

Austrian Ramsar Sites

Austria signed the Convention in 1983 and has since designated 26 Ramsar sites, which have also been incorporated into federal law.

- Autertal – St. Lorenzen Raised Bog (Carinthia)
- Mires of the Bayerische Wildalm-Wildalmfilz (Tyrol, Germany)
- Donau-March-Thaya-Auen (Lower Austria, Slovakia, Czechia)
- Güssing Fish Ponds (Burgenland)
- Hörfeld Mire (Carinthia, Styria)
- Lafnitztal (Styria, Burgenland)
- Lendspitz – Maiernigg (Kärnten)
- Mires and Lakes of Keutschach-Schiefling (Carinthia)
- Mires of the Nassköhr (Styria)
- Mires of the Pass Thurn (Salzburg)

- Mires of the Sauerfelder Wald (Salzburg)
- Mires of the Schwarzenberg (Salzburg)
- Mires of the Styrian Salzkammergut (Styria)
- Mires of the Überling (Salzburg)
- National Park Kalkalpen (Upper Austria)
- National Park Thayatal (Lower Austria)
- Neusiedler See – Seewinkel – Waasen (Burgenland)
- Upper Drava River (Carinthia)
- Pürgschachen Mire (Styria)
- Rhine Delta at Lake Constance (Vorarlberg)
- Rotmoos in the Fuscher Valley (Salzburg)
- Sablatnig Mire (Carinthia)
- Lower Inn Reservoirs (Upper Austria, Germany)
- Lower Lobau (Vienna)
- Waldviertel Ponds, Peat Bogs and Floodplains (Lower Austria)
- Wilder Kaiser (Tyrol)



Federal Ministry
Agriculture and Forestry, Climate
and Environmental Protection,
Regions and Water Management
Republic of Austria

Ramsar Sites in Austria



History and Goals of the Ramsar Convention

The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. It was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar by the Caspian Sea in 1971 and has been signed by 173 countries. The basic condition for participation is to designate internationally important wetlands as “Ramsar Sites”.

Ramsar Sites now cover all geographic regions of the planet and the list of contracting states increases every year due to the importance of Ramsar’s mission: Wetland conservation is crucial to ensuring sustainable access to fresh water!

The Convention has progressed from prioritizing the conservation of water- and shorebirds to now protecting entire habitats. This process led to extending the convention’s goals to match some of the goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity (protection – sustainable use – equitable sharing of benefits). The Convention seeks to establish management plans, ecological monitoring and collaborations with other regional and global conventions and institutions. Another important aim is to include local communities through public outreach.

Did you know,

- that Ramsar is a spa town in Iran where the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance was signed in 1971?
- that this Convention has been ratified by 173 countries worldwide?
- that contracting states agree to conserve the biodiversity of designated Ramsar Sites? Instead of a general ban on utilization, the goal is to implement the principle of sustainable and ecologically “wise use”.
- that worldwide, 2,500 wetlands have been designated Ramsar Sites? The total area amounts to 2,500,000 km², which is one-fifth of the size of Europe.
- that there are 26 Ramsar Sites in Austria with a total area of 1,266 km²?

If you would like to learn more:

www.ramsar.org
www.bmluk.gv.at



Ramsar Sites in Austria



Federal Minister
Norbert Totschnig

Austria's diverse natural and cultural landscapes not only offer quality of life and recreational space, but are also home to impressive biological diversity and form the basis of economic strength. Protecting these valuable habitats and managing them responsibly is our shared task – in the interests of present and future generations. Wetlands such as rivers, streams, floodplains, moors, lakes and wet meadows

play a key role in this: they are the basis of life for countless animal and plant species and also play a central role for us humans – for example, in water management, climate regulation and as places to experience nature.

The Ramsar Convention, which now has 173 signatory states, sets out the goal of preserving the ecological status of important wetlands and ensuring their sustainable use. In Austria, 26 of these particularly valuable „Ramsar sites“ have been designated to date – they are examples of the „wise use“ principle.

This folder provides a concise overview of the Ramsar Convention, its significance for nature conservation and the Austrian Ramsar sites. They all make a valuable contribution to preserving our natural diversity and ensuring a functioning water balance.

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What is the Ramsar Convention about?

The Convention's mission is “the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world”.

The Convention uses a broad definition of the types of wetlands covered in its mission, including swamps and marshes, lakes and rivers, wet grasslands and peatlands, oases, estuaries, deltas and tidal flats, near-shore marine areas, mangroves and coral reefs, and human-made sites such as fish ponds, rice paddies, reservoirs, and salt pans.

Why wetlands?

Wetlands provide fundamental ecological services and are regulators of water regimes. Wetlands not only secure our access to fresh potable water and play an important role in flood control, they also act as carbon sinks and are critical for climate protection.

Wetlands are sources of biodiversity at all levels. They harbour genetically diverse populations and contain an overall high diversity of species and habitats. Wetlands also provide a



resource for traditional land use, scientific research, cultural diversity and human recreation.

The encroachment and subsequent loss of wetlands often leads to irreparable damage to the environment including important ecosystem services. Already damaged wetlands need to be restored and intact wetlands need to be conserved by ensuring their wise use.

“Wise use” Concept

“Wise use” is defined by the Ramsar Convention as a use that benefits mankind while simultaneously conserving the properties and ecosystem services of natural habitats.

Wise use of wetlands is defined as “the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development” for current and future generations.

The “wise use” concept relates to conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and their resources for the benefit of humankind. This includes the management of wetlands through restoring river banks and constructing water retention measures in drained peatlands.



What do contracting parties do?

Contracting parties of the Ramsar Convention have committed themselves to:

- designate at least one suitable site for the List of Wetlands of International Importance (“Ramsar List”) as part of their declaration of accession and ensure the effective ecological management of the site;
- contribute as many suitable wetlands as possible to the “Ramsar List”; although sites do not need to be protected by policies and legislation, parties are obliged to maintain and preserve the ecological properties of sites through “wise use”;
- work towards the wise use of all their wetlands through national land-use planning and ensure maintenance and protection of “Ramsar Sites”;
- promote research on wetlands and offer training to facilitate maintenance and wise use of wetlands; and
- build international collaborations with respect to transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems, shared species, and development projects that may affect wetlands.



How does the Convention work?

The Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) meets every three years to discuss globally relevant strategies to protect and wisely use wetlands and to adopt policies and guidelines. The Ramsar Secretariat, established in Gland, Switzerland, manages the daily activities of the Convention. Its responsibilities include representing Ramsar at international conferences (on water, climate, biodiversity, etc.), designating new Ramsar Sites, preparing the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) and assisting the 173 contracting states.

In Austria, the implementation of the Ramsar Convention falls on the federal provinces (nature conservation) and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management. At annual meetings of the “National Ramsar Committee”, federal and provincial representatives collaborate with NGOs like the Chamber of Agriculture and the Austrian Federal Forestry AG (ÖBf, www.bundesforste.at).

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