

**For immediate release**

## **New book unveils fragility of one of Africa's largest wetlands: the Okavango Delta**

**Background:** Wetlands are one of the most threatened ecosystems in the world, and freshwater species are great indicators for determining the health of these environments. IUCN's assessment of African freshwater biodiversity found that the freshwater ecosystems in the region contain a particularly high level of animal and plant species, and the Okavango Delta in Botswana is no exception.

A new book, "**Okavango Delta: Floods of Life**", produced by IUCN, in collaboration with the Harry Oppenheimer Okavango Research Centre (HOORC) of the University of Botswana, makes the case for the delta's protection and highlights the importance of its freshwater species. The delta is a vast array of swamps, seasonal wetlands, and semi-arid scrub land that provide a home to great numbers of large mammals, including the better-known buffaloes, elephants, hippos, lions, leopards and wild dogs, as well as the less well-known lechwe and sitatunga antelopes. The delta also supports an estimated 1,700 species of plants, more than 400 species of birds, 71 fish species and hundreds of thousands of invertebrates, including many dragonfly species, which can serve as excellent indicators of conditions above and below water in the delta.

In addition to its natural beauty, the Okavango Delta provides an important source of income to the local people as well as to the government. However, increasing pressure on the water resources and encroachment for economic reasons means more must be done to protect the delta before it is too late.

### **Key Issues:**

*"Wetland ecosystems provide important services to many people and it is often the poorest communities who depend on them most, yet they remain highly threatened by land conversion, water abstraction and pollution," says William Darwall, Head of IUCN Species Programme's Freshwater Unit. "We hope this book will inspire decision makers throughout the region to take forward programmes for monitoring conditions within the delta as one important step for helping to ensure the survival of this delta as one of the world's most beautiful and valuable wetlands."*

*"The plight of wetland species is so often overlooked yet they face many serious threats around the world - in particular due to the increasing water use. This book not only provides some wonderful pictures of the highly diverse group of species found in the Okavango Delta, but also helps to raise awareness about the important role they play in this vital ecosystem," says Dr Simon Stuart, Chair of IUCN's Species Survival Commission.*

**To review a copy of "Okavango Delta: Floods of Life", please contact:**

### **Media team:**

Nicki Chadwick, Media Relations Officer, m +41 76 771 4208, e [nicki.chadwick@iucn.org](mailto:nicki.chadwick@iucn.org)

**About IUCN:** IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges by supporting scientific research; managing field projects all over the world; and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN, international conventions and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

The world's oldest and largest global environmental network, IUCN is a democratic membership union with more than 1,000 government and NGO member organizations, and almost 11,000 volunteer scientists and experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work is supported by over 1,000 professional staff in 60 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world. IUCN's headquarters are located in Gland, near Geneva, in Switzerland. [www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)

