

Ramsar Information Sheet

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1. Date this sheet was completed:

July 1996

2. Country:

The Gambia

3. Name of wetland:

Baobolon Wetland Reserve

4. Geographical co-ordinates:

15.90 - Longitude

13.50 - Latitude

5. Altitude:

11.63 M (above sea level)

6. Area:

20,000 ha

7. Overview

Baobolon is a tidal wetland complex which is located in the North Bank of The Gambia River. It consists of six major bolons (tributaries/creeks) between Salikeni and Katchang villages. Together they form a wetland complex of approximately 20,000 ha. The tidal flats have been the subject of low cost communal dyking schemes for fresh water retention and rice production. The area's mangrove ecosystem provides an important fish breeding ground and its tributaries are an important source of fish (African Tilapia) for the local communities and travellers alike. Local communities equally obtain fencing and roofing materials from the area. The Baobolon extends to The Gambia's borders with Senegal and offers the potential for bilateral cooperation on biodiversity.

8. Wetland type:

- tidal estuary
- mangroves
- Salt Marsh and tidal flats
- Savanna woodlands adjacent to salt marsh and occasionally flooded

9. Ramsar Criteria:

10. Map of site included:

see attached

11. Name and address of compiler/contact:

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12. Justification of criteria selected under point 9:

Criteria no. 1. The Baobolon wetland complex provides food, thatch grass and fencing materials and maintain cultural practices/values of local communities without negatively impacting on the resource base.

Criteria no. 2. Because of the occurrence of three distinct types of habitat all in very close proximity at several locations the Baoblon complex has the special value as the habitat of plants and animals - Resident and migratory - at a critical stage of their biological cycle.

13. General location:

North Bank Division of The Gambia; between the villages of Salikeni and Katchang.

14. Physical features:

Baobolon does not have the characteristics of a river any more. It is now a valley which stretches over a length of more than 140 km from the border south of the Ferlo River towards the River Gambia. The valley crosses the Senegalese territory at Marlene, Ndiao, Kayemore and passes through the south-east of Niorro and penetrates The Gambia territory through Illiassa. For about six months of the year water in the Baobolon area remain brackish. However, during the rainy season (July-October) fresh rain water is retained by the dikes for rice cultivation. This situation continues until December when the general water level begins to drop and water turns brackish again.

15. Hydrological values:

There is likelihood that the Marshes act as a flood control and sediment retention mechanism However, more studies need to be carried out to really ascertain this statement. The water retained behind the community dikes for almost 2 months after the rainy season has a significant effect on local ground water supplies. This is evidenced by the fact that local wells immediately close to the dikes are relatively shallow with a high volume of water initially, but as the dry season progresses and much of the retained water disappears, the level of water in the wells drop, often necessitating deepening of the wells to increase the volume.

16. Ecological features:

The significance of Baobolon lies in the fact that there are three distinct wetland ecosystems - mangrove forest, salt marsh and savanna - woodland - all occurring in very close proximity at several locations. The mangrove forests are characterised by : *Rhizophora racemosa*, *Rhizophora mangle* and *Avicennia africana*. The barro flats support : *Sesuvium portulacastrum*, *sporobolus spicatus*, *Paspalum Vaginatum* and *Diplachne fasca*. The principal species of grasses in the grass savanna (intermittent flooding) are: *phragmites karka*, *Echinochloa pyramidalis* and *cyperus papyrus*. Riparian and fringing savanna - woodland and woodland species include; - *Daiella Oliveri*, *ptericarpus erinaceous*, *Terminalia albida*, *Parkia biglobosa*, *Bombax costatum* etc. shrubs and small trees include :*Ficus spp*, *philostigma thonningii*, *Terminalia avicennoides*, *Anthostema Senegalensis*, *Nauclea latifolia* and grass species include :*Andropogon tectorum*, *A. gayanus*, *Beckeropsis unisetata* and *pennisetum subangustu*.

17. Noteworthy flora:

Mangroves : *Rhizophora racemosa*, *Rhizophora mangle*, *Avicennia africana*.

Mangroves are extensively felled and used for fencing, fuelwood and construction purposes in The Gambia. This unrestricted and uncontrolled use of mangroves plus the saline intrusion phenomenon is causing the disappearance and probably, massive die offs of this species in The Gambia.

Other locally important and protected species include :

Ptericarpus erinaceous, *Parinari macrophylla*, *Acacia albida*, *Cordyla africana*, *Parkia biglobosa*.

