



IUCN - Ramsar Collaboration

Supporting the Wise Use of Wetlands



International Union for Conservation of Nature



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Wetlands for
our future
Punta del Este 2015 (COP12)

IUCN – The International Union for Conservation of Nature is proud to host the Secretariat of the International Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) – the Ramsar Convention – at its headquarters near Geneva, Switzerland. Over the years, IUCN has collaborated with the Ramsar Convention in many ways, such as supporting countries in accession

to the Convention, scientific assistance in the designation of Ramsar sites, providing help at site level management, and supporting the capacity to link local communities with government authorities to ensure the conservation of wetlands. Here are some brief highlights of IUCN's recent work in support of the Ramsar Convention.

IUCN Asia

IUCN has contributed to the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands in Asia through:

- Support to the accession by new Contracting Parties and site designation;
- Surveys and research on Ramsar Sites e.g. on customary laws, biodiversity, economic valuation;
- Institutional capacity building and trainings for Ramsar authorities and managers;
- Support to the management of Ramsar Sites;
- National or regional dialogue platforms and events on Ramsar site management;
- Direct support to the Ramsar Secretariat and to the Ramsar Regional Centre – East Asia.

Recently IUCN Asia, with the IUCN Nepal office developed a proposal for the Ramsar Convention Secretariat's Global partnership for Wetlands Restoration Programme. The project 'Wetlands for the Future: Improving livelihoods and enhancing biodiversity through restoration and management of Jagadishpur Ramsar site in Nepal' has been approved and will develop the management of the site as well as strengthen the capacities of Ramsar authorities and site managers.

IUCN Asia has also developed a proposal for a Regional Ramsar initiative (RRI) in the Indo-Burma region (including Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia and Viet Nam). This RRI was discussed with Ramsar focal points in each country and will be presented during the Standing Committee before the 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention (COP12) for approval. IUCN will act as the secretariat for the RRI.

In the Lower Mekong Region, IUCN Asia has worked with the Ramsar Convention Secretariat on another proposal for a Regional Ramsar Initiative to be called 'MekongWet'. This proposal is expected to build climate change resilience in selected Ramsar Sites in Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam.

Lao PDR

IUCN Lao PDR was strongly involved with and supported the accession of the Government of Lao PDR to the Ramsar Convention in 2010, by providing information and training. IUCN also assisted with the identification and designation of the two Ramsar sites in Lao PDR, Beung Kiat Ngong and Xe Champhone, by aiding the drafting of Ramsar Information Sheets and organising local consultations.

IUCN's research into human rights-based approaches (RBAs) to reduce poverty and benefit conservation has focused on the development of tools to better inform conservation strategies. After developing a step-wise approach for implementing RBAs to conservation, the IUCN Environmental Law Centre in collaboration with the IUCN Lao PDR Office, the IUCN Regional Office for South America, and the IUCN Regional Office for Mesoamerica initiated a project to apply the different steps of this approach in practice. The Lao PDR IUCN country office and the IUCN Environmental Law Centre undertook a situation analysis in the Xe Champhone Ramsar Site to examine the under-researched issue of customary law governing natural resources, including its relationship with statutory law in this area. IUCN Lao PDR, together with its government partners from central, provincial and local levels, carried out surveys with villagers from 11 villages in and around the Ramsar Site to learn more about traditional laws and regulations, local beliefs and taboos and how these regulations are linked to the protection and management of natural resources and biodiversity. The overall goal of the project was to ensure the protection and sustainable use of natural resources in the Xe Champhone Ramsar Site with regulations that are appropriate locally and in the national context of Lao PDR.

Video 'Sacred Natural Sites in the Xe Champhone Ramsar Site: The Spirit of Conservation':
www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0gmyT77Zyc



Women harvesting rice, Vietnam ©Hoang Tran/Shutterstock.com

To conserve Beung Kiat Ngong, IUCN Lao PDR created a plan to reduce overfishing and over-harvesting, as well as enhancing food security in 13 surrounding villages that directly depend on the site for income. This includes increasing the yield of rice and using tourism as an alternative source of income. IUCN Lao PDR developed a co-management plan for the Beung Ngong Ramsar site, drafted jointly between the communities and the Ramsar Provincial Committee.

The IUCN Lao PDR Water and Wetlands Programme Coordinator has regularly been invited by the Ramsar Convention to provide training on Ramsar site management and management effectiveness monitoring based on the work achieved in Lao PDR. This includes providing training during the Workshop of Ramsar Site Managers of Asia in the Philippines, training to Vietnamese Ramsar site managers in Vietnam and participation in the drafting of a resolution on management effectiveness and revised Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) to be presented during the Ramsar 12th Conference of the Parties (CoP).

