the Middle Ages. In the course of time its surface of exploitation got wider, emerging three different saltern ponds namely, from the north to the south, Principal, Hospital and Renegada. At the end of the 19th century they were privatized and purchased by Manuel Garcia de Coterillo, who would name them and the pinewood nearby after him.

The last enlargement by the Golfico zone (mudbathing area) is carried out at the very beginning of the century. The mills known as Molino de Quitin, Molino de Calcetera or de Ezequiela were built at that time and so were the strips of land joining them. This last with the aim of having a pond

to store water from the Mar Menor, rose by the water-wheels. These ponds are designed to obtain salt from sea water. The seawater is fed into them and water drawn out though natural evaporation which allows the salt to be harvested from August to November.



The Encañizadas is a traditional trap for fishing. Located in the southern extreme of the park, they are devices made of sticks and canes, like a labyrinth, where fish are trapped and stay alive until they are sold.

Written evidences tell about the existence of two watchtowers built in the 16th century to guard from the pirates raids. The Pinatar Tower remained occupied until the 18th century and the Encañizada Tower guarded the natural channel where crafts could enter to the small lake. Another human action on this landscape was the reforestation of dunes, creating a protective barrier made up of vegetation between the saltworks and the sea, in order to protect the ponds from the advance of the mobile dunes.

The Park suggests

A brief route from the Nature Study and Wetlands Preservation Centre through the paths meant for the visit is a very nice walk, with some viewing points to admire the fauna and the different environments within this Regional Park. There are informative exhibition panels all along the route.

Going to any of the observatories in the Park can be a unique experience to watch the see birds inhabiting this area. Just binoculars, a bird-watching guide and keep silent are required for this visit.