



Akrotiri Marsh (also known as Fassouri Marsh/Reedbed) is a unique wetland in Cyprus, important for both wildlife and humans.

This wetland is located in the north-western part of Akrotiri Peninsula, in the Limassol District, 3km away from Akrotiri village. It is part of the unique Akrotiri wetland complex, the largest in Cyprus, and it lies within the Cyprus Sovereign Base Area (SBA).

The marsh, which covers an area of around 150 hectares, draws from the Akrotiri aquifer thus remaining green throughout summer. The site is a Ramsar site, an Important Bird Area (IBA) and a Special Protection Area (SPA), equivalent to the EU designation, according to the nature laws of the Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs).

The area is important for rare bird species, amphibians, invertebrates and plants. The connection between the marsh and humans dates back centuries as the area supplied the raw materials for the traditional activity of basketry and grazing for the animals of the residents of Akrotiri village.



For more information please visit the project website www.akrotirimarsh.org

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Akrotiri Marsh Restoration:
a flagship wetland in the Cyprus SBAs

www.akrotirimarsh.org

© Albert Stoecker

The project is implemented with aid from the Darwin Initiative through UK Government funding.

Hydrological changes together with a significant decrease in grazing during recent decades resulted in the overexpansion of reeds across the marsh and the consequent loss of bird and plant diversity and a reduction in biodiversity in general. This created a need for the restoration and management of the marsh which was initiated through the project 'Akrotiri Marsh Restoration: a flagship wetland in the Cyprus SBAs' funded by Darwin Plus.

The Darwin Plus project “Akrotiri Marsh Restoration: a flagship wetland in the Cyprus SBAs”:

- Has a duration of 2 years, from April 2015 until March 2017.
- Is implemented by BirdLife Cyprus as a lead partner, the Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre and the RSPB/BirdLife UK.
- Is funded by the Darwin Initiative through UK Government funding (Darwin Plus, the Overseas Territories Environment and Climate Fund).

The project aims to:

- enhance the biodiversity richness of the marsh by restoring it to a mosaic of habitats and
- strengthen the relationship between the marsh and the Akrotiri Community by providing new socio-economic opportunities for the local villagers.



The project includes conservation and management actions in combination with public awareness raising actions:

Management actions:

- Water management works
- Improvement of nesting and foraging conditions for important bird species
- Vegetation management using grazing cattle of the unique Cyprus breed

Public awareness raising actions:

- Creation of visitor facilities such as an observation tower and walkway
- Installation of information signs on site
- Production of an eco-touristic leaflet
- Website creation – www.akrotirimarsh.org
- Public awareness raising events with the local community
- Promotion of basketry – a traditional activity of the area

An important wetland for wildlife



Akrotiri Marsh is an important migration stop-over for birds and a key breeding site for birds of conservation importance such as Ferruginous Duck, Spur-winged Lapwing, Black-winged Stilt, Black Francolin and, most probably, Little Bittern. Here one might see rare migrants like Demoiselle Crane as well as other remarkable species such as Glossy Ibis, Squacco Heron, Eurasian Bittern, Little Crane, Spotted Crane, Great Reed Warbler, Red-footed Falcon, Lesser Kestrel and others.



Akrotiri Marsh is one of the few sites where the Ferruginous Duck breeds - a species of global conservation concern.

Ferruginous Duck © Thomas Hadjikyriakou



Akrotiri Marsh is home to rare and threatened plant species many of which are included in the Red Data Book of the Flora of Cyprus. For some plants such as *Ipomoea sagittata*, *Mentha aquatica*, *Euphorbia pubescens*, *Orchis palustris* and *Baldelia ranunculoides*, the marsh is the only known site in Cyprus.

Mentha aquatica © Pantelis Charilaou



The Lemon-yellow Tree Frog *Hyla savignyi* travels for miles to reach its breeding grounds. Akrotiri Marsh is one of the most important destinations for this small frog's journey.

Lemon-yellow Tree Frog © Pantelis Charilaou



Grazing cattle are one of the most important management tools for increasing biodiversity in Akrotiri Marsh.

Grazing cattle at the marsh © Claire Papazoglou