

Type of protected nature area: Nature park

El Hondo Nature Reserve forms part of the lagoon area of Elche, which is created by the mouth of the River Vinalopó and which was almost entirely drained between the Middle Ages and the XIII century, in order to convert it into farm land.

In this area of marsh land, in the 1920s of the last century, the Compañía de Riegos de Levante (the Levante Irrigation Company), constructed two regulating reservoirs: the Levante Reservoir of 450 hectares and the Poniente Reservoir of 650. They serve to collect and subsequently distribute to the local farmers, by means of a central channel, water brought from the mouth of the neighbouring River Segura. These bodies of water are hidden behind reed thickets and other marsh vegetation, giving it the aspect of great natural lagoon. They are surrounded by a series of ponds and salt marshes, with crops and groves of palm trees in the hinterland, making up an exceptional landscape.

El Hondo, which lies between Elche and Crevillent, was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1988 and subsequently declared a Nature Reserve by the Regional Government, the Generalitat Valenciana, in 1994. Appearing in the lists of the RAMSAR, it is classified as a ZEPA (Protected Area for Birds) due to the importance and abundance of its bird life. There are 172 species, of which about 50 nest here. Among them are the marbled teal, one of Europe's most threatened birds and the white-headed duck, also at risk of extinction, as well as herons, several types of wading duck and flamingos. Also found living in this water environment are eels, grey mullets, carp and the common tooth carp, a small fish endemic in the Spanish Mediterranean.

El Hondo landscape is dominated by reeds and there is also a sparse presence of rushes. Sea lavenders occupy the driest areas, alongside marsh samphire and sodas.

Various walkways and observatories allow the visitor to get to know the different parts of the reserve and to observe the activity of the many birds, both in the reservoirs and in the skies, where magnificent sunsets take place.