

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

1. **Date this sheet was completed/updated:** 24 April 1994
2. **Country:** Congo
3. **Name of wetland:** Réserve communautaire du Lac Télé/Likouala-aux-Herbes
4. **Geographical coordinates:**

0° 30' South latitude - 1° 40' North latitude
17° 00' - 17° 30' East longitude

5. **Altitude:** An average altitude of 250 metres above sea level
6. **Area:** 438,960 hectares, of which 20 per cent is land

7. **Overview:** This wetland is a large flooded forest with grasslands subject to seasonal flooding and floating grasslands along the main streams and rivers. The small islands along the streams are occupied by villages or cultivated areas. The largest strip of dry land is that which crosses the Likouala-aux-Herbes River from Lake Télé to the edge of Lake Mboukou on the Batanga River to the east.

8. **Wetland type:** humid continental

9. **Ramsar criteria:** 3c

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

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

Projet Lac Télé/Likouala-aux-Herbes
Boîte postale 244
Brazzaville
Tel.: (242) 83 38 14
Fax: (242) 83 49 07

12. **Justification of the criteria selected under point 9, on previous page:**

13. **General location:** This wetland is in northern Congo in the region of Likouala, district of Epena. The nearest large city is Impfondo, 85 kilometres from the town of Epena by paved road.

14. **Physical features:**

Relief is relatively flat with slight differences in elevation where old alluvial terraces are

found among meanders and swamps. This complex river system is formed by the main river, the Likouala-aux-Herbes, into which the Bailly, Batanga, Mandoungouma and Tanga rivers flow. The site includes two main lakes, Lac Télé (5-6 kilometres in diameter) and Lake Mboukou (approximately 2 kilometres in diameter). The site is completely covered by a Quaternary formation of alluvial deposits. The soils are primarily hydromorphic bog soils under flooded forests and hydromorphic soils under floating grasses along the Likouala-aux-Herbes and its main tributaries.

The climate is equatorial with four seasons. There is a dry season from December to April, a short rainy season from May to June, a short dry season from July to August and a long rainy season from September to November. Average precipitation is between 1600 and 1800 millimetres per year, and the average annual temperature is 25° C. The site is wetter in the south (more than 1800 millimetres of rainfall per year) than in the north (1700 to 1800 millimetres of rainfall per year).

15. Hydrological values:

Biological role – This is an area for the reproduction of migratory Palaearctic species of marabou storks and pelicans.

Physical and chemical roles – Chemical composition of the water, protection from erosion by wind, rain and flooding of the shores of streams along which are located villages and creation of a microclimate.

16. Ecological features:

Land environment

There is dense forest on leached ferrous soils with Meliaceae (*Entandrophragma* spp.) and legumes (*Albyzia zygia*, *A. ferruginea*, *Pentacletrha* spp., *Pericopsis alata*, *Piptadeniastrum africanum*, *Pterocarpus soyauxii*) associated with Irvingiaceae (*Irvingia gabonensis*, *I. grandifolia*, *Klainedoxa gabonensis*). There is secondary forest in fields left fallow after farming of mainly *Lophira alata* and *Musanga cercropioides*. There is seasonally flooded forest primarily of *Gilbertiudendron dewevrei*, and riparian forest of *Parinari excelsa* associated with *Uapaca heudelotii* and *Guibourtia demeusei* associated with *Uapaca heudelotti*. There are grasslands of scrub savannah of *Hyparrhenia diplandra* and *Setaria restioifea* and flooded savannah of *Hypparrhenia deplandra*.

In the marine environment

There are mudflats dominated by *Myragina stipulosa*, *Uapaca guinensis* and *U. paludosa*. There are also islands of floating grasses of *Digitaria polybotrya*, *Echinocloa stagnina* and *Vossia cuspidata*, as well as areas of raffia composed of *Raphia hookeri* and *R. vinifera*.

17. Noteworthy flora:

There are populations of *Gilbertiodendron dewevrei*, *Guibourtia demeusei* and *Uapaca heudelotii* along the rivers and *Hyparrhenia diplandra* and *Jardicea congoensis* on the flood plains.