IUCN Lao PDR was involved in the organisation and building of dialogue platforms and events on Ramsar site management. This included peer-to-peer visits from stakeholders between the two sites in Lao PDR and a three

day workshop on Ramsar and Wetland Governance in Asia, with the participation of representatives from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Tanguar Haor, Bangladesh

Tanguar Haor is home to swamp forests, hundreds of species of birds, fishes, amphibians, reptiles and mammals, many of which are rare and endangered, whilst also sustaining the livelihoods of 88 surrounding villages and contributing to national food security. The site was established as a Ramsar site in 2000. IUCN Bangladesh is working on behalf of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, and in association with local communities, to establish a co-management model to converge and develop the natural resources of Tanguar Haor for the benefit of its dependents. This approach has its focus on access rights, local empowerment and capacity building to institutionalise and follow Ramsar's wise use principles in natural resource management, allowing local communities to take control of its natural resource management.

“Rice, grown in wetland paddies, is the staple diet of nearly three billion people, and accounts for 20% of the world’s nutritional intake”

The project also focussed on gender issues within these communities, addressing gender discrimination and women empowerment. IUCN conducted a study providing key guidelines assisting local communities in monitoring changes to biodiversity in Tanguar Haor and take conservation initiative by halting over-exploitation, hunting and poaching.

www.iucn.org/asia

IUCN West Asia

The Azraq Basin, Jordan

The Azraq Basin is one of the most important groundwater basins in Jordan. It is located in the north-eastern part of the country and extends to the borders of Syria and Saudi Arabia. The Azraq Oasis is located in the central and

lowest part of the basin. The wetland site faces conflicts between agricultural and environmental needs. The aim of the project was to create a local participative process and identify underlying issues, and to contribute to the implementation of the National Water Management Plan by creating ownership among all stakeholders. The project

initiated collaboration of IUCN Members with the Jordan Badia Research and Development Centre, to provide information for decisions concerning the management of Azraq oasis activities. IUCN also collaborated with the Arab Women Organization (AWO) focusing on a gender related project and community participatory planning and management. The IUCN Regional Office for West Asia is supporting AWO in process documentation and information-sharing at different levels for influencing policies for local communities' rights towards their water resources.

The Hawizeh Marsh, Iraq

The Iraqi Ministry of Oil awarded Shell Iraq Petroleum Development (SIPD) and Petronas Carigali a contract for technical assistance in developing the Majnoon field in Basra in 2009. The Northern part of the Majnoon concession area lies within the Hawizeh Marsh, a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention since 2007. Oil development activities within the Hawizeh Marsh could impact the ecosystem of the marshes. In 2010, the Hawizeh Marsh was put on the Montreux Record¹ due to its ecological status being threatened

1 The Montreux Record is a register of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference. It is maintained as part of the Ramsar List.



Tourism expenditure linked to wetlands is estimated at around USD 925 billion each year
©MeganCarley/Shutterstock.com

by low water levels and a lack of wetland management capacity. SIPD took the initiative to involve IUCN and Wetlands International to find ways to tackle these challenges. The Majnoon project activities are designed to demonstrate that sustainable gas and oil development and conservation can go hand in hand. Meanwhile, the initiative aims to help the government achieve its goal of ensuring sustainable, social and economic development through wise use of ecosystems, sustaining the livelihoods of the Iraqi people, including marshlands communities.

www.iucn.org/rowa

IUCN West and Central Africa

IUCN has supported community involvement in sustainable management of mangroves throughout West Africa, to reduce the impact of drought and over-exploitation, covering the coasts of Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea and Sierra Leone. Through demonstration projects and re-enforcement

of national policy, 32 hectares of mangroves have been rehabilitated and preserved. IUCN has also worked to harmonise the policies on mangrove management in West Africa and the adoption of a regional charter on mangroves.

IUCN has supported the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Africa, intervening on:

- Preliminary studies for the designation of Ramsar sites;
- The restoration of degraded wetland ecosystems;
- Improving the governance of water resources;
- The development and implementation of management plans for wetlands;
- Financing community initiatives for sustainable management of natural resources;
- Support for policy development and national strategies for wetlands



The Ramsar Convention is the only global treaty to focus on one single ecosystem
©Ethan Daniels/Shutterstock.com

IUCN has been involved in the rehabilitation of 8 hectares of rainforest within the Inner Niger Delta Ramsar Site in Mali. In addition, IUCN implemented the conservation and recovery of the Baie de l'Etoile, while promoting the preservation of its economic value, with the objective to improve livelihoods and adopt measures for climate change adaptation.