18. Noteworthy fauna:

The following avifauna have been reliably observed at various locations and in various habitat types within the Baobolon wetland (complex) reserve:

Egretta gularis, *Pocephalus Senegalux*, *Psittacula Kraneri*, *Egretta garzetta*, *Ciconia episcopus*, *Halcyon senegalensis*, *Scopus umbretta*, *Streptopelia decipiens*, *Ardeola ralloides*, *Lxobrychus minutus*, *Ardea goliath*, *Ceryle rudis*, *Egretta alba*, *Lepoptilos crumeniferus*, *Vanellus spinosus*, *Nycticorax nycticorax*, *Merops hirundineus*, *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*, *Ardea cinerea*, *Bucorvus abyssinicus*, *Haliaetus vocifer*, *Ceryle maxima*, *Ibis ibis*, *Pelicanus rufescens*, *Coracias garrulus*, *Buteo augurals*, *Milvus migrans*, *Terathopius ecaudatus*, *Threskiornis aethipica*, *Vanellus spinosus*, *Alcedo Cristata*, *Calidris minuta*, *Halcyon malimbica*, *Sarkidiornis melanota*, *Plectropterus*

gambensis, *Dendrocygna viduata*, *Anas querquedula*, *Anas acute*, *Nettapus auritus*, *Anas clypeata*, *Apus affinis*, *Tringa hypoleucos*, *Lamprotornis candatus*, *Anhinga rufa*..

Fish species present in the baobolon area include:

Ethmalosa fimbriota, *Sphreana sp.*, *Polydactylus quadrifilis*, *Arius sp.*, *Fonticulus elongatus*, *Pomadasy peroteti*, *Pseudotolithus bracygnathus*, *Crassostrea gasar*.

Also present are crabs : *Callinectes sp.*

The area also provides significant habitats for other aquatic animals such as :cape clawless otter, West African Manatee, Nile crocodile, Sitatunga etc. etc.

Other wildlife include: spotted hyena, primates (Red colobus, Patas and Green vervet monkeys), bushbuck, duiker.

19. Social and cultural values:

Several sites immediately outside the reserve were identified as War zones, trading posts, hiding places, sites for performing cultural /traditional rituals etc. during the period of the slave trade.

20. Land tenure/ownership of:

The Baobolon wetland reserve site was declared a protected wetland area by the government of The Gambia to protect and conserve the entire wetland habitats and associated wildlife and avifauna for now and posterity. Under the traditional system of tenure local residents claim ownership of certain areas of the wetland complex. For purposes of good public relations, certain resource exploitation practices by the communities (e.g. fishing for local use, harvesting of thatch grass and fencing materials and cultural practices) are allowed to happen at levels that the resources can sustain.

The surrounding lands are made up of communal farmlands, private agricultural and residential lands.

21. Current land use/principal human activities:

Current uses on the site are predominantly recreational ; birdwatching, wildlife viewing, fishing for home consumption and canoeing.

22. Factors adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land use and development projects:

The core area of the wetland reserve is under optimal conservation status. Because of the salinity of much of the area, there are no immediate perceived developmental threats to the reserve. Development of settlements on the reserve's periphery as it stands now are unlikely to impact negatively on the reserve's resources and values. However as settlements continue to grow and the associated human populations increase, the pressure on land to feed and accommodate the increasing population is likely to extend to the reserve area.

On the contrary, the main concern now is the destruction caused by wildlife on agricultural crops. This is a matter of great concern often resulting in serious conflicts between farmers and conservation officers. An acceptable solution to the problem has to be worked out.

23. Conservation measures taken:

The area is protected by The Wildlife Conservation Act & the Banjul Declaration both of 1977. A limited ecological and ecotourism assessment of the area was undertaken in December 1993 to have an indication of its potential role for ecotourism.

24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

Area is being nominated for designation as a Ramsar site. Plans are ahead to carry out a detailed environmental, ecological and socio-economic survey of the area with a view to preparing a sound management plan for the area in order to optimize the amount and quality of wetland habitat available to waterbirds and other wetland dependent species. Work will commence soon.

25. Current scientific and research facilities:

There are no ongoing research projects in the area.

26. Current conservation education:

No facilities for conservation education exists in the reserve as yet. However, the conservation education and extension unit of the Kiang West National Park, which is adjacent to Baobolon and the extension unit of the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management periodically organise community and public awareness programmes on wildlife and protected area issues in the communities surrounding the Baobolon.

27. Current recreation and tourism:

The area is extensively used for recreational purposes i.e. birdwatching, wildlife viewing, sport and local fishing, canoeing, and photography.

28. Jurisdiction:

- The Government of The Gambia (Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources).
- Functionally - The Department of Parks and Wildlife Management

29. Management authority:

The Department of Parks and Wildlife Management
c/o Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources
The Quadrangle
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30. Bibliographical references: