

## Location



## Introduction

The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria is a country in North Africa, the biggest country in Africa. It is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, Tunisia to the northeast, Libya to the east, Niger to the southeast, to the southwest by Mali, Mauritania and Western Sahara and Morocco to the west. It shares maritime borders with Spain and Italy (Sardinia) to the north. Part of the Algerian coast is in the Alboran sea.

Algeria's Mediterranean coastline is 1,622km long. 90% of the country is in the Sahara desert. The remaining area can be divided into three distinct topographical and climate regions: at the coast, the Tell region including the Tell Atlas, close to the Sahara desert the Saharan Atlas, and the 'Hauts Plateaux' or High Plateau, a highland region of level terrain with huge, shallow wetlands between these two parallel mountain ranges. The climate is arid to semiarid, with mild wet winters and hot, dry summers along the coast.

## Regional Seas and Biogeography

Mediterranean Sea  
Alboran Sea  
Mediterranean Sea LME

## Habitats

The Mediterranean coastline is a narrow coastal strip of sandy beaches bordered to the south by the Tell Atlas mountain range which runs more or less parallel to the coast. The coastline consists of sandy beaches, dunes and rocky shorelines (sometimes with high cliffs).

- Seagrasses are found in shallow waters off Algeria's coast and around the Iles de Rachgoun RAMSAR site.
- Salt marsh habitat is present at many of the lake and river RAMSAR sites in Algeria, including the Marais de Mekhada RAMSAR site.
- Tidal flats – salt flats are found around the Grande Sebkhia d'Oran, a large salt lake in the northwest of the country, near to the city of Oran.

## Biodiversity Hotspots

### → RAMSAR Sites

**Ile de Rachgoun**, also a Marine Protected Area, is a small island off the coast of the city of Aïn Témouchent, in western Algeria, surrounded in large part by seagrasses. This is an important wintering site for several bird species which rest and nest in very large numbers during their migration between Eurasia and Africa, including several species of gull, Atlantic puffins (VU) and Eurasian curlew (*Numenius Arquata*). It also provides refuge for large cetaceans such as sperm whale *Physeter macrocephalus*.

**The Reserve Naturelle du Lac de Réghaïa**, is a lake and marsh/reed area at the estuary of the Réghaïa wadi, in the central part of the coast, east of Algiers. The estuary mouth is blocked by a sand ridge. The site is 600m inland and an artificial barrier keeps water permanently in the marsh. The site is important for migratory birds arriving from the Mediterranean Sea and Sahara Desert, including several nesting and wintering migrants, with many wading species such as duck and teal.

**Vallée de l'oued Soumman** is situated in the eastern part of the coast, near to the city of Béjaïa. This lower stretches of the Oued Soumman river has with temporary marshes and a coastal lagoon. Birds in the area include cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) and Kentish plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*).

**Reserve naturelle du Lac de Béni-Bélaïd** – is a small lake, fringed by beach on the northern side, east of the city of Jijel. The site is important for Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) and also supports a diverse range of birds including some rare species such as ferruginous duck (*Aythya nyroca*), purple swamphen (*Porphyrio porphyrio*) and common moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*). The site also supports waders such as egrets, heron, stork, grebes,

cormorants and yellow-legged gulls (*Larus michahellis*).

**Réserve Intégrale du lac El Mellah**, also an IBA, is a lagoon, linked by a 900-metre channel to the sea, which is part of the El Kala wetland complex (also a National Park and UNESCO Biosphere reserve). The site also has a small brackish delta with saltmarsh and reeds and a smaller temporary freshwater lake. The area is important for migrating waterbirds and some nesting species. Species known there include cormorants, ducks and grebe. El Mellah, along with Ramsar Sites at Lac Oubeïra and Lac Tongamakes up the El Kala Biosphere Reserve.

Algeria also has several lake/wetland areas inland from the sea which are important for birds. Not all are reported on here, but some notable sites include:

**Le Lac de Télamine** and **les Salines d'Arzew**, two RAMSAR sites in western Algeria near Oran, inland from the Mediterranean but both important for birds. These are lake and wetland habitats with marshes and reedbeds. Greater flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) and common shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) winter in their thousands on the Lac de Télamine and neighbouring wetlands. The Salines are located on the western route of the Mediterranean/Black Sea flyway, and host many species during their autumn and spring migrations, and also wintering species including shelducks, flamingo and greylag goose (*Anser anser*).

