Burkina Faso names Mare de Darkoye and Mare de Yomboli as Ramsar Sites

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Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso has designated two new Wetlands of International Importance; it now boasts 24 Ramsar Sites in total. The Sites are both water bodies in the northern semi-arid Sahel region which support a wealth of biodiversity including many migrant bird species.

Mare de Darkoye (Ramsar Site no.2400) features wet meadow, alluvial forest, aquatic vegetation and open water habitats. The flora consists of herbaceous and woody vegetation of variable density, including *Acacia seyal* and *Ziziphus mauritiana*, as well as species which are protected in Burkina Faso, such as *Pterocarpus lucens*.

The wetland provides a refuge for many species including breeding and migratory birds. The 106 bird species recorded include about 50 Palearctic migrant species, while 14 representative resident species, such as the Northern gray-headed sparrow (*Passer griseus*), have been observed around the Site. Some are threatened, such as the endangered hooded vulture (*Necrosyrtes monachus*) and the vulnerable black crowned crane (*Balearica pavonina*).

Livestock and arable farming and fishing are the main activities for local communities. However, overlogging and other human activities threaten the natural regeneration of the Site and increase soil degradation. The wetland is part of the Sylvo-Pastoral and Partial Faunal Reserve of the Sahel, the largest protected area of Burkina Faso. It does not have yet a management plan but key conservation measures are being implemented as well as monitoring of bird species.

Mare de Yomboli (Site no. 2401) is among the biggest water bodies in this part of the country, and one of a string of lakes in the transition zone between the Sahel and the Sahara. It is a hotspot for wildlife with its gazelles, wildcats, elephants and reptiles.

It is also a prime area for seasonal rest, breeding, and passage of over 13 palearctic or afro-tropical migratory bird species. Threatened species include the vulnerable black crowned crane (*Balearica pavonina*) and the critically endangered white-headed vulture (*Trigonoceps occipitalis*). These species are
among the nine bird species which are fully protected in Burkina Faso.

Plant species such as *Adansonia digitata*, *Celtis ehrenbergiana* and *Dalbergia melanoxylon* are listed in the national protected plant species list; however, the floral diversity of the area is decreasing due to the gradual replacement of many of these species by drought-resistant species as *Acacia raddiana*.

Poaching is the biggest threat to wildlife resources, as well as livestock farming which is gradually destroying habitat. Conservation activities are mainly focused on soil protection and restoration through the recovery of degraded land, dune fixation, and reforestation.

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