



MEDITERRANEAN ALLIANCE FOR WETLANDS

2024 Winter Newsletter



20th December 2024

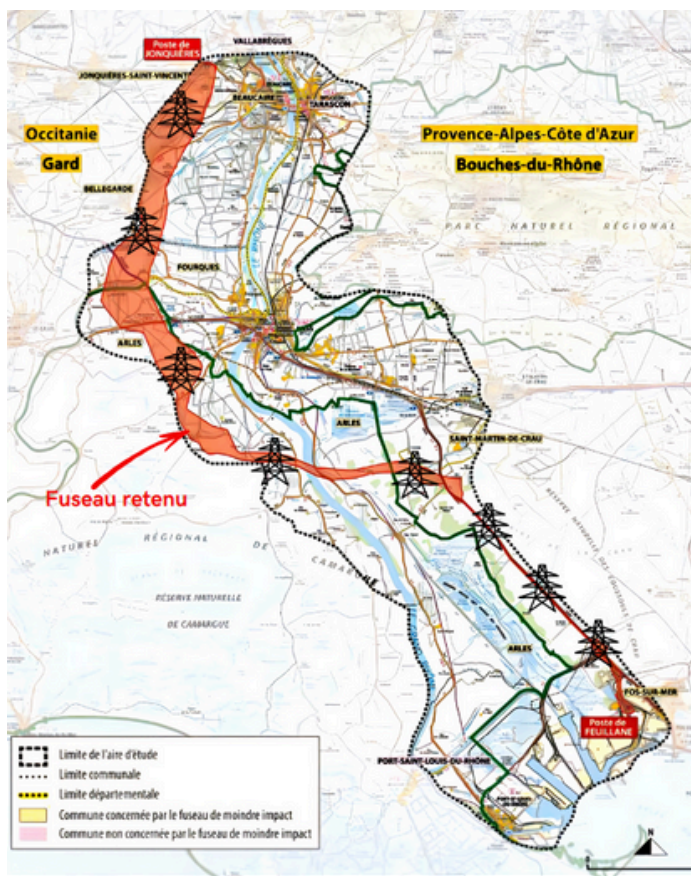
Marco Šćiban, Camargue 2024

Red Alert Camargue

74 organisations warn decision makers against the risks of the increasing number of infrastructure projects in the Camargue

In 2024, the local collective "En Travers de la Route" activated MAW's Red Alert System to highlight [threats to the Camargue](#), a critical Mediterranean wetland and biodiversity hotspot. Mega infrastructure projects, including a superhighway, a new bridge, and a 65-km extra-high-voltage (EHV) overhead power line, threaten this Natura 2000 site, which lies on a vital migratory flyway. Despite alternative solutions, no cumulative environmental impact assessment has been conducted.

74 organisations representing 36 countries, including MAW members, BirdLife partners, WWF, and others, are alerting national and European authorities to reconsider. Letters addressed to the French Minister for Ecological Transition, the European Commission, and the Bern Convention Secretary highlighted the ecological and socio-economic risks of these projects.



The 65km [extra-high-voltage overhead power line](#) involves 180 60-80 metre high pylons crossing:

- 4 Natura 2000 sites,
 - a national nature reserve,
 - a regional park,
 - a Ramsar site,
 - a UNESCO biosphere reserve,
- endangering over 400 bird species.

Beyond ecological impacts, the project risks damaging agriculture, tourism, and culture in the region.

[A petition with over 34,500 signatures](#) demonstrates strong public opposition.

An unprecedented local collective of stakeholders, including farmers, environmentalists, and tourism representatives called “STOP THT”, have proposed viable alternatives. The undersigned organisations call for an in-depth evaluation of these solutions to align carbon neutrality with preserving this Mediterranean refuge for 103 endangered species.

The project also breaches EU environmental laws, including [the Nature Restoration Law](#), and France’s [Bern Convention](#) obligations. Additionally, UNESCO could withdraw the Camargue’s Man & Biosphere label, undermining France and the EU’s credibility in balancing climate goals with biodiversity protection.

