



# Ramsar Sites Information Service

## Annotated List of Wetlands of International Importance

# Swaziland

**3 Ramsar Site(s) covering 1,183 ha**

### Hawane Dam and Nature Reserve

Site number: 2,121 | Country: Swaziland | Administrative region: Hhohho district

Area: 232 ha | Coordinates: 26°13'S 31°05'E | Designation dates: 12-06-2013

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Hawane Dam and Nature Reserve is a protected area along the Mbuluzi River which covers the whole Hawane reservoir (which supplies water to the city of Mbabane) and its surroundings. The surface area covered by the reservoir and the Nature Reserve is 232ha. The shoreline is typically composed of a narrow belt of sand which varies with water level, beyond which lies the montane grassland ecosystem indigenous to this area. The main swamp/marsh, called the Hawane swamp, is situated upstream of the reservoir where the Black Mbuluzi river enters the system. The reservoir is host to a variety of waterbirds, whereas the swamp supports a small but critical population of the endemic and regionally critically endangered plant *Kniphofia umbrina*. The reserve's main attraction is its wealth of birdlife, and a trail is provided for bird-watching. Bird species include the lanner falcon *Falco biarmicus*, Egyptian goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*, pied kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*, white-faced whistling duck *Dendrocygna viduata* and wattled crane *Bugeranus carunculatus*. Overgrazing by livestock and transformation of grasslands to agricultural fields is increasingly affecting the area, while the lack of proper solid waste management systems may be resulting in effluent discharge into the reservoir.

### Sand River Dam

Site number: 2,122 | Country: Swaziland | Administrative region: Lubombo district

Area: 764 ha | Coordinates: 24°00'S 31°42'E | Designation dates: 12-06-2013

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Sand River Dam is situated in the Lubombo district within the IYSIS cattle ranch which is privately owned by Royal Swaziland Sugar Corporation (RSSC). The reservoir is a major magnet for waterfowl and other waterbirds, particularly when water levels are low. The lowveld of Swaziland is relatively arid with few naturally-occurring wetlands other than riparian strips along rivers. The waterbird community of this region, therefore, relies heavily on a handful of artificial wetlands. Sand River Dam is one such site, and plays an important role in maintaining waterbird abundance and diversity within the region. The surrounding hillsides are heavily overgrazed by goats and domestic cattle and crop residues are burned every winter. The Site regularly supports over 20 waterbird species and regularly harbours more than 500 individual birds. This makes it the second most important wetland in the country in terms of waterbird abundance. It is a critical site for a number of threatened species, including the critically endangered hooded vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* and African white-backed vulture *Gyps africanus*.

## Van Eck Dam

Site number: 2,123 | Country: Swaziland | Administrative region: Lubombo district

Area: 187 ha | Coordinates: 26°46'S 31°55'E | Designation dates: 12-06-2013

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Van Eck Dam is situated within the Mhlosinga Nature Reserve in the Lubombo district, about a kilometre north-west of Big Bend. When water levels are low, the reservoir is a major magnet for waterfowl and other waterbirds. A number of globally threatened and near-threatened species have been recorded at Van Eck Dam, including the martial eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus* and the critically endangered African white-backed vulture *Gyps africanus*, both of which have bred on or very close to Mhlosinga Nature Reserve. Several other raptor species regularly breed at Mhlosinga, including the African fish eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer* and African goshawk *Accipiter tachiro*. Nile crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*) and South African rock python (*Python natalensis*), both of which are listed as threatened nationally, are found at Van Eck Dam, as well as the globally threatened hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*). The boundaries of Mhlosinga Nature Reserve have been changed. The area to the west of the reservoir has been removed from the Reserve and sugarcane irrigation pivots have been installed, transforming the savannah habitat. The area to the south of Van Eck Dam was previously used as a cattle ranch, but has now been incorporated into the Reserve.