

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

NOTE: It is important that you read the accompanying *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document before completing this form.

1. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

06. 11. 94

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15	09	94

Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Country:

Zaire

3. Name of wetland:

Parc National des Virunga

4. Geographical coordinates: 1° N -1° S, 29°-30° E

5. Altitude: (average and/or max. & min.)

The park comprises an exceptional variety of habitats with an elevation range of 700 -5,119 m (Mont Ruwenzori), and 907 m at Lac Idi Amin.

6. Area: (in hectares) 800,000 ha.

7. Overview: (general summary, in two or three sentences, of the wetland's principal characteristics)

Differences in elevation cause large disparities in temperature, rainfall, and humidity levels between the various sectors of the park, which is situated in the African Rift valley.

8. Wetland Type (please circle the applicable codes for wetland types as listed in Annex I of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document.)

marine-coastal: A . B . C . D . E . F . G . H . I . J . K

inland: L . M . N . O . P . Q . R . Sp . Ss . Tp . Ts
. U . Va . Vt . W . Xf . Xp . Y . Zg . Zk

man-made: 1 . 2 . 3 . 4 . 5 . 6 . 7 . 8 . 9

Please now rank these wetland types by listing them from the most to the least dominant:

9. Ramsar Criteria: (please circle the applicable criteria; see point 12, next page.)

1a . 1b . 1c . 1d | 2a . 2b . 2c . 2d | 3a . 3b . 3c | 4a . 4b

Please specify the most significant criterion applicable to the site: _____

10. Map of site included? Please tick *yes* -or- *no*

(Please refer to the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document for information regarding desirable map traits).

11. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

Comité Interministériel de Coordination C.I.C.
Secrétariat Général à l'Environnement et la Conservation de la Nature
B.P. 12..348 Kinshasa 1
ZAIRE
Tel: 243-12-33.250/33.251
Fax: 001-212-376-9355

Please provide additional information on each of the following categories by attaching

extra pages (please limit extra pages to no more than 10):

12. Justification of the criteria selected under point 9, on previous page. (Please refer to Annex II in the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document).

- Wetland constituting a representative example of the biogeographical region.
 - Several migratory bird species present.
 - An assemblage of rare, vulnerable and endangered species.
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13. General location: (include the nearest large town and its administrative region)

The Parc National des Virunga wetlands are located in the Nord-Kivu Administrative Region. The park covers the Masisi, Rutshuru, Lubero, Goma and Beni districts and is close to Goma, the main centre in Nord Kivu Region.

14. Physical features: (e.g. geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; catchment area; downstream area; climate)

The Parc National des Virunga is entirely situated in the African Rift Valley.

The Virunga volcanoes are recent in origin, and there is still volcanic activity. The two large lakes in the park belong to different hydrographic systems, despite their both lying in the same rift. Lac Kivu is linked to the Zaire River basin, while Lac Amin is linked by its outlet, the Semliki River, to the Nile.

Differing elevation in the park area naturally causes wide temperature, rainfall and humidity variations from one sector to another.

The park contains the sites which record minimum and maximum rainfall for the whole country, just 75 km distant from each other. In some years rainfall in Ishango barely reaches 500 mm, whilst the figures for the slopes of Mont Ruwenzori can exceed 3,000 mm at around 3,000 m elevation.

15. Hydrological values: (groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilisation etc)

- Air purification,
 - Feeding and wintering ground for migratory birds,
 - Fish stocks,
 - Forestry and farming
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16. Ecological features: (main habitats and vegetation types)

Vegetation in the National Park is extremely varied due to differences in elevation. Most of the park lies in the Sudano-Zambezian phytogeographic zone, and comprises a host of biocenoses whose variety is second to none. The park lies on the fringes of several geographic zones and contributes to the protection of rainforest and eastern steppe species.

Lying astride the equator it contains most tropical biotopes with an exceptional variety of biotic factors. Rainfall, temperature, soil and vegetation are extremely diverse.

The park also includes biocenoses whose existence depends on very special environments such as lava, hot springs and the presence of toxic gases.

Along the rivers in the park are some of the most substantial concentrations of wild mammals in Africa, or indeed in the world.

The park is one of the few places where mountain gorilla can be studied in their natural environment.

17. Noteworthy flora: (indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc)

Wet biotopes, e.g.:

- papyrus swamps;
- phragmites swamps;
- ponds and pools;
- aquatic or transition environments comprising *Craterostigma* meadows and savanna under *Sporobolus*, and the amphibious environment.

