

A sentinel territory, observatory of biodiversity and global changes

Ecologically preserved and located far away from human activities, the French Southern Lands acted since the 1950s as open-sky laboratories in the field of life sciences, earth sciences and sciences of the universe. The Institut Polaire Français Paul-Emile Victor (IPEV) coordinates the excellence of research, which supports the management of the Nature Reserve. The manager of the Reserve takes also benefit from the expertise of the Natural History National Museum for the management of the fisheries.

Internationally acknowledged as observatories of biodiversity, these territories are unique in the world to monitor the impacts of global changes on ecosystems.

A surveillance to deliver on challenges

To ensure the integrity of its large perimeter, the Nature Reserve benefits from a proven surveillance system. It is implemented by the French maritime services that use satellite technologies and deploy patrol ships. Since 2017, the fleet is completed by a new vessel, *L'Astrolabe*, built under a partnership between the TAAF, the owner, the IPEV and the French Navy. In addition to its logistic operations in Antarctica for the TAAF and the IPEV, the patroller will ensure defence and sovereignty missions in the South Indian Ocean, including inside the perimeter of the Nature Reserve.

A regular supply

The *Marion Dufresne II*, the TAAF's supply ship, carries out four trips annually between Reunion Island and the French Southern Lands. It allows maintaining permanent staff on the islands (scientists, logistics, staff of the Nature Reserve, etc.) but also embarking on board few tourists each year to discover this protected area, under the supervision of a guide and a member of the Nature Reserve staff.

Any other boats wishing to sail to the French Southern Lands must obtain authorisation from the TAAF.



L'Astrolabe



The Marion Dufresne II



Réserve Naturelle
TERRES AUSTRALES FRANÇAISES

Fact sheet

Creation of the Nature Reserve : 3rd October 2006 (decree n° 2006-1211)

Extension of the Nature Reserve : 12th December 2016 (decree n°2016-1211, extended by decree n°2016-1700)

Geographical location : Southern ocean

Total area of the Nature Reserve : 672,969 km², including approximately 7,700 km² of terrestrial area

Protected area : 1,662,766 km² (TAAF order n°2017-28)

No permanent population, but the bases house approximately 150 persons per year (technical, scientific, military, nature reserve staff etc.).

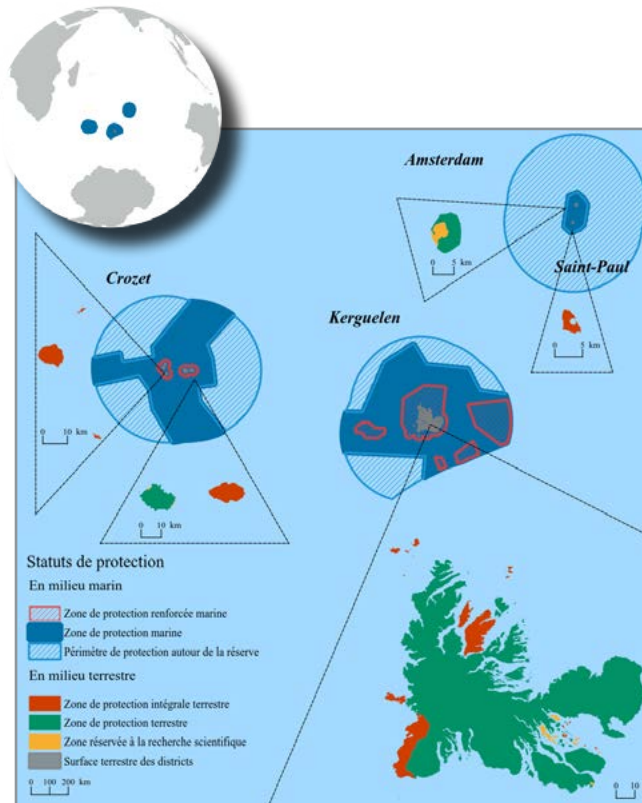
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Réserve Naturelle
TERRES AUSTRALES
FRANÇAISES

Exceptional lands and seas



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TERRES AUSTRALES
ET ANTARCTIQUES FRANÇAISES

An exceptional natural heritage

The French Southern lands host the greatest diversity of invertebrates and plants of all Subantarctic islands, and one of the greatest richnesses of birds and marine mammals on the planet. Their fauna and flora present extremely original adaptation strategies, developed over several million years of evolution in a totally isolated environment, thousands of kilometers away from any continent.

