**60 Years of Passion!**

  

**A Mini Camargue**

Located 4 km from Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, the

**Pont de Gau Bird Park** gives you the chance to explore **60**

**hectares** of natural marshland devoted exclusively to the wildlife and flora of the Camargue.

**AT THE HEART OF THE CAMARGUE NATIONAL RESERVE ...**

The trails will take you past marshes, ponds, reed beds, grasslands, sansouïres, badlands ... an **amazing diversity of habitats** which supports the presence of a large number of bird species, both sedentary and migratory.

Everything has been designed to facilitate the observation of **hundreds of Greater Flamingos, herons, storks, egrets, numerous duck species, waders, birds of prey and small passerines.**

**Come and visit us....look….listen….**

Information panels provide you with lots of information about the avifauna of the Camargue and also general ornithological concepts.

There are **three possible routes** to take and all are well signposted. They follow two small marshes and a larger one. Like this you are three times more likely to enjoy a show of beaks and feathers!

Along the trails you will find observation towers and observatories located in the heart of the marshes. These allow you to get even closer to the birds and if you are quiet you will find that they seem to ignore you.

The advantage of Pont de Gau is the amazing proximity between visitors and birds:

**This park belongs to the birds but here we humans have the privilege of entering into their world!**

**A FAMILY HISTORY**

Zoo, bird sanctuary, fauna rescue centre, nature trail network, Pont de Gau has many labels . Created in **1949** by a passionate Camarguais ornithologist, it is a family affair. André Lamouroux laid out what it was commonly called a "**zoo**" in those days. When his son René took over in 1974, he imagined something else entirely and infused the park with a breath of fresh air and an **essentially educational mission**.

First, he swapped the old and dilapidated cages for large aviaries where he recreated the **habitat** of each species represented. Following this he enlarged the premises and gave the adjoining 12 hectares of marshland, previously used for hunting, a completely different function. He created small trails circulating through the marshes, the latter designed specifically in accordance with the species of birds present and their needs. In this vast space he landscaped islands , planted thousands of trees and provided information for visitors on huge, easy to read, thematic panels. Besides bird watching, a core mission remains: **increasing public awareness of the need to protect the Camargue and nature in general.**

Since the mid-seventies, the Park has also provided a fauna rescue facility, which houses nearly **600 birds per year** from throughout the region.

In 1987, René rented the 50 acres of Ginès marsh from the Camargue National Park. In the 90s, to assist with the management of the Park, he was joined by his three sons, Jerome, Frédéric and Vincent.

Today the Park provides more than 6 kilometres of marked trails in a **protected environment**, unparalleled proximity to birds and optimal viewing conditions.

*Passion, enthusiasm and friendship are some of the strong values ​​of the Lamouroux family, whose members have dedicated themselves to the service of the birds of Camargue. Their great ambition is to share with as many people as possible this passion for birds by providing them with the opportunity for a first-hand experience of the beauty and fragility of our environment.*

Jean Jalbert

(Director of the Tour du Valat Biological Station and President of the Association of Friends of the Park)

Pont de Gau

Observation towers and hides, information panels along the pathways, guided tours… everything here has been put in place with the goal of maximising the possibilites of observing the fauna of the Camargue at close range and learning about it.

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| René Lamouroux, Jean Boutin and Hubert Kowalski during the “Save the Flamingos” Operation which  took place during the extremely cold winter of 1985. |
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**The wildlife rescue centre and the “Friends of the Park” Association**

**THE FAUNA RESCUE CENTRE**

It was under the initiative of René Lamouroux, almost 30 years ago, that the Pont de Gau Fauna Rescue Centre was born. **The care centre is unique in the Bouches du Rhone area**. On site is the Park team which provides **voluntary care to the injured birds**. When the bird arrives at Pont de Gau (often thanks to the help of firemen or associated networks) it is immediately examined and the individual who brought it in is informed of its prognosis. The length of stay depends on the severity of the injury but throughout this period the bird receives daily medical attention and is fed by members of the Association and Park staff. The number of birds collected is about **600 per year** and there is always a peak of activity between May and September, during the reproduction period. Indeed, a large number of fledglings which fall from the nest are collected by individuals and taken to Pont de Gau. Here the team continue the process of raising the chicks until they are old enough to be released back into the wild.

**40% of injured birds are released after care!**

**THE FRIENDS OF THE PARK**

**The Association of Friends of Pont de Gau manages the Fauna Rescue Centre.**

**Its mission: education in relation to the environment, the implementation of educational projects and activities such as conferences, monitoring of flamingo nests, training in bird-ringing, placement of nestboxes and feeders and nature outings.**

**Its action is also scientific: species monitoring, ringing camps, and management of natural areas.**

**Its board of directors is composed of scientists, conservationists and other nature lovers.**

**Open to all, it publishes an annual newsletter.**

**Very involved in the Camargue, it plays an active role in many different projects and serves on the commitee which supports the Camargue National Park.**

Squacco Heron

**A Mini Camargue.**

In the heart of the marshes, hiking trails and observatories offer a rare proximity to wildlife.

**Throughout the year**, Pont de Gau is the ideal site for discovering, observing and photographing many species of birds, including hundreds of flamingos in their natural environment. Ponds, marshes, grasslands, badlands, reed beds and sansouires make up this vast area, which covers 60 hectares and is completely dedicated to the discovery of birds and to birding. The park offers themed events and guided tours.

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**The park is open every day: 1/04 to 30/09 from 9am until sunset. 1/10 to 31/03 from 10am until sunset.**

**The closing time of the reception area depends on the month. Please ask us for further information.**

**Entry ticket valid all day long.**

**Closed on Christmas Day, 25th December.**

**www.parcornithologique.com**