In West Africa, IUCN published a study and produced a documentary on The Sourou Valley ('The Sourou Valley, Yesterday and Tomorrow': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WrmA5HW0cc>), which was distributed to assert the economic value and importance of the wetlands of Burkina Faso. Advocacy at the National Assembly of Burkina helped strengthen the consideration for environmental issues in the Sourou Valley, and advocate for the sustainable management of wetlands. IUCN produced and disseminated a practical tool for the economic valuation of wetlands based on the economic evaluation studies in Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Mali and Senegal on wetlands vulnerable to climate change.

IUCN West Africa further strengthened the sustainable management and maintenance of biodiversity in the Arly-Pendjari National Parks, across Benin, Burkina Faso and regions of Niger, and supported the preparation of a draft management plan for this transboundary protected area.

IUCN was a key player in the development of an Action Plan for the implementation of a National Policy on Wetlands in Burkina Faso, as well as studies for the designation of 11 Ramsar Sites in Angola, and the strengthening of management capacity for Senegal's 5th Ramsar Site, Tocc-Tocc through advocacy of local parliamentarians and politicians.

*“Scientific studies show that
64% of the world’s wetlands
have disappeared since 1900”*

In participating towards securing community livelihoods to minimise the impact of human activities in the Waza Logone Floodplain in Cameroon, IUCN supported income-generating strategies and recommendations for environmental assessments with the extractive industries. In Mauritania, IUCN supported the development of a national strategy for the conservation of wetlands.

www.iucn.org/paco

IUCN East and Southern Africa

In East and Southern Africa, IUCN worked towards the establishment of an Eco-Tourism Centre in the Ramsar Site of Lake Opeta, Uganda. The establishment of the Centre is one of the activities under The Community-Based Wetland Biodiversity Conservation (COBWEB) Project that is implemented by IUCN, in collaboration with the Wetlands Management Department of the Ministry of Water and Environment, Nature Uganda, Uganda Wildlife Society and Local District Governments. The Centre will be used as an information hub for Lake Opeta biodiversity. Target users of information from the Centre include tourists, academic researchers, wetland managers and practitioners.

IUCN also provides a solid platform in the region for establishing partnerships for the Ramsar Convention and its Parties. For example, IUCN is working with the Ministry of Water and Environment of Uganda at Lake Bisina, Lake Opeta and Lake Mburo-Nakivale Ramsar Sites. Together, Wetland Community Conservation Areas were set up as a means of bringing together communities, local government and the national authorities, to put wetlands 'wise use' into action. Included in the COBWEB project evaluation is the increased income of



Okavango Delta ©Peter Howard/IUCN

the Lake Nakivale area which significantly reduced crime rates in the region.

In the Okavango Delta, WANI collaborated closely with the Government of Botswana and other partners, including the University of Botswana, to coordinate development of the Okavango Delta Management Plan (ODMP). This

entailed integrating a range of activities to combine new knowledge, learning, institutional coordination, inter-sectoral cooperation and coordination of decision making at local to basin levels. Four years after the completion of the ODMP, implementation is on-going with documented progress on sustainable management and community decision making in the management

of the delta's resources. The ODMP was the first of its kind and the lessons learned provide an example for the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) and Strategic Action Programme initiated by the Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM).

www.iucn.org/esaro

IUCN Oceania

IUCN has been supporting the Fiji Government in creating proposals for Nasoata Island to be designated as a Ramsar Site. The island belongs to the people of Nakorovou Village and is a predominantly mangrove island. IUCN is working with local communities to develop a co-management plan for the sustainable use of mangroves on Nasoata. The plan brings together formal and informal management systems including at the national, provincial and community level, allowing the communities to conduct consultations with the authorities and to secure a management framework for the conservation of the region.

As part of the IUCN Oceania Mescal project, a report entitled 'Impacts of Projected Climate Change on Mangrove and Coastal Ecosystems and Community Livelihoods in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa' was produced and is available online: https://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/2013_09_06_mescal_projected_cc_impacts_1.pdf

www.iucn.org/oceania



The IUCN Water and Nature Initiative was a contributor and financing partner of the Ramsar Convention in the report *The Economics of Ecosystem and Biodiversity (TEEB) for Water and Wetlands* that benefitted from contributions of case studies from around the globe and an extensive review process and discussion. The report highlights that the importance of both coastal and inland wetlands has been often greatly undervalued. Figures in the report show that, comparatively, inland and coastal wetlands deliver higher value per unit area than tropical forests. A very high proportion of the value of these inland and coastal wetlands comes from their water-related benefits, such as water purification and flood and storm mitigation.

