



*"People and Wetlands: The Vital Link"*  
**7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties  
to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971),  
San José, Costa Rica, 10-18 May 1999**

Information document

**Descriptive List of Wetlands of International Wetlands  
(Ramsar List)**

**Action requested:** This document is primarily for information. Nevertheless, the Ramsar Bureau will welcome comments and suggestions from Contracting Parties and observers at COP7 on the activity described here.

1. Thus far, the public version of the List of Wetlands of International Importance that is kept up to date and available at the Bureau has included only the name of each Ramsar site, date of designation, state or province where it is located, area in hectares, and geographical coordinates. While useful as a record of Ramsar site designations, this document is not very informative or inspiring.
2. To assist in promoting a better understanding and appreciation of Ramsar site designation at the local, national, regional and international levels, the Ramsar Bureau has engaged a consultant to prepare short, easy-to-read summary descriptions of each site included in the List. These are being prepared with target groups such as local people, the media and NGOs in mind, and are intended to provide, in about three sentences, a snapshot of the type of wetland, its special ecological, biological or hydrological values, and any wise use activities which occur at the site.
3. To date about 900 of these site descriptions have been prepared in draft form as per the examples given below. The Bureau intends to complete the drafting and editing after COP7 and to provide the opportunity for each Contracting Party to review them before making the descriptions available, in the three working languages of the Convention, through the Bureau's Web site and in hard copy format.

**Some examples of the promotional summary site descriptions**

**Bangladesh**

**The Sundarbans - Area 596,000ha; World Heritage Site; Forest Reserve, Wildlife Sanctuary**

Part of the Ganges Delta, which includes extensive mangrove forests and major river deltas flowing into the Bay of Bengal. The site is inundated by tidal water twice daily. An important area for breeding tiger, raptors, wintering and staging waterbirds, as well as nesting marine turtles, and many commercially exploited species such as shrimp and prawns. Principal human activities are fishing, timber harvesting, and collecting honey and wax from wild bees' nests.

## **Chad**

### **Lac Fitri - Area 195,000ha; Biosphere Reserve**

Fed by a catchment of approximately 70,000km<sup>2</sup>, this Sahelian lake plays a vital role in the local economy, especially during periods of low rainfall. It supports a productive fishery and extensive seasonal grazing. Habitat is of international importance for wintering Palearctic waterbirds and as drought refuge for many species, including elephants.

## **Ecuador**

### **Manglares Churute - Area 35,042ha; Ecological Reserve**

The site consists of mangrove forest along river estuaries, bordered by scrub bushlands of salt tolerant species. It also includes a lagoon with rich aquatic vegetation and associated marsh. A rich fauna including notable species of mammals, reptiles and birds is supported. Human activities include environmental education, recreation, low-intensity grazing, subsistence farming and intensive shrimp farming. The area has great potential for the development of ecotourism.

## **Estonia**

### **Endla - Area 8,050 ha; Nature Reserve**

A freshwater ecosystem of peat bogs, swamp forests, lakes and rivers. Vegetation includes dwarf pine shrub, reedbeds and rare or endangered orchid species. Numerous species of vulnerable or endangered waterbirds use the area for breeding. The site is an important area for water supply, conservation education and scientific research. Human activities include agriculture and sport fishing.

## **Mexico**

### **Delta del Río Colorado - Area 250,000ha; Biosphere Reserve, Shorebird Reserve**

A system of natural and artificial wetlands which includes intertidal areas, brackish deltas, riverine environments and permanent, freshwater lakes and ponds, set in one of the largest hydrographic basins in North America. Vegetation consists of diverse aquatic plants and coastal halophytic (salt tolerant) species, representing numerous endemic, rare or threatened species. Human activities include fishing, hunting, agriculture, scientific research, environmental education, ecotourism and ranching. Small settlements of indigenous people are present.

## **Netherlands**

### **Weerribben - Area 3,400ha; Special Protection Area EC Directive; National Park, Nature Reserve**

A low-lying peatland, with bogs, marshland, reedbeds, wet meadows, pools, channels, heathland and woodland. An important area for numerous species of breeding birds, as well as notable species of plants and butterflies. Human activities include reed cutting, woodland coppicing, regulated hunting and recreation, livestock rearing and water sports.

## **Papua New Guinea**

### **Tonda - Area 590,000ha; Wildlife Management Area**

Coastal plains subject to seasonal freshwater flooding. The site, bordering Indonesia, includes tidal river reaches, mangrove areas, grassland and savannah woodlands. An important wetland for over 250 species of resident and migratory waterbirds and as a refuge during drought. Sixty-three species of fish are supported. About 1,500 subsistence gardeners and hunters live in the area. Visitors come for fishing, birdwatching and deer hunting.