

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7, as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Note for compilers:

1. The RIS should be completed in accordance with the attached *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for completing the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands*. Compilers are strongly advised to read this guidance before filling in the RIS.
2. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Bureau. Compilers are strongly urged to provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of maps.

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

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

April 18, 2006

3. Country:

Liberia

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

Kpatawee Wetlands

5. Designation of new Ramsar site:

This RIS is for (tick one box only)

- a). Designation of a new Ramsar Site ; or
b). Updated information on an existing Ramsar site

6. For RIS updates only, changes to the site since its designation or earlier update:

a) Site boundary and area

The Ramsar site boundary and area are unchanged:

or

If the site boundary has changed:

- i) the boundary has been delineated more accurately ; or
- ii) the area has been extended ; or
- iii) the area has been reduced**

**** Important note:** If the boundary and / or area of a designated site is being restricted/ reduced, the contracting party should have following the procedures established by the Conference of the Parties in the Annex of the COP9 resolution IX.6 and provided a report in line with paragraph 28 of that Annex, prior to the submission of an updated RIS.

b). Describe briefly any major changes to the ecological character to the Ramsar site including in the application of the criteria, since the previous RIS for the site:

7. Map of site:

Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines*, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps, including digital maps.

a). A map of a site, with clearly delineated bordering, is included as:

- i) a hard copy (require for conclusion of site in the Ramsar list):
- ii) an electronic format (e.g. a JPEG or Arc View image)
- iii) a GIS file providing geo-referenced site bordering vectors and attribute tables

b). Describe briefly the type of bordering delineation applied:

e.g the boundary is the same as an existing protected area(nature reserve, national park, etc.), or follows a Catchment boundary, or follows a geopolitical boundary such as a local government jurisdiction, follows physical boundaries such as roads, follows a shoreline of a waterbody, etc.

The delineation was an on screen digitizing using 250k topography base map taking into consideration geographical and catchments boundaries. The map is actually depicting the site as a waterfall and agriculture project site, The Kpatawee Swamp Rice Project, which has the objective of demonstrating advanced methods of rice cultivation. This is an alternative means of discouraging shifting cultivation. Shifting cultivation is a traditional method of farming where a farmer moves from one place to another each farming year. This means he has to clear new forest area for farming. This destroys our forest and affects the wildlife habitat. This means the area is actually composed of settlements and secondary forest within the site.

N

8. Geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude, in degrees and minutes):

Provide the coordinates of the approximate centre of the site and/ or the limits of the site. If the site is composed of more than one separate area, provide coordinates for each of these areas.

The site is between latitudes 07 °06' and 07 ° 08' N and longitudes 09 °37' and 09 ° 38' W

9. General location:

The Kpatawee wetland is located in the central part of Liberia within the Kpatawee clan. The large administrative region is Bong County. Kpatawee is 3 miles away from Suakoko, which is the nearest largest town. The population of Kpatawee clan is eight hundred plus.

10. Elevation: (average and/or max. & min.)

500-750m above sea level

11. Area: (in hectares)

835 hectares

12. General overview of the site:

Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland.

Kpatawee waterfall is a branch of the St. John River, one of the six major rivers in Liberia. The river flows southward passing through Bong County with fluctuations in water level at varying season. In the upper region, the water erode its V. shaped valley, while in the lower section, it accumulates sand and gravels. The movement of the water flow in this way causes the water to branch into several directions leaving patches of bare lands in between. These patches of bare land provide wintering grounds for large numbers of common Sandpipers.

Kpatawee wetland is comprised of the kpelleh tribe of the Kpatawee clan. The tribal people are both Christians and pagans. Eight hundred plus occupied this area with up to 75% youth in domination. Secondary forest tree species engulf the wetland. Some examples are *Parinari excelsa*, *Parkia*, *Cryptosepalum* and *Amanoa*. The wetland is an inland riverine. The Kpatawee rice project established by Government, uses the water for irrigating the rice fields.

Each season, the site is a host to many migratory birds such as European bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*), Yellow throated Honey-guide *Melignomon eisentrauti* and White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer*. All of these are rare species.