www.teebweb.org

IUCN South America

Lake Titicaca, Peru and Bolivia

Lake Titicaca, a transboundary Ramsar Site, is a fragile high-altitude ecosystem shared between Bolivia and Peru. Since 2011, IUCN Water, IUCN's Environmental Law Centre and IUCN South America have been working through the 'Building River Dialogue and Governance' (BRIDGE) Project in Lake Titicaca, promoting water governance and transboundary cooperation. Over the last two decades increasing development has put pressure on politicians to address necessary reforms of national and bi-national water institutions governing the basin. Responding to these challenges, BRIDGE has played a key role in enabling and facilitating changes through a multi-level water diplomacy programme to build good water



Lake Titicaca ©Gail Johnson/Shutterstock.com

governance capacity in partnership with the Lake Titicaca Authority (ALT) and national agencies. The programme uses a combination of knowledge and information tools, procedural advice and technical support, capacity building and training to strengthen relations between stakeholders across all levels.

www.iucn.org/sur

“Wetlands are home to more than 100,000 known freshwater species alone, and this number is growing all the time. From 1999 to 2009, some 257 new species of freshwater fish were discovered in the Amazon”

IUCN Global Species Programme



Part of IUCN's Global Species Programme work is the generation of data on freshwater species, assessing the biodiversity in freshwater areas, particularly as an input into the future expansion of the Ramsar network, as well as the monitoring of biodiversity within existing sites. The data generated includes species distribution maps, Red List

status, and ecology which are used to support Ramsar site selection criteria.

IUCN Species has also developed and published a methodology for the identification of Key Biodiversity Areas in inland waters. The IUCN Freshwater Biodiversity Unit offers freshwater datasets and tools for site designation and monitoring. The IUCN databases and application of them, including the Red List website, allow for searching, for example for freshwater dependent species by country, habitat or threatened status.

www.iucn.org/species

IUCN World Heritage Programme

As of June 2014, there are 228 natural World Heritage sites, including world-renowned places such as the Great Barrier Reef, the Galapagos, Virunga National Park, and the Everglades. Approximately 60 Ramsar sites overlap with these areas. In its role as Advisory Body on nature to the UNESCO World Heritage (WH) Committee, IUCN continually monitors the state of conservation of natural World Heritage sites. This work includes monitoring for the yearly WH Committee Sessions, field missions and ongoing day-to-day monitoring.

IUCN regularly consults with the Ramsar Secretariat on sites that have both WH and Ramsar designations. Examples of collaboration include joint reactive monitoring missions to Doñana National Park (Spain) in 2011, and to Virunga National Park (Democratic Republic of the Congo) in 2014.

In 2014, IUCN's WH Programme launched the IUCN World Heritage Outlook – the first global assessment of the conservation prospects for all natural World Heritage sites.



Since then IUCN has been discussing with the Ramsar Secretariat the possibilities of expanding this innovative tool specifically to Ramsar-designated sites. The IUCN Outlook methodology can easily be used to compile comprehensive information on the most pressing conservation issues that Ramsar sites are facing and therefore help improve their conservation. The IUCN WH Outlook also aims to recognize well-managed sites and promote sharing of experience and best-practice examples. Further information at www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org

In coordination with the secretariats of the Ramsar Convention and UNESCO, IUCN is carrying out a project with a view to harmonizing the integrated management of sites with multiple international designations (Ramsar and WH sites, Biosphere Reserves and Global Geoparks). Thanks to a number of case studies, challenges facing management of sites with multiple designations will be highlighted, along with ways to overcome them. Emphasis on the complementarity and synergy that multiple designations can offer will be key.

www.iucn.org/worldheritage

Learn More

IUCN Toolkits: www.waterandnature.org/toolkits



Briefing 'Achieving Implementation of Integrated Water Resource Management'

http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iwrn_water_briefing_1.pdf

TEEB Report on Water and Wetlands

http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/teeb_water_wetlands_report___full_report_1.pdf

The Diversity of life in African Freshwaters: Underwater, under threat. An analysis of the status and distribution of freshwater species throughout mainland Africa: http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iucn_africa_freshwaters_2011.pdf

IUCN's work on wetlands: www.iucn.org/water

Quotes in this document: Ramsar Fact Sheet 1 'Wetlands, why should I care?' www.ramsar.org

About IUCN

IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges. IUCN's work focuses on valuing and conserving nature, ensuring effective and equitable governance of its use, and deploying nature-based solutions to global challenges in climate, food and development.

IUCN supports scientific research, manages field projects all over the world, and brings governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

www.iucn.org

About The Ramsar Convention

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, called the Ramsar Convention, is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

The Convention was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and came into force in 1975. Since then, almost 90% of UN member states, from all the world's geographic regions, have acceded to become "Contracting Parties".

www.ramsar.org



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