

TECHNICAL ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS FOR WETLAND DESIGNATED FOR INCLUSION ON THE LIST OF WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE UNDER THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE ESPECIALLY AS WATERFOWL HABITAT (RAMSON CONVENTION)

COUNTRY: Uganda

NAME: Lake George Wetland

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION:  $SO^{\circ}02'$  -  $NO^{\circ}16'$ .  $E30^{\circ}01'$  -  $E30^{\circ}03'$ .

A permanent swamp situated just North of the Equator in western Uganda on the northern shores of Lake George. Most of the wetlands is within the borders- of Queen Elizabeth (formerly Rwenzori) National Park. A small northern portion is located in the Kibale Game corridor (a Game Reserve).

ALTITUDE: 915 - 1000m

AREA: Approximately 150 sq. km.

LEGAL PROTECTION: Protected as being part of a National park since 1952.

CLIMATE: Annual rainfall for the area 700 - 1200 mm. Equatorial with two rainy seasons per year. Little fluctuation in maximum and minimum temperatures - mean range  $18^{\circ}C$  -  $28^{\circ}C$  - High solar radiation.

LAND TENURE: State-owned

PHYSICAL FEATURES: This wetland lies within the western arm of the East African Rift Valley. It once underwent volcanic activity. The main drainage is from the Rwenzori mountains to the north and north west. Including the following rivers Ruimi, Hiima, Mubuku, Rukoki, Kamulikwezi, Mahoma, nsonge, Mpanga and Dura.

VEGETATION: The following types occur:-

- (i) Cyperus papyrus swamp-dominated by Cyperus papyrus and associated species include Ipomoea rubers, Melanthera Scandens, Cayratia ibuensis, Hibiscus diversifolius. Found at Lake margins and permanently wet swamps. May float over water and soft mud. Occasionally burned but regenerates in a few months. Edges utilised by elephant and hippopotemus. Within the swamp is rare swamp-dwelling antelope, the sitatunga.
- (ii) Cyperus latifolius swamp dominated by cyperus latifolius. Found in permanently wet swamps. Burning is rare and regeneration rapid. Lightly grazed by elephant.
- (iii) Cladium mariscus swamp - dominated by Cladium mariscus. Located in permanently wet swamps. Mostly, occasionally burned. Exceptionally inaccessible being located in the centre of the swamp.

- (iv) *Nymphaea* community - dominated by Nymphaea (water lily), associated species include Ceratophyllum demersum, Azolla africans, Pistia stratiotes. Uncommon, floats on clean water, found at mouth of Nsonge river.
- (v) Trees and shrubs include Aechynomene elaphroxylon (Ambatch), Mimosa pigra.

FAUNA ESPECIALLY BIRDS: The large mammals associated with this wetland include;

elephant Loxodonta africana

Hippo Hippopotamus amphibius

sitatunga Tragelaphus spekei (aquatic antelope)

The area of Queen Elizabeth National Park is well known for being rich in bird species because of its wide variety of habitats, including swamp and marsh, lake, wallows etc. Winter migrants from the Palaearctic include sandpipers, snipe and plovers. These arrive in September/October and leave March/April each year. Species list includes:

Marsh sandpiper	<u>Tringa</u>	<u>Stagnatilis</u>
Wood sandpiper	<u>Tringa</u>	<u>glareola</u>
Green sandpiper	<u>Tringa</u>	<u>ochropus</u>
Curlew sandpiper	<u>Calidris</u>	<u>ferruginea</u>
Common sandpiper	<u>Actitis</u>	<u>hypotencos</u>
Greenshank	<u>Tringa</u>	<u>nebularia</u>
Redshank	<u>Tringa</u>	<u>totanus</u>
Spotted Redshank	<u>Tringa</u>	<u>erythropus</u>
Little Stint	<u>calidris</u>	<u>minuta</u>
Ruff	<u>Philomachus</u>	<u>pugnax</u>

All the above inhabit marshes and the soft edges of lakes and wallows.

Migratory Ducks and Geese include:

Garganey Teal Anas querquedula

European Pintail Anas acuta

mostly on lakes and pools.

A resident species in this wetland which deserves mention because of its rarity is the whale-headed or shoebill stork (Balaeniceps rex), which dwells in the heart of papyrus swamps.

**MANAGEMENT:** There is no management plan for this wetland or for the Park as a whole. However, this situation is soon to be rectified. In addition the Park has been a Biosphere Reserve under the Man & the Biosphere (MAB) programme of UNESCO since 1979. Although the biosphere reserve concept has yet to be fully implemented there.

**MODIFICATION BY HUMAN ACTIVITY:** Most of this wetland is in its natural state, However the fringes are being modified or utilised by human activity as follows:

- (i) papyrus for roofing
- (ii) burning although rare
- (iii) seepage of chemicals from Kilembe mines to the west
- (iv) washing down of agricultural chemicals in Mubuku River from the Mubuku Irrigation Scheme.
- (v) Pollutants from Hima Cement factory to the north-west.

The fact that the swamp lies in a protected area has ensured its preservation, although virtually surrounded by areas of human population.

**SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH POTENTIAL:** The National Park contains the oldest ecological research station in tropical Africa (the Uganda Institute of Ecology).

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