

12. Lake Sibaya

Geographical Coordinates 27°20'S 32°38'E

Area 7,750ha

Location About 3km west of the town of Sibayi, on the north-east coast of Natal province, eastern South Africa.

Date of Ramsar Designation 28 June 1991.

Other International Designations None.

National Designations None.

Principal Features The largest natural freshwater lake in South Africa, Lake Sibaya (pH 8.2-8.3) is narrowly separated from the Indian Ocean by forested sand dunes, which reach heights of 165m. The site also includes areas of swamp forest and wet grassland. A number of South African Red Data Book reptiles occur, including *Crocodylus niloticus*, *Varanus exanthematicus*, *V. niloticus*, *Bradypodion setaroi*, *Bitis gabonica*, *Lycophidion semiannule* and *Dasypeltis medici*. South African Red Data Book birds include *Butorides rufiventris*, *Ixobrychus minutus*, *Phoenicopterus ruber roseus*, *P. minor*, *Nettapus auritus*, *Polemaetus bellicosus*, *Neotis denhami*, *Macheiramphus alcinus*, *Vanellus melanopterus*, *Gypohierax angolensis*, *Tyto capensis*, *Caprimulgus natalensis*, *Smithornis capensis*, *Macronyx ameliae*, *Nectarinia neergaardi*, *Batis fratrum*, *Platysteira peltata* and *Zosterops senegalensis*. Other breeding birds include *Phalacrocorax carbo*, *P. africanus* and *Haliaeetus vocifer*. South African Red Data Book mammals include *Petrodromus tetradactylus*, *Cercopithecus mitis*, *Cephalophus natalensis*, *Philantomba monticola*, *Paraxerus palliatus tongensis* and *Neotragus moschatus*. The site also supports the second largest population of *Hippopotamus amphibius* in Kwa Zulu. The lake supports a diverse zooplankton fauna, including the endemic copepod *Tropocyclops brevis*. Other invertebrates species include 15 aquatic and 43 terrestrial molluscs and notable fish include the endemic species *Silhouetta sibayi*. Amongst South African Red Data Book plants occurring at the site are *Diospyros rotundifolia*, *Encephalartos ferox*, *Warburgia salutaris*, *Ancylanthus monteiri*, *Blighia unijugata*, *Bridelia cathartica*, *Coffea racemosa*, *Commiphora zanzibarica*, *Craibia zimmermannii*, *Dialium schlechteri*, *Lasiodiscus mildbraedii*, *Morus mesozygia*, *Pavetta barbertonensis*, *P. gerstneri*, *Suregada zanzibariensis* and *Tapura fischeri*. In addition, the site supports the only populations of *Vanilla roscheri* and *Oecevelades decaryanum* in the South Africa, and a recently discovered species of the genus *Oecevelades*. (1a,2a,2b,2c,2d,3b)

Conservation Issues State owned and managed by the KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources. There is a proposal to designate the site as a Nature Reserve. A research station is located within the site. An electric fence is currently being erected around the lake as part of the developing management of the site as a formally protected area. Severe over grazing by domestic livestock and irrational burning has degraded the grasslands, and extensive areas around the lake have been cultivated. Two pumping stations have been constructed on the lake's shore and water is being abstracted for use in Mbazwane and Vasi. The invasive plant *Pereskia aculeata* is spreading along the east shore, but is now being actively controlled. DDT based pesticides are sprayed extensively in an attempt to control malaria in surrounding areas and there is also a proposal to apply a pesticide to the wetland in an attempt to eradicate the disease bilharzia, which is carried by a mollusc. This would kill all invertebrates and small fish within the wetland.