

PONT AUDEMER VAL DE RISLE TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICE

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Open Monday to Saturday
all year round



Did you know ?



A sensitive natural area (ENS - Espace Naturel Sensible) is recognised as outstanding in terms of the diversity and rarity of the natural heritage (fauna, flora and landscape) it is home to. These areas must be protected but also opened to the public if conditions allow. The department of Eure has 59 sensitive natural areas divided into five priority environments : wetlands, chalk cliffs, forests, plains and alluvial terraces.



What is RAMSAR ?

The Ramsar convention confers an international label to its designated wetlands which rewards and highlights the sustainable management of these zones encouraging those involved to stay on track.

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A SENSITIVE NATURAL AREA

NORMANDIE

THE LAKES



PONT-AUDEMER VAL DE RISLE
communauté de communes



PONT-AUDEMER - TOUTAINVILLE



History of the lakes

Until the 19th century, the Risle valley was predominantly agricultural. The valley was mostly made up of wet meadows and swampy areas which were used as grazing land. At the end of the 19th century this landscape was radically modified when construction materials to build new transport links were needed and several aggregate extraction companies were created in the Risle valley. The wetlands were destroyed and replaced by huge gravel pits. The extracted materials were used to build the A13 motorway which runs along the edge of the sensitive natural area lake site. When these quarries were abandoned, they filled with water creating the lakes that can be seen today.

Black Poplar

Black poplars, *populus nigra*, can live for up to 400 years. Just one of these trees is still present on the site, sole survivor of the historic wooded countryside. This tree is also remarkable for the diameter of its trunk and its shape. It has been given remarkable tree status by the A.R.B.R.E.S society. An emblematic species of alluvial forests, the black poplar brings with it a number of ecological advantages. The safeguarding and long-term conservation of its genetic resources is therefore of utmost importance to this dynamic ecosystem. The black poplar is one of the most endangered species in Europe. Overexploited, native black poplars have been replaced by fast-growing hybrids.



Black Poplar



Cattle Fares



Facilities near the pond



Southern marsh orchids

Flora

The sensitive natural area lake site is home to a wide diversity of flora with 318 species, of which 28 are rare heritage species. Southern marsh orchids can be seen in the site's wet meadows. It is a hardy plant which can measure up to 40 cm. Its flowers, ranging from pale pink to purplish red, are set out in quite dense ears. It flowers from June to July.



Fish

Eight species of fish including several species of cyprinidae (roach, bream, crucian carp and tench) have been seen. They represent the first link in the food chain of the lakes. The European eel (*Anguilla Anguilla*) is one of the site's emblematic species. It belongs to the Anguilliformes family. It measures between 40cm and 150cm long and the females can weigh up to 4 kg. A migratory species, during its lifetime the eel travels several thousand miles to reproduce in the Sargasso Sea.

Ponds

Ponds are an important part of the traditional rural landscape of Normandy. In our region, 90% of them have disappeared in the last one hundred years. There are many reasons for their importance. They play a role in rainwater regulation and they serve as veritable biological reserves for aquatic flora and fauna. Ponds form replacement habitats for many, often protected, species such as frogs, dragonflies, aquatic insects and birds. These are accompanied by a wide variety of aquatic plants. Today, a programme of pond conservation is in progress to put a stop to their disappearance.

Lake site birds

78 species of birds visit the sensitive natural area of the lakes all year round, 52 of which are protected under French law. Many birds overwinter in Normandy before going to nest in northern and eastern Europe. Over the last few years cattle egrets, a wading bird of the heron and bittern family, have been seen. They gather in colonies in larger numbers as the years go by. There are two hides on the site for your use.



Download the lakes walking trails.