Highground habitats, including:

- bamboo belt;
 - briarwood belt;
 - mountain country.
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18. Noteworthy fauna: (indicating, e.g., which species are unique, rare, endangered, abundant or biogeographically important; include count data, etc.) The large mammals in the park are characterised by their diversity, for some species by their biomass (?), and by their status as endangered or disappearing species. Endangered species include chimpanzee, *Pan troglodytus schweinfurthii*, leopard, *Panthera pardus linnaeus* and okapi *Okapia johnstoni*, a species endemic to Zaire.

19. Social and cultural values: (e.g. fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological site etc.)

- Ornithological, primatological, anthropological and archaeological research identifying the first well-known civilisation in central Africa and Zaire has been conducted inside the park, at Ishango, by the Frankfurt Zoological Society.
 - Important fish stocks for the Vitshumbi fishing cooperative.
 - Forthcoming natural history museum in Rwindi.
 - The oldest stone tools in the world have been discovered at two sites on the shores of the Semliki River and Lake Rutanziga (Senga 5 and Kanyatsi 2 sites).
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20. Land tenure/ownership of:

(a) site: State-owned land (b) surrounding area: State-owned

21. Current land use:

(a) site:

fishing on Lac Idi Amin outside the nature reserve.

hunting

subsistence farming and agroforestry (fuelwood)

(b) surroundings/catchment:

22. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land use and development projects:

- strong pressure from the population around the park gathering fuelwood
- influx of Rwandan refugees in the surrounding areas, making the park difficult to protect
- uncontrolled development of fishing activities

Potential pressures:

threats from technology and future development projects:

- Building of one or more dams on the Upper Rwindi or Upper Rutshuru Rivers.
 - Pollution of the Upper Rwindi by factories
 - High-voltage power line from Bukavu (Ruzizi) to the northern shores of Lac Beni, via Goma-Rutshuru-Kibirizi, with spurs towards Rwindi and the mines at Lueshe. Building the powerlines would involve many areas of foundation work for the pylons close to the park and, sometimes,
 - inside it.
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23. Conservation measures taken: (national category and legal status of protected areas - including any boundary changes which have been made: management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it has been implemented)

By decree adopted on 21 April 1925, the Parc National des Virunga is a strict nature reserve. It is currently subject to the terms of the legislation contained in Decree-Law 69-041, 22 August 1969, on nature conservation in Zaire.

A management plan for the park is in preparation.

24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented: (e.g. management plan in preparation; officially proposed as a protected area etc.)

The park will be managed in a way similar to biosphere reserves with the aim of involving the local people in work to protect it.

25. Current scientific research and facilities: (e.g. details of current projects; existence of field station etc.)

- Mountain gorilla ecoethology in the Parc National des Virunga (project run by the Frankfurt Zoological society).
- Chimpanzee ecoethology in the park (WWF project).
- There is an operational research centre in the park at Lulimbi.
- Current research focuses on animal behaviour and reproduction, and types of vegetation in the park

26. Current conservation education: (e.g. visitors centre, hides, information booklet, facilities for school visits etc.)

An education programme has been set up in cooperation with WWF to heighten local people's awareness to protection in the park through film and slide shows and by enhancing cooperation with the customary authorities and the population living near the nature reserves.

Publication of two nature magazines, Panda and Leopard.

Organisation of school trips, lectures in schools and surrounding villages, public awareness programmes in the media (radio, television, workshops, 60th anniversary of the Park).

27. Current recreation and tourism: (state if wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type and frequency/intensity)

Leisure and tourist centre.

Mass tourism.

Presence of infrastructure for tourism.

28. Jurisdiction: (territorial e.g. state/region and functional e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment etc.)

Territorial jurisdiction: Nord-Kivu region

Functional jurisdiction: Ministère de l'Environnement; de la Conservation de la Nature et du Tourisme

B. P. 12.348 / KINSHASA 1

Zaire

29. Management authority: (name and address of local body directly responsible for managing the wetland)

Institut Zairois pour la conservation de la Nature (IZCN)

13 avenue des Cliniques, B. P. 868 KINSHASA / GOMBE

Zaire

Tel: 243-12-31.401

30. Bibliographical references: (scientific/technical only) see original French document, section 29

Please return to: **Ramsar Convention Bureau, Rue Mauverney 28, CH-1196 GLAND, Switzerland**

Telephone: +41 22 999 0170 • Fax: +41 22 999 0169 • e-mail: ramsar@hq.iucn.org