13. Ramsar Criteria:

Circle or underline each Criterion applied to the designation of the Ramsar site. See Annex II of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines* for the Criteria and guidelines for their application (adopted by Resolution VII.11).

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8

14. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 13 listed above:

Provide justification for each Criterion in turn, clearly identifying to which Criterion the justification applies (see Annex II for guidance on acceptable forms of justification).

Criterion 2

Many of the species present at the site are currently considered as endangered species and are vulnerable. They include Three-cusped Pangolin *Manis tricuspis* (CITES App. II) and the endemic otter shrew *Micropotamogale lamottei* (EN). Some migratory bird species include the Little Ring Plover *Charadrius dubius*, and Forbes' Plover *C. forbesi* (CMS App. II). The Red Colobus monkey *Procolobus badius*, and the Water Chevrotain *Hyemoschus aquaticus* are other species, considered endangered and protected by the new Forestry Law of 2000 that are also observed in this area on many occasions as reported by residents.

Criterion 4

The Kpatawee Wetland provides a refuge for various species of birds and fish population, with the following species being examples: Palearctic Migrant species such as Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*), Greenshanks (*Tringa nebularia*), Common sandpiper. In the irrigated rice fields, other species observed wintering are the Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, Green Sandpiper *T. ochropus* etc.

15. Biogeography (required when Criteria 1 and/or 3 and /or certain applications of Criterion 2 are applied to the designation):

Name the relevant biogeographic region that includes the Ramsar site, and identify the biogeographic regionalisation system that has been applied.

a) biogeographic region:

Southern Upper Guinea Freshwater Ecoregion

b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme (include reference citation):

WWF's Freshwater Ecoregions of Africa

16. Physical features of the site:

Describe, as appropriate, the geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth, water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; downstream area; general climate, etc.

The site is located in the belt of rolling hills with an elevation range of 500-750m above sea level. It is surrounded by secondary rainforest. Rocks characterizing the site are granite and limestone or marble stones. The soil is relatively high in ions and less organic. The land is highly eroded in some parts. Water level varies from rainy to dry season. The water level rises up to 2.5m during the rainy season in July to August. The dry season brings the water level down to as low as 50 cm. However, the water never dries. Sedimentation occurs downstream as the result of rapids or water current. The relative humidity is around 80-85% during wet season and 60-65% during dry season. The annual rainfall is around 2000mm-2250mm.

17. Physical features of the catchment area:

Describe the surface area, general geology and geomorphological features, general soil types, general land use, and climate (including climate type).

The water flowing through the wetland is a branch of the St. John River which flows from the northern highlands down south across the country. The down flow of the river is rapid and strong and erodes a V-shaped valley, while in the lower sections, sand and gravel accumulate. This accumulation causes the river to branch in several directions leaving patches of dry or bare land within the system.

During the rainy season, the sandbanks shift almost daily, especially after heavy rainstorms, when water level rises rapidly. These shifting sands create the extraordinary change in water level between dry and rainy seasons. The waterfalls, rocks and crags make navigation on the water extremely difficult. So that even canoes are scarce except near the banks of the river.

18. Hydrological values:

Describe the functions and values of the wetland in groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilization, etc.

The hydrological value of the wetland is seen as underground water recharge for rural water supply and irrigation of paddy fields.

19. Wetland Types

a) presence:

Circle or underline the applicable codes for the wetland types of the Ramsar “Classification System for Wetland Type” present in the Ramsar site. Descriptions of each wetland type code are provided in Annex I of the *Explanatory Notes & Guidelines*.

Marine/coastal: A • B • C • D • E • F • G • H • I • J • K • Zk(a)

Inland: L • M • N • O • P • Q • R • Sp • Ss • Tp • Ts • U • Va
Vt • W • Xf • Xp • Y • Zg • Zk(b)

Human-made: 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • Zk(c)

b) dominance:

List the wetland types identified in a) above in order of their dominance (by area) in the Ramsar site, starting with the wetland type with the largest area.

The wetland is primarily considered as a waterfall.

M, Tp, 3, 2, 9

20. General ecological features:

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site.