**The Marais de Mekhada** (also an IBA) is another inland site, a marsh located northwest of the El Kala NP wetland complex in the eastern part of Algeria. It is separated from the sea by sand dunes. The site regularly holds 30,000 wintering waterbirds, including graylag geese, shelducks and plovers. Breeding birds include Eurasian bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), White stork (*Ciconia Ciconia*) and collared pratincole (*Glareola pratincole*) and breeding is also likely for other species including heron, little grebe and ibis. Birds often move from this site when hunting is taking place.

#### → IBAs

In addition to the IBA sites listed above, les Iles Habibas, two rocky islands 12km off the coast northwest of Oran. Gulls overwinter and nest on the eastern side of the more westerly Island (Gharbia) and other seabirds breeding at the site include a large colony of Caspian gulls *Larus cachinnans* as well as Scopoli's shearwater (*Calonectris Diomedea*), European shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*) and Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*).

#### → Marine Protected Areas

See above.

#### → National Parks

See above.

#### → IMMAs

No IMMAs are identified in Algerian waters.

### At risk Wildlife

In this section, some individual wildlife species are mentioned followed by a letter in parentheses. These are species included in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species within the top three categories of risk - Vulnerable to extinction (VU), Endangered (EN) or Critically Endangered (CR). A more complete list of IUCN listed species is found in Appendix 1.

#### → At risk birds

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Algeria's wetlands are part of a large Mediterranean complex of ecological areas used by many waterbird populations, they provide an important network of sites used by thousands of birds migrating between breeding grounds in the Arctic and wintering sites in southern Europe and North Africa. Highest numbers of overwintering birds are generally seen between October to January, although late passage migrants such as whiskered tern (*Chlidonias hybrida*), black-winged stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*), ruff, spotted redshank and common redshank can be seen congregating from April to May. Breeding bird populations are found from late spring to autumn, including egrets, dabbling and diving ducks and rail species as well as the Caspian gull (*Larus cachinnans*). Black winged stilt (*Himantopus Himantopus*) and Kentish plover (*Charadrius alexandriunus*) are resident breeders. A large number of wading bird species are included on the Algerian list of non-domestic protected species.

#### → At risk reptiles

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Two species of marine turtles are found along Algeria's coasts – loggerheads (VU, which are the most common), as well as leatherback (VU) and occasionally green (EN) turtles. Nesting is believed true for loggerheads along

Algeria's coast but based on limited scientific data. Leatherbacks are more commonly observed in the waters off the western coast of Algeria, with known feeding grounds in the Alboran sea and Algerian basin. The Mediterranean Strike-necked terrapin (*Mauremys leprosa*) is also found in Algerian rivers and coastal areas.

→ **At risk mammals**  
→ **At risk mammals**

Historical stranding data indicates that several species of dolphin are present in Algerian waters, including striped, common bottlenose and Risso's dolphins. Sperm and fin whale (both VU), short-finned pilot whale and Cuvier's beaked whale have also been observed. The Mediterranean monk seal (VU) has historically been recorded, but the species has no known breeding sites in Algeria.

### **Past experience with oil spill and potential risks**

Algeria has experienced several minor spills, including the Juan Antonio Lavalleja (1980) and the Oued Gueterini (1986). Minor incidents have also occurred in ports and terminals in the country. There were no reports of oiled wildlife during these incidents. In 2000 there was a spill of 2000 tons of solid chemical (type not specified) and in 2005 there was a spill of 1500 tons of crude oil off the coast of Algeria but again, no reports of affected wildlife. Although not related to an oil spill incident, in 2024 a group of volunteers transported around 300 flamingos from a drying out lake to another location in Algeria. Algeria is the third largest oil producer in Africa. Its proven oil reserves onshore, with several refineries and tanker import/export terminals along the coast. Political tensions have recently led to some disruptions in supply.

### **International and Regional Treaties and Agreements**

→ **Oil spill and HNS Response**

- CLC Convention 69
- CLC Protocol 76
- CLC Protocol 92
- FUND Protocol 76
- FUND Protocol 92
- FUND Protocol 2003
- LLMC Convention 76
- LLMC Protocol 96
- OPRC Convention 90
- HNS Convention 96
- HNS PROT 2010
- OPRC\_HNS 2000
- BUNKERS CONVENTION 01

→ **Marine Biodiversity Protection**

- Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS)
- Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA)
- Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution
- The Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC)

### **Oil Spill Response and HNS Spill Response**

→ **National Contingency Plan?**

The National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (plan 'Tal Bahr') was adopted in 1994. It was created by the Tal Bahr National Committee, which is chaired by the Minister of the Environment. The plan recognizes three regions which must have their own regional oil spill response plan: Aliers (central), Oran (western) and Jijel (eastern).

