Namibia designates Bwabwata – Okavango

16 January 2014

Namibia

Namibia has designated its fifth Ramsar Site, Bwabwata – Okavango (46,964 ha; 18°12’43”S 21°45’36”E) in Bwabwata National Park. The site covers the lower Okavango River, part of the Okavango Delta Panhandle and permanently or temporarily flooded marshes and floodplains bordered by riparian forest and open woodland. It supports IUCN Red-Listed species, including the vulnerable African Elephant *Loxodonta africana*, Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibius*, Lion *Panthera leo*, Slaty Egret *Egretta vinaceigula* and the endangered Grey Crowned Crane *Balearica regulorum*. The site supports one of the highest diversities of species in the Zambezian Flooded Savannas ecoregion. Over 400 species of birds have been recorded, the highest number of any site in Namibia.

The site provides a variety of ecosystem services, including provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural services. Current land use includes tourism, crop cultivation and livestock farming. Small-scale farming dominates, typically of a few hectares of millet, sorghum and maize with a small number of goats and cattle. A management plan was drafted recently and is in the process of official approval. Parts of the southern boundary of the site are contiguous with the northern boundary of the Okavango Delta Ramsar Site in Botswana.

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