The government of Seychelles has designated a small wetland on Mahé Island for World Wetlands Day, 2 February 2010. At ceremonies at Seychelles’ World Wetlands Week celebrations next week, Ramsar staff will hand over to national authorities the site certificates for Aldabra Atoll (announced here in November 2009) and for Mare Aux Cochons High Altitude Freshwater Wetlands (04°38’S 055°25’E). Mare aux Cochons, which is part of the Morne Seychellois National Park, has an area officially listed as 1 hectare, because of our practice of rounding to the nearest hectare, but at 0.315 ha it is in fact the second smallest Ramsar site in the world.

Ramsar’s Cynthia Kibata notes that, as the only wetland area on the largest Seychellois Island and one of three inland wetland areas in the archipelago, the site plays a role in maintaining the biodiversity of the Western Indian Ocean Ecoregion. Several species of global conservation concern are found within this site, including the endangered Seychelles Scops Owl, the critically endangered Vateriopsis seychellarum plant as well as the vulnerable Seychelles frog (Soglossus sechellensis) and Seychelles tree frog (Tachycnemis seychellensis). There has been relatively little study of the site, but it has been recognised as a breeding ground for the tree frogs noted above.

As this site is found within the Morne Seychellois National Park, there is little commercial activity being carried out there. The main sources of income from the site are from conservation, restoration and ecotourism activities. Invasive plants and animals pose the greatest threat to native invertebrate and smaller vertebrate species as well as to the native plants’ propagation in these areas. Under the state’s jurisdiction, Mare aux Cochons is covered by the protective State legislation; there is currently no site specific management plan, however.

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