→ **Role of Competent National Authorities**

The Minister of Environment has overall national control of oil spill response, with regional command being assumed by the relevant region as listed above. For oil spill response at-sea, responsibility lies with the Service National des Gardes Côtes (SNGC), part of the naval forces of the Ministry of Defence.

## Oiled Wildlife Preparedness and Response

### → Formal guidelines?

There is no reference of a formal oiled wildlife response plan in Algeria.

### → Response objectives and strategy

No reference.

### → Euthanasia or rehabilitation?

There is no reference of formal guidelines on strategies for wildlife response in Algeria, although it is likely that rehabilitation would be permitted. Wildfowl species are shot by hunters during the winter season.

### → Impact assessment

It is probable that L'Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Sciences de la Mer et de l'Aménagement du Littoral (ENSSMAL) and the Centre National De Recherche et de Développement de la Pêche et de l'Aquaculture (CNRDPA) for cetaceans as well as the Université d'Oran Essenia, Faculté des Sciences (for sea turtles) would get involved in scientific impact assessment activities. The University of Bejaïa, laboratoire de Zoologie appliquée et d'Ecophysiologie animale (AZL) may contribute to impact assessment studies for birds. The Algerian Wildlife Watchers Association (AWWA) may also support provision of information on Algerian wildlife, although their focus is not specially on marine/coastal species.

### → Notification and early response

No reference.

### → Wildlife responders

There is no expertise for oiled wildlife response in Algeria. Organisations such as WWF North Africa and MEDASSET, which works on turtle conservation issues in the Mediterranean, might be called on should sea turtles be impacted.

### → Cooperation between stakeholders

The CNRDPA, with support from ACCOBAMS, have established a network for cetacean monitoring, including training veterinarians to carry out necropsies.

### → Permanent facilities

There are no permanent facilities for marine wildlife or oiled wildlife in Algeria.

### → Current processes

No reference.

## Documentation and references

### General references

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## Appendix 1

### → At risk birds

**Common name / Latin name / IUCN Red List Category (CR,EN,VU) / Resident-Migratory (season) / Breeding-Nesting-Pupping (season)**

Balearic Shearwater / *Puffinus mauretanicus* / CR / Resident /  
Slender-billed Curlew / *Numenius tenuirostris* / CR / Resident / Non-breeding  
White-headed Duck / *Oxyura leucocephala* / EN / Resident /  
Common Pochard / *Aythya ferina* / VU / Resident / Non-breeding  
Yelkouan Shearwater / *Puffinus yelkouan* / VU / Resident /  
Grey Plover / *Pluvialis squatarola* / VU / Resident /  
Broad-billed Sandpiper / *Calidris falcinellus* / VU / Resident /  
Curlew Sandpiper / *Calidris ferruginea* / VU / Resident /  
Black-legged Kittiwake / *Rissa tridactyla* / VU / Resident / Non-breeding  
Audouin's Gull / *Larus audouinii* / VU (Algerian List of non-domestic protected animals (Decret executif 12-235) / Resident / Non-breeding  
Atlantic Puffin / *Fratercula arctica* / VU / Resident / Non-breeding  
Aquatic Warbler / *Acrocephalus paludicola* / VU / Migratory /

### → At risk reptiles

**Common name / Latin name / IUCN Red List Category (CR,EN,VU) / Resident-Migratory (season) / Breeding-Nesting-Pupping (season)**

Leatherback turtle / *Dermochelys coriacea* / VU (Algerian List of non-domestic protected animals (decret executif 12-235) / Resident/migratory /  
Green turtle / *Chelonia mydas* / EN (Algerian List of non-domestic protected animals (Decret executif 12-235) / Resident/migratory /  
Loggerhead turtle / *Caretta caretta* / VU (Algerian List of non-domestic protected animals (Decret executif 12-235) / Resident/migratory / Nesting suspected, limited observations  
Mediterranean stripe-necked terrapin / *Mauremys leprosa* / VU (Algerian List of non-domestic protected animals (Decret executif 12-235) / Resident /

### → At risk mammals

**Common name / Latin name / IUCN Red List Category (CR,EN,VU) / Resident-Migratory (season) / Breeding-Nesting-Pupping (season)**

Eurasian otter / *Lutra lutra* / NT (Algerian List of non-domestic protected animals) / /  
Mediterranean monk seal / *Monachus monachus* / VU (Algerian List of non-domestic protected animals) / /  
Sperm whale / *Physeter macrocephalus* / VU / Migratory /  
Fin whale / *Balaenoptera physalus* / VU / /