Benin extends two Ramsar Sites to cover entire coastal area

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Benin

Benin has significantly increased the area of two Wetlands of International Importance. Together they now cover the entire coast of Benin, forming a vast and important complex of wetlands.

Basse Vallée du Couffo, Lagune Côtière, Chenal Aho, Lac Ahémé (Ramsar Site no. 1017) has been extended 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.

The Site provides habitats for 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, over 90 fish and 364 plant species. The diverse fauna includes a number of threatened species including the critically endangered hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*).

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.

Basse Vallée de l’Ouémé, Lagune de Porto-Novo, Lac Nokoué (Ramsar Site no. 1018) has been extended from its original area of 91,600 ha 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.

The Site is composed of various ecosystems including swamp forest, flooded prairies, reeds, floating vegetation, and mangrove. 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 across the Site, 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.

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