Togo names two more Ramsar sites

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Togo

The government of Togo has designated two new Wetlands of International Importance, the large catchment of the Oti-Mandouri River in the north of the country and the entire coastal area in the south. Togo, which joined the Convention in 1995, now has 4 Ramsar sites covering 1,210,400 hectares. According to Ramsar’s Evelyn Parh Moloko, based on the data sheets provided by the government, the Bassin versant Oti-Mandouri (425,000 hectares, 10°37’N 000°38’E), a Réserve de Faune in Savanes region, is a complex of several permanent and temporary rivers (including River Oti Mandouri and its tributaries), marshes, gallery forests, tree and shrub savannahs and undergrowth, which confer a habitat for 27 mammal species, 37 known fish species, crustacean, mollusks, birds and reptiles amongst others. Vulnerable species like the Hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*) and African Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*), in addition to their conservation value, play an important role in the culture of the people. Plant species such as the Baobab tree (*Adansonia digitata*) and a sacred wood species called Togobegue are worshiped by the surrounding populations. The main products presently exploited by the inhabitants include fuel and work wood, bush meat, mollusks and crustaceans, mainly for subsistence but also for sale in neighboring villages. The permanent presence of guards at this site contributes to combating deforestation, illegal hunting and unsustainable exploitation of fish resources. In addition to this, there are sacred forests where the local population carries out community rituals.

The Zones Humides du Littoral du Togo site (591,000 ha, 06°34’N 001°25’E) comprises the entire coastline of Togo and is characterized by natural and artificial mangroves dominated by *Rhizophora racemosa* and *Avicennia germinans* species, rivers, lakes, lagoons, marshes, ponds, and a long sandy beach. These different ecosystems of the littoral zone are of great natural biological, ecological and economic value and host a wide variety of bird, mammal, reptile, fish, mollusk and crustacean species. Endangered species found here include marine turtles (*Chelonia mydas, Eretmochelys imbricata, Lepidochelys olivacea* and *Dermochelys coriacea*), the African Manatee (*Trichechus senegalensis*), hippopotamus, etc. This zone contributes over 85% of the total annual fish production in Togo and is also exploited for fuel wood, construction wood, mollusks, crustaceans, bush meat and medicinal plants, both for subsistence and commercial purposes. There is presently no management plan for the site, but personnel from the Ministère de l’Environnement et des Ressources Forestières combat unsustainable logging and fishing and illegal hunting. The Ministry has also produced a strategy for wetland management, with an emphasis on mangroves, which should lead to the preparation of an action plan.

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