



# Ramsar Sites Information Service

## Annotated List of Wetlands of International Importance

# Benin

4 Ramsar Site(s) covering 2,587,342 ha

### **Basse Vallée de l'Ouémé, Lagune de Porto-Novo, Lac Nokoué**

Site number: 1,018 | Country: Benin | Administrative region: Sur le plan administratif, le site 1018 se trouve à cheval sur cinq départements à savoir : Littoral, Atlantique, Ouémé, Plateau et Zou.

Area: 652,760 ha | Coordinates: 06°45'14"N 02°24'47"E | Designation dates: 24-01-2000

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site in southern Benin was extended in 2018, from the original area of 91,600 hectares designated in 2001, to cover 652,760 ha. In addition to the lower stretch of the Ouémé valley, the Site now covers a marine area, a lagoon complex, the swamp of Adjarra, and the middle Ouémé valley. This Site and [Ramsar Site no. 1017](#) "Basse Vallée du Couffo, Lagune Côtière, Chenal Aho, Lac Ahémé" now cover the entire coast of Benin, forming a vast and important complex of wetlands. The Site is composed of various ecosystems including swamp forest, flooded prairies, reeds, floating vegetation, and mangrove. It is home to more than 200 plant species, including threatened species or varieties such as *Mansonia altissima var. altissima*. The diverse fauna of the site includes: eight primates including the red-bellied monkey (*Cercopithecus erythrogaster*); more than 80 fish species; aquatic mammals such as *Trichechus senegalensis*; 18 reptile species; and at least four turtle species including the leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) which nests on the Site. There are around 215 bird species, many found at Lac Nokoué, which is an Important Bird Area (IBA-BJ004). The presence of sacred forests adds a social and cultural value to the Site. Human uses include fishing by over 20,000 fishers, logging, agricultural production, and food gathering. However, the over-exploitation of natural resources and land conversion threaten the ecological character. The Site has a management plan and some conservation activities are being implemented.

## Basse Vallée du Couffo, Lagune Côtière, Chenal Aho, Lac Ahémé

Site number: 1,017 | Country: Benin | Administrative region: Sur le plan administratif, le site 1017 s'étend sur quatre Départements : Atlantique, Mono, Couffo et Zou

Area: 524,289 ha | Coordinates: 06°47'37"N 01°51'13"E | Designation dates: 24-01-2000

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The Site in southern Benin was extended in 2018, from the original area of 47,500 hectares designated in 2001, to cover over 524,000 ha, including the valleys of the Couffo, Mono and Sazué rivers. This Site and [Ramsar Site no. 1018](#) "Basse Vallée de l'Ouémé, Lagune de Porto-Novo, Lac Nokoué" together now cover the entire coast of Benin, forming a vast and important complex of wetlands. The Site provides habitats for migrating turtles and birds, and spawning grounds for fish, crustaceans and molluscs. Its mangrove swamps, flooded grasslands and wooded savannah are home to around 233 bird species and over 90 fish species. The diverse fauna includes a number of threatened species such as hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), African manatee (*Trichechus senegalensis*), *Brycinus carolinae* (a ray-finned fish) and red-bellied monkey (*Cercopithecus erythrogaster*). 364 plant species have been counted, belonging to 100 families including *Poaceae* and *Rubiaceae*. Activities include tourism, the fishing sector which employs about 10,000 fishers, and production of salt, palm wine and corn. The sacred status of areas such as some mangroves adds social and cultural value to the Site. Major threats include the over-exploitation of the mangroves, soil erosion due to illegal logging, and coastal erosion. The Ramsar Site overlaps with the Mono UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, for which a management plan is being implemented with the participation of the local communities.

## Site Ramsar du Complexe W

Site number: 1,668 | Country: Benin | Administrative region: Le site Ramsar du complexe W est localisé à l'extrême nord du pays dans le département de l'Alibori.

Area: 926,927 ha | Coordinates: 11°41'13"N 02°41'15"E | Designation dates: 02-02-2007

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The site includes the National Park of W of Benin and other protected areas, as well as the free zones between the Park and the Niger River (which offer customary use rights to inhabitants). It is bordered by Burkina Faso and Niger with which it shares the W-Arly-Pendjari transboundary Ramsar Site established in 2018. The Site has a diverse and rugged landscape featuring rivers, ponds, meadows and floodplains, gallery forests and savannah. It hosts the most important savannah population of the African elephant in West Africa, as well as cheetah. Its vegetation is characterized by vulnerable plant species such as African rosewood *Pterocarpus erinaceus*. Significant numbers of waterbirds have been recorded, and the floodplains of the rivers Niger, Mékrou and Alibori offer a breeding ground and passage zone for fish species such as *Distichodus rostratus*. The Site helps to ensure water availability and quality by receiving and filtering surface water runoff, recharging groundwater, trapping sediment and controlling flooding. It is also important for tourism, environmental education and fish production, and it includes traditionally sacred sites such as the Koudou Falls. Threats to the Site include poaching, illegal farming and grazing, toxic fishing methods and bush fires. Management and restoration plans are currently being implemented, with monitoring of key animals and plants and of the hydrological regime.

## Zone Humide de la Rivière Pendjari

Site number: 1,669 | Country: Benin | Administrative region: Administrativement, le site Ramsar 1669 est situé dans les communes de Tanguiéta, Matéri et Kèrou appartenant au Département de l'Atacora au Bénin

Area: 483,366 ha | Coordinates: 11°08'40"N 01°33'17"E | Designation dates: 02-02-2007

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The Site in the far north-west of Benin is one of the most important humid ecosystems in sub-sahelian West Africa, and features forest galleries, savannah and swampy meadows, alluvial plains, ponds, rivers, and dense dry forests within floodplains. This combination of habitats supports threatened species such as African elephant, cheetah and many bird species including black crowned crane *Balearica pavonina*. The ponds retain water during the dry season, attracting animals and tourists, and the Site plays an important role in sediment retention and stabilization of the banks of the River Pendjari. The local communities have the customary use rights on natural resources; their main activities include agriculture, animal breeding, fishing and hunting. The historic and archaeological value of the Site can be seen in ancient metal-working areas found there. The wildlife habitats are threatened by population pressure which has led to the partial declassification of the protected area. However, a participatory land use and management plan have been drawn up for the Site as well as a business plan to promote sustainable tourism. The Site was extended in 2018 from 144,774 ha to 483,366 ha, with the creation of the W-Arly-Pendjari transboundary Ramsar Site shared with Burkina Faso and Niger.