The wetland falls within the rainforest zone of Liberia, the belt of mountain ranges and plateaux. The main habitat consists of a rocky terrain, in the form of granite and limestone or marble stones. Growing in between the rocks are savannah grasses. The site is within a valley with secondary forests trees overlooking the site.

21. Noteworthy flora:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

Noteworthy flora in this region is the Raphia palm. This tree is economically important because the local inhabitants use it for producing a local beverage called “Palm Wine”.

22. Noteworthy fauna:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc., including count data. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

Noteworthy fauna observed are the Maxwell's duikers *Cephalophus maxwelli*. It is very common and widely hunted. Local people are earning high income from the sale of this meat. The species is believed to be very prolific.

23. Social and cultural values:

e.g., fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological sites, social relations with the wetland, etc.
Distinguish between historical/archaeological/religious significance and current socio-economic values.

a). During the collection of relevant data on the site, the villagers expressed that they would like to have the area as a protected area for nature reserve in order to attract tourism. This area is a site for hosting. The villagers valued this area as a picnic ground for hosting meetings, workshops and retreat. Many groups travelled from Monrovia and other places for these purposes. Small donations are provided to the villagers for the use of the area.

b) Is the site considered of international importance for holding, in addition to relevant ecological values, examples of significant cultural values, whether material or non-material, linked to its origin, conservation and/or ecological functioning?

If Yes, tick the box and describe this importance under one or more of the following categories:

NA

- i) sites which provide a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge and methods of management and use that maintain the ecological character of the wetland:
- ii) sites which have exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilizations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland:
- iii) sites where the ecological character of the wetland depends on the interaction with local communities or indigenous peoples:
- iv) sites where relevant non-material values such as sacred sites are present and their existence is strongly linked with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland:

24. Land tenure/ownership:

(a) within the Ramsar site:

The Kpelleh tribe of the Kpatawee Clan owns the land.

(b) in the surrounding area:

The Kpelleh tribe of the Kpatawee Clan also owns the land.

25. Current land (including water) use:

(a) within the Ramsar site:

The current use of the land is for palm wine production, hunting, fishing, basket making, bathing, swimming, washing of clothes and other domestic uses. Within the proposed site, the Governments of Liberia and China undertook the Kpatawee Rice Project. The objective of the project was to introduce new rice farming methods to farmers to discourage shifting cultivation in order to prevent damage to the forest. This project provided the opportunity to employment thereby increasing income level as well as increasing the yield in rice production.

(b) in the surroundings/catchment:

The surrounding catchment is used for the holding of the local secret society meetings. A university, The Cuttington University and a referral hospital, Phebe Hospital are providing higher education and medical care in the surrounding area. Local people in the surrounding area are involved in small businesses, such as the sale of gasoline, timber and clothing materials. A weekly market is established for the interaction of people, both rural and urban dwellers travelling from major cities in Liberia, such as Gbarnga, Ganta, Monrovia, etc.

In other areas around the site local people are involved in soap making, tie and dye of clothing materials, palm wine, palm oil, piggery and poultry production, etc.

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

(a) within the Ramsar site:

In the mid eighties, the Government of Liberia conducted a feasibility study on the Kpatawee Waterfall to determine its hydro-potential. It was defined as suitable. Since the Civil Crisis, nothing is done to affect the hydro plan. The threat under consideration is that, if the Government decides to implement this plan, it will affect the ecological character of the site.

(b) in the surrounding area:

Around the site, the rural inhabitants are engaged in coal production and pit sawing in an uncontrolled way. If this attitude continues unchecked, it will affect the aesthetic beauty of the site.

27. Conservation measures taken:

List national category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site; management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it is being implemented.

a) List national and/or international category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site:

NA

b) If appropriate, list the IUCN (1994) protected areas category/ies which apply to the site (tick the box or boxes as appropriate):

NA

Ia ; Ib ; II ; III ; IV ; V ; VI

c) Does an officially approved management plan exist; and is it being implemented?:

No management plan is developed

d) Describe any other current management practices:

Currently the locals are managing the site for holding picnics, meetings and other activities by a local community management team as was reported by local people at the time of conducting the survey.

28. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

The national conservation measure like all other protected areas is to include the Kpatawee Wetland under a protected area management network after the successful designation as Ramsar Site and to exclude exploitation/ occupation inimical to the purposes of designation of the area.