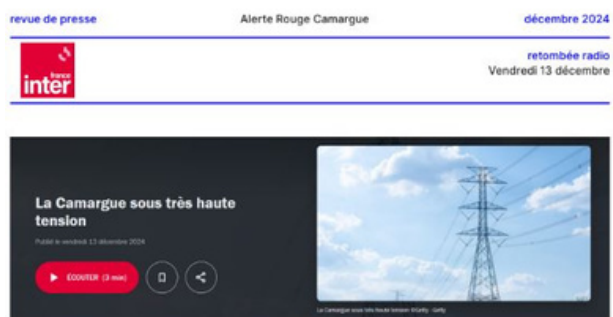
The Red Alert reached different media outlets in France



The Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands extends gratitude to all its members, partners and the many organisations and individuals who supported us during our most recent Red Alert campaign. Your invaluable efforts and contributions played a crucial role in the success of this Red Alert and in raising awareness about the importance of protecting the Camargue.



DR, Camargue 2024



Sign the petition and advocate for sustainable development and wetland conservation. Together, we can protect the Camargue.

Red Alert Lake Marmara

Legal Victory for the Conservation of Lake Marmara, Turkey

Lake Marmara in Manisa, Türkiye, designated a Wetland of National Importance in 2017, covers 24,893 hectares under the Ramsar Convention. It is one of Türkiye's 184 Important Bird Areas and 305 Key Biodiversity Areas, hosting species protected by the Bern Convention and endemic freshwater fish..

Once a vital wetland, Lake Marmara now faces severe degradation from poor agricultural and water management practices. In 2022, a protocol was signed by several governmental agencies to allocate the lake to agricultural use, proposing a dyke to divide the lake and convert parts into farmland. Subsequently, the National Wetland Commission revised wetland conservation boundaries, conditional on the lake's restoration. [Doğa Derneği/BirdLife Türkiye](#) triggered MAW's Red Alert System, joined by 25 organisations urging the Turkish president to intervene.

In January 2023, Doğa Derneği, local NGOs, WWF-Türkiye, and residents filed a lawsuit challenging the protocol and boundary changes. Expert reports revealed the proposals would cause irreversible harm but affirmed the lake's recovery potential if water flow was restored. On November 4, 2024, the court annulled both the protocol and boundary changes, a landmark victory for conservation.

Restoration efforts will now focus on water balance, ecosystem rehabilitation, and biodiversity protection, highlighting the power of collective action in safeguarding nature.



Green Light System

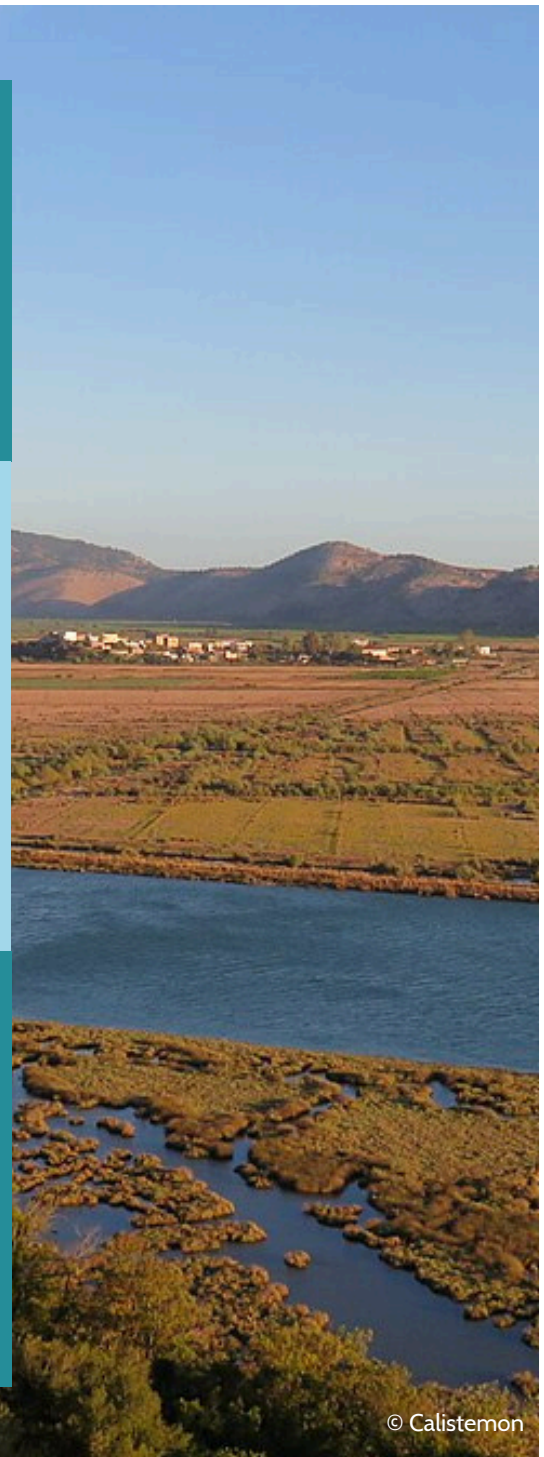
MAW awards AOS the Green Light System for Vrina Freshwater Marshes Restoration