Considered as **an exceptional site for the conservation of the planet's birdlife**, these islands are home to over 50 million birds, including 47 species 12 of which are assessed as threatened by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of threatened species. Eight bird species are endemic such as the emblematic Amsterdam albatross (*Diomedea amsterdamensis*). The French Southern Lands also host large populations of pinnipeds, including the second world's population of southern elephant seals (*Mirounga leonina*) and the third population of Subantarctic fur seals (*Arctocephalus tropicalis*), as well as cetaceans such as the Commerson's dolphin (*Cephalorhynchus commersonii kerguelensis*), an endemic subspecies of the Kerguelen islands.

In addition, the immensity of the Nature Reserve at sea allows the inclusion of all the essential zones for the reproduction and feeding of marine species, thus guaranteeing the conservation of their populations in the long term. It also presents zones of high primary productivity that structure the trophic network as a whole, forming a true 'carbon sink' that contributes to the fight against climate change globally.

Recognized as one of the last remaining wilderness areas on the planet, these territories play a major role in the preservation of the biodiversity and the health of the ocean on a worldwide scale.

The construction of one of the world's largest marine protected areas

In 2006, the islands of Crozet, Kerguelen and Saint-Paul & Amsterdam, as well as a part of their territorial waters, were classified as a National Nature Reserve by an inter-ministerial decree, forming the largest nature reserve in France (22,800 km²).

In 2016, supported by the scientific community and in accordance with the commitments made by France at the end of 2015 at the COP 21, the marine part of the Nature Reserve was extended to cover 672,969 km². This extended area integrates the new marine and terrestrial challenges of the territory, including the essential zones for the feeding and reproduction of marine species.

In order to conserve these ecologically important zones, the Nature Reserve includes close to 128,000 km² of strict protected zones (Category Ia IUCN).

On land, all access and human activity is prohibited, with the exception of activities authorised through a derogation granted by the Nature Reserve manager. In the marine area, all waste discharge and the extraction of natural resources, including fishing, are prohibited.

In addition, in 2017, the TAAF issued an order to set out a protection zone around the Nature Reserve, which extends its governance and the environmental regulation to the whole exclusive economic zone of the French Southern Lands, covering over 1.66 million km².

The Nature Reserve and its protected area now represent **one of the largest marine protected areas on the planet**.

Planning and implementing the management of the Nature Reserve

The management of the Nature Reserve comes under TAAF's responsibility, which refers to an Advisory Committee and to a Scientific Council.

While the presence of invasive alien species and the impact of global changes represent important pressures on these territories, the **management plan** of the Nature Reserve, drawn up in close collaboration with the scientific community, constitutes a true **roadmap**, ensuring the conservation of this exceptional natural heritage.

This management plan includes actions to improve knowledge on marine species and ecosystems, to implement National Action Plans for the protection of the threatened species, to strengthen biosecurity measures, to fight against invasive alien species, to reduce the impact of human activity, to manage sustainable fisheries, to set up an observatory of biodiversity or to organise awareness campaigns targeting the Nature Reserve's users.

Apart from its designation as a National Nature Reserve, the French Southern Lands were recognised in 2008 as a Ramsar site for the importance of its wetlands. In addition, since 2012, the territory is part of two Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSA), coming under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Nature Reserve is also applying for the inscription on the IUCN Green List and the UNESCO World Heritage site, inasmuch as it hosts one of the world's greatest concentrations of sea birds and mammals and includes all the essential zones for their reproduction and feeding.



Kerguelen cabbage



Amsterdam albatros



Southern elephant seal



Commerson dolphin



Limpet (gastropod mollusc)



Killer whale