The villagers are aspiring to place the site under a protection status where they themselves would be able to manage the site. In this way they will ensure the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland under a management plan.

No conservation measure has been proposed beside what the work of this RIS is intending to do. The Kpatawee Wetlands after fulfilling the required criteria for Ramsar Site designation, will have a management plan developed in order to seek governments approval under the Act creating the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of Liberia.

29. Current scientific research and facilities:

e.g., details of current research projects, including biodiversity monitoring; existence of a field research station, etc.

No current research is ongoing aside from a survey that was conducted by BirdLife International to determine the bird population. This research was sponsored by Wetlands International under the administrative guidance of Society for the Conservation of Nature (SCNL) in Liberia. The head research scientist was Wolf Gatter of Germany who led a team of research personnel from the Forestry Development Authority (FDA), the University of Liberia (UL) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of Liberia in 2005.

30. Current conservation education:

e.g. visitors' centre, observation hides and nature trails, information booklets, facilities for school visits, etc.

There is no current conservation education ongoing beside the site visits that were made by EPA personnel to collect relevant data about the site. During these visits wetland communities were able to know the mission of the visits at which time an exchange of information was made. Other education and communication strategy include radio talk

shows periodically occurring on various radio programs. In November 2005 students in elementary division were asked to depict the wise use concept through arts by the Government CEPA Focal Point.

31. Current recreation and tourism:

State if the wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type(s) and their frequency/intensity.

This site is an ideal site for nature reserve and tourist attraction but has not officially been recognized for this purpose. On many occasions this site is visited by guests from various places for the view of its romantic waterfalls and terracing. The diversity of waterfowls flocking in this area under the serenity of nature makes a grand display of nature's beauty. Currently the villagers are using the area for fishing and swimming.

The current recreation activities are the holding of retreats, workshops and meetings by various groups from Monrovia and other areas in the Country.

32. Jurisdiction:

Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.

The Local People are the ones now with jurisdiction over the area

33. Management authority:

Provide the name and address of the local office(s) of the agency(ies) or organisation(s) directly responsible for managing the wetland. Wherever possible provide also the title and/or name of the person or persons in this office with responsibility for the wetland.

The same as (32) But the EPA is the contact institution through the Focal Point

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34. Bibliographical references:

scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 13 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

- 1). The Liberian Bushmeat Atlas produced by the Philadelphia Zoo
 - 2). Liberia National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)
 - 3). Report from the Project "The Impacts of Nutrient Discharge in The Liberian Coastal Waters"
 - 4). The Birds of Mount Nimba, Liberia (Peter R. Colston and Kai Curry-Lindahl 1986)
 - 5). Birds of Liberia (Wulf Gatter 1997)
 - 6). Birds of Liberia-A Preliminary Check-List with Status and Open questions
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APPENDICE

List of Some Birds found in highland areas in Liberia (Gbedin and Kpatawee Wetlands inclusive)

No.	Common Name	Scientific name
1	Hooded Vulture	<i>Neophron monachus</i>
2	Beaudouin's Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus beaudouini</i>
3	Brown Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>
4	Bateleur	<i>Therathopius ecaudatus</i>
5	Common/Steppe Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
6	Tawny Eagle	<i>Aquila rapar</i>
7	Whalberg's Eagle	<i>Aquila whalbergi</i>
8	Swallow-tailed Kite	<i>Elanus riocourii</i>
9	Grey Kestrel	<i>Falco ardosiaceus</i>
10	Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>
11	European Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>
12	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>
13	Helmed Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>
14	Verreaux's Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo lacteus</i>
15	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
16	Violet Turaco	<i>Musophaga violacea</i>
17	African Scops Owl	<i>Otus senegalensis</i>
18	Spotted Crake	<i>Porzana porzana</i>
19	Little Crake	<i>Porzana parva</i>
20	Black-billed Wood Dove	<i>Turrur abyssinnicus</i>
21	Brown Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus binotatus</i>
22	Red-necked Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus ruficollis</i>
23	Freckled Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus tristigma</i>
24	Striped Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon chelicuti</i>
25	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
26	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
27	Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops hirundineus</i>