MAW's Steering Committee (SC) has selected the Vrina freshwater marshes, located in Butrint National Park in Albania, as the 3rd site under the Green Light Protocol.

The grant was awarded to the Albanian Ornithological Society (AOS), a valued member of MAW, to support their restoration efforts of the site.

This grant will enable AOS to carry out essential work aimed at reversing the ecological degradation of the site and ensuring its long-term protection and sustainable management.

The Vrina freshwater marshes are of ecological importance and their restoration is urgently needed to halt biodiversity loss and combat the invasion of Tamarix vegetation, which is putting the ecosystem at risk and can lead to land cover change driven by agricultural practices.



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Green Light System

MAW awards BPSS the Green Light Site Grant for Carska Bara wetlands

As the fourth site selected under the Green Light Protocol, MAW's Steering Committee has chosen the Carska Bara wetlands in Serbia for its significant ecological and cultural value. This Ramsar site, also designated as a Special Nature Reserve under IUCN Category IV, and a IBA represents a critical habitat for biodiversity and a treasure of natural heritage.

The grant has been awarded to the [Bird Protection and Study Society of Serbia \(BPSS\)](#), a BirdLife International partner, to support their efforts in restoring the site to its early 20th-century condition. At that time, the Old Begej River was still naturally connected to the Begej River, sustaining the wetland's rich ecosystem.



DRUŠTVO ZA ZAŠTITU I
PROUČAVANJE PTICA SRBIJE



Carska Bara Ustanova "Rezervati prirode", 2024



Carska Bara Ustanova "Rezervati prirode", 2024



BPSS, 2024

Announcement

Dear Members,

We want to inform you that our website is currently experiencing technical issues. Our team is actively working to resolve the problem as quickly as possible.

We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause and appreciate your patience. Further updates will be shared as soon as the services are restored.

Thank you for your understanding.

The secretariat team



Teresa Zuna, Camargue 2024

Green Light Site Funded

WWF North Africa secures a Grant to Restore Dar Fatma Peatlands

WWF North Africa has been awarded a grant of 250 thousand Swiss Francs from the Audemars Watkins Foundation to fund part of the restoration of the Dar Fatma peatlands in Tunisia. This site is the second site under MAW's Green Light protocol.

This project targets the ecological restoration of these critical North African wetlands, known for their important role in carbon storage and water regulation. The degradation of the peatlands has resulted in biodiversity loss, disrupted hydrological functions, and increased water scarcity risks.

Beyond the important environmental goals, the initiative focuses on empowering local communities, primarily small-scale farmers, by providing economic opportunities through sustainable projects such as ecotourism and artisanal crafts. Governance improvements, including the formation of a management committee, aim to enhance site stewardship, while educational campaigns will raise awareness of wetland conservation.

This nature-based solutions project promises to combat climate change impacts, restore biodiversity, and strengthen the resilience of local communities, marking a critical step forward in North Africa's conservation efforts.

Congratulations to all the people involved in this!