18. Noteworthy fauna:

There are several species of primates: the gorilla, chimpanzee, guenon and the colobus monkey (*Cephalophus calypigus*, *C. monticola*, *C. nigrifrons*, *C. sylvicultor*), duiker (*Tragelaphous spekei*); a bovine (*Syncerus caffer nanus*), an elephant (*Loxodonta africana cyclotius*) and a Suidae (*Potamochoerus porcus*). Bird life is represented by Ardeidae (*Ardea goliath*, *A. purpurea*, *Ardeola ibis*, *A. ralloides*, *Egretta alba*, *E. garzetta* and *Nycticorax nycticorax*), Phalacrocoracidae (*Anhinga rufa*, *Phalacrocorax africanus*), Ciconiidae (*Ciconia abdimii*, *C. episcopus*, *Leptptilos crumeniferus*), Jacanidae (*Actophylornis africana*), Alcedinidae (*Alcedo cristata*, *Ceryle maxima*, *Ceyx picta*, *Halcyon*, *H. senegalensis*), Anatidae (*canard de Hartlaub*, *oie de Gambie*, *sarcelle à oreillons*), waders (*chevalier sylvain*, *écharre à tête blanche*, *petit gravelot*).

19. Social and cultural values:

Fish and wildlife are an important resource for the local inhabitants. There is a possibility of creating fish ponds near the villages. The hunting of buffalo (*Syncerus caffer nanus*) using a locally made non-poisonous *sagaie* symbolizes the bravery of the Bomitaba male (the main ethnic group living in this area). There is a sacred and mythical attribute given to Lac Télé around the legend of the “mokele mbembe”, a huge animal resembling a dinosaur.

20. Land tenure/ownership of:

At the site: The reserve is in the public domain and belongs to the government.

In the surrounding area: The land belongs to the local communities.

21. Current land use:

The dry land surrounding the villages is used to grow subsistence crops (manioc, yams, bananas, taro) and market crops (cacao and coffee). The forest on dry land and seasonally flooded forest are areas for hunting in the area of wise use (ZUR). The rivers, sloughs (*marigots*), natural ponds and lakes are used for small-scale fishing.

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

There is a project to build a road for extraction of timber exploited by the Congolaise Industrielle de Bois (CIB) near the northern and north-western boundary of the reserve. There is also cutting down of forest by the CIB next to the northern and north-western boundaries of the reserve. Bush fires out of control have destroyed a large area of riparian forest between the villages of Makengo and Matoko.

23. Conservation measures taken:

Creation of the Réserve communautaire du Lac Télé/Likouala-aux-Herbes

24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

A management and conservation plan is being prepared.

25. Current scientific research and facilities:

This area has not been studied in detail. However, there have been about ten expeditions, including that of ORSTOM in 1976, the American-Congolese expedition of 1981, the French expedition of 1983, the Belgian expedition of 1984, the Dutch-Congolese expedition of 1986, the French expedition of 1987 and the Japan-Congolese expedition of 1988. Although most of these expeditions have sought to study the possible existence of a prehistoric animal that may have lived in the lake, there has been no serious study of the lake's aquatic ecosystem or of the life of the local inhabitants.

Under the project Lac Télé/Likouala-aux-Herbes, a socio-economic study was carried out in more than twenty villages. A report on this work has been published along with the results of the preliminary surveys of mammal and flora. There are no research facilities except for a small weather station purchased by the project in 1996.

26. Current conservation education:

The project organizes seminars for schoolchildren and local partners as part of the management of the reserve. There is a club of friends of nature that helps the project in promoting awareness among the local population.

27. Current recreation and tourism:

All activities related to ecotourism have been included in the conservation plan that is being prepared.

28. Jurisdiction:

Ministère de l'Economie forestière

29. Management authority:

At the present time, the reserve is managed by the Projet Lac Télé/Likouala-aux-Herbes and the Comité Local de Conservation (CLC).

30. Bibliographical references: