



# Ramsar Sites Information Service

## Annotated List of Wetlands of International Importance

# Sierra Leone

1 Ramsar Site(s) covering 295,000 ha

### Sierra Leone River Estuary

Site number: 1,014 | Country: Sierra Leone | Administrative region: Western Area  
Area: 295,000 ha | Coordinates: 08°37'N 13°03'W | Designation dates: 13-12-1999  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Sierra Leone River Estuary. 13/12/99; 295,000 ha; 08°37'N 013°03'W. The Estuary, near Freetown Peninsula, is dominated by mangrove systems, with lowland coastal plains to the north. As it enters the Atlantic Ocean, the estuary widens to about 11km and deepens to form a natural harbor said to be the third largest in the world. 19% of Sierra Leone's total mangrove is included within the site. The site exceeds the 1% threshold for at least eight waterbird species, namely Ringed and Kentish Plovers, Sanderling, Curlew Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Greenshank and Redshank, and Western Reef Heron; breeding habitat is supported for some of these. More than 20,000 individuals have been recorded for some waterbird species, and in 1995 more than 10,000 were recorded for 36 species. The Estuary is threatened by vegetation clearance and unsustainable fishing, and efforts are being made strictly to conserve certain core areas within the site. Vast areas of untouched mangrove forest still exist, however, and traditional fishing and agro-forestry for fuelwood can be managed sustainably in collaboration with an existing EU-funded Artisanal Fishing Community Development Programme. Fine beaches in some areas provide hope for well-managed tourist development, especially in light of the presence of an historic slave castle on Bunce Island, and so ecotourism development is considering promising. Ramsar site no. 1014. Most recent RIS information: 1999.