Tour du Valat, 2024

Azraq Reserve, Jordan

Protecting Biodiversity through Collaboration and Innovation



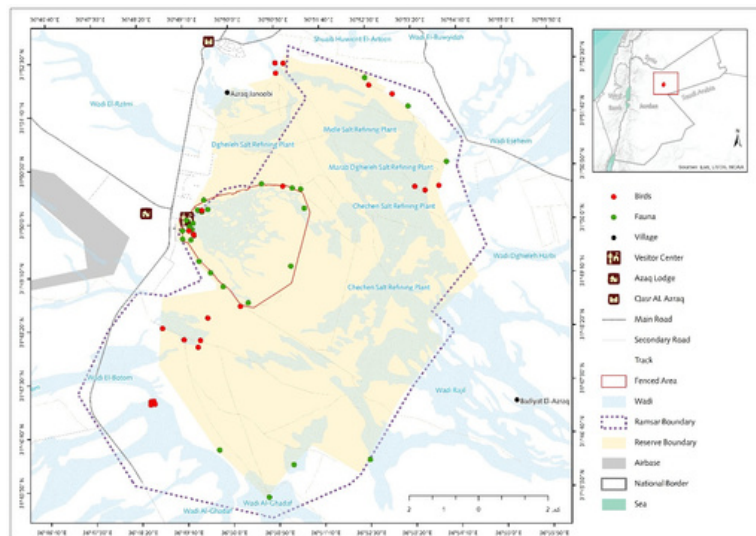
RSNC 2024

The Azraq Reserve continues to lead in conservation efforts, combining technology and collaborative planning to protect its unique biodiversity.

Under the patronage of Azraq District Governor Sami Al-Khalayleh, stakeholders met to strengthen collaboration between the local community and relevant parties, aiming to preserve the environment, protect natural reserves, and promote sustainable development in the region.

In an innovative effort to monitor the health of Azraq's unique ecosystem, conservation teams have employed night cameras strategically placed near buffalo carcasses in the reserve. This approach has provided fascinating insights into the region's predators and scavengers. The footage revealed an impressive variety of wildlife, including wolves, jackals, red foxes, and majestic eagles. Each species plays a vital role in maintaining the ecological balance of the area. Check out [the videos here](#).

Additionally, biodiversity distribution maps are being developed to track species movements and habitat use throughout the reserve. These maps will inform targeted conservation efforts and ensure that vital habitats are protected.



Welcoming Our New Member Organization:

Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA)

We are delighted to extend our warm welcome to [PPNEA](#) for joining our network. Established in 1991, in Tirana, Albania, PPNEA aims to secure a societal and governing atmosphere where nature conservation is a priority, through rigorous scientific research, community engagement, strategic partnerships establishment and continuous interaction with decision-making institutions.

MAW has recently been collaborating with PPNEA, AOS and Euronatur and other key international organisations on a Red Alert to [stop the construction of the Vlora airport](#), in Narta lagoon, Albania.

Please join us in welcoming PPNEA! We look forward to a fruitful and inspiring collaboration



Act now for Tagliamento River, Italy

The Tagliamento, Europe's last free-flowing Alpine river, is under threat from harmful development projects.

This unique ecosystem is now at risk due to the planned flood protection infrastructure that would not ensure safety! An appeal signed by 815 experts from 35 countries urges authorities to protect the river's distinctive morphology and connectivity. Read the call from the international technical-scientific community.

The Italian Centre for River Restoration (CIRF), a member of Wetlands International Europe, with main national and local environmental NGOs, has launched an international petition targeting the general public.



Please join the movement to preserve the Tagliamento, sign the petition to protect this vital ecosystem.



Past Events

MAW General Assembly

The MAW General Members meeting held on October 23rd to 24th in Arles, France, provided a valuable platform for collaboration and knowledge exchange on Mediterranean wetland conservation. Participants explored key advocacy strategies, emphasizing approaches informed by scientific data and negotiation.

Lessons learned shared during the meeting illustrated innovative advocacy efforts. These included integrating wetland conservation into national biodiversity policies and using campaigns to raise awareness and set legal precedents for environmental protection. Participants also discussed strategies for engaging with influential decision-makers and committees within regional governance structures to advance conservation priorities effectively.

Another focus was an [organizational needs assessment](#) aimed at identifying gaps, resources, and growth opportunities within the network. By assessing resources and areas for growth, it enables effective member support and alignment with strategic goals.



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Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands

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