

FAUNA AND FLORA

The contrasts between the dune and back dune areas are surprising : the dune is a soft, dry environment, whereas the rear dune is below sea level, so wet and salty.



The Salicornia is a characteristic species of wet and salty environments located on the Orpellières in the back dune lowlands

The Saladelle, also known as sea lavender, looks like lavender flowers. It appears near the lower lands as soon as the presence of salt arises. It rejects the salt by the underside of the leaves and forms small crystals which can be easily observed.



The Sea purslane is a characteristic plant of the top beaches. His look of succulent remember that it is able to withstand salinity and moisture management through large variations in its succulent leaves, small and round.

The blue thistle sea has rolled and thorny bluish gray leaves. It is effective shelter for many small animals. Similarly, its deep roots help stabilize the dunes. Very tough, it repels snails, caterpillars and other eaters.



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The obione is a sub-shrub with oval leaves which consists mainly of the salt-meadows. It grows on the vase, making it a typical plant estuaries and funds bay. It plays a vital role in the functioning of this ecosystem.

Some examples of a variety of wildlife you can see on the protected area :

The Kentish plover is a coastal species migratory or sedentary. This very nervous bird is between 15 and 17 cm tall and eat small invertebrates frequenting the mudflats. Declining in Europe, it is rare to observe.



The little egret hunts near floating vegetation, seeking prey in the shade. It is between 55 to 65 cm tall and feeds small fish, frogs, lizards, worms, crustaceans, molluscs, and a large number of insects. The major problems for the species are the extinction and alteration habitat related to human activity.

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The grey heron is a large and majestic gray bird (between 90 and 98 cm tall). He frequents any wetland (marshes, streams, ponds ...) to find the food. He walks slowly and bent in the shallow waters, quietly, pointing to down its beak. For large prey, it strikes strongly its beak to pierce them, and shakes before swallowing, head first.

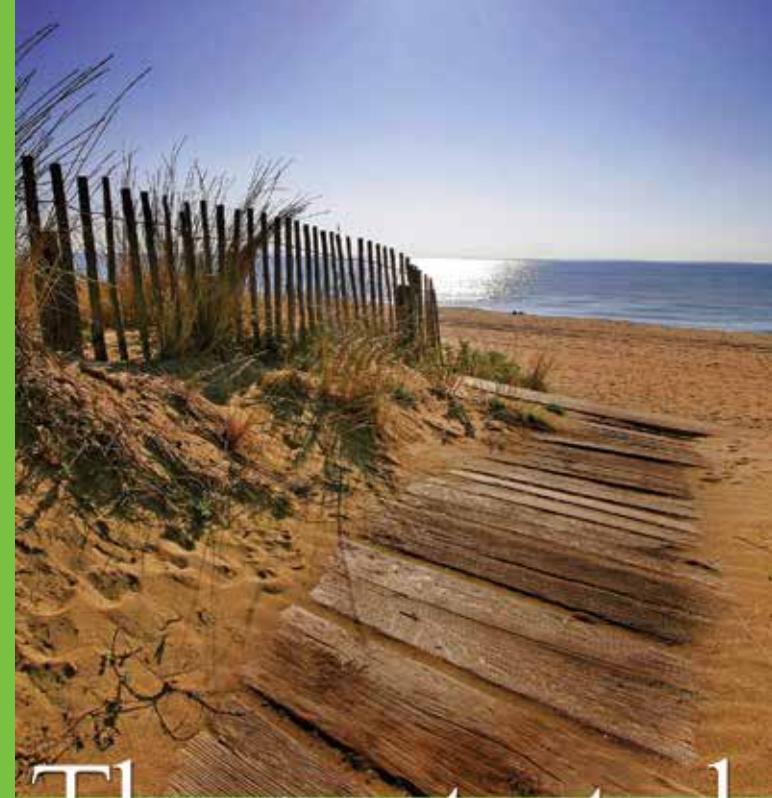
The rhinoceros beetle is part of the family beetles. It can reach up to 4 cm long. Only the male is dressed up in this impressive horn.



The distribution area of the *green lizard* covers Europe Southern and Central. Young people are brown and gets green full-grown. This reptile systematically searches south facing areas and needs heat.



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The protected natural site of Les Orpellières



History

The natural site of Les Orpellières («Orb peeled») is located at the mouth of the Orb, in the towns of Valras and Sérignan. Acquired by the Conservatoire du Littoral in 1980, this area consists of 150 acres of beach, dunes of 2.5 km and a vast salt-meadow .

Until World War II a farm lived here, as the freshwater supplies from the Orb was used to desalinate the land to allow for viticulture. The buildings were used to operate the field (water tower, tanks), while their surroundings were enriched plantations (fig, cypress, plane).



Then the farm and its hydraulic system are abandoned, causing salinization of the area. At the same time the site is slowly eroding. An ecological analysis conducted in 1983 highlighted the necessity to protect and restore the dunes, the only preserved coastal areas in their natural state in the region. Between 1994 and 1999, the Serbian artist Miodrag Djuric said, «Dado» (1933 - 2010) decided to invest the old buildings of the area into a workshop. There he made murals and «object-sculptures».

Today, a natural balance seems to have been reached between sweet and salty environment environment on a Natura 2000 site. *During summer the Maison de l'Environnement is scheduling tours (call 04 67 37 25 91)*



How to come ?

At the end of Sérignan continue on the D37 then turn right the D37E11 towards Sérignan les Plages. At the entrance follow right the panel « Orpellières ».

Lat: 43.252994 / Lon: 3.302065



Preserving the coastline



On this site the dune plays an important role in the evolution of the coastline by maintaining the ecological balance of the wet area. In 1984 rehabilitation actions are decided: the ganivelles are arranged to capture the sand brought by the sea or the winds. With this simple action the dunes are now recovered. Revegetation is settled.

Meanwhile, frequentings are implemented: ditches are dug to prohibit automobile traffic, parking areas and access roads to the beach for pedestrians are canalized.

Thanks to all these actions the site regain its status as it was in 1968, before the period of high erosion.

The dunes of Orpellières, a remarkable preserved natural heritage, has become a test site for research and intervention on the rehabilitation of Mediterranean dune areas.

Security / protection information

We remind you that it is prohibited to walk outside of trails, as well as pick or disturb plants, the risk of disturbing the ecosystem of this site still very fragile. Also, it is forbidden to camp or make a fire.