



# IUCN - Ramsar Collaboration

Supporting the Wise Use of Wetlands



International Union for Conservation of Nature



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IUCN – The International Union for Conservation of Nature is proud to host the Secretariat of the International Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) – the Ramsar Convention – at its headquarters near Geneva, Switzerland. Over the years, IUCN has collaborated with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in many ways, such as supporting countries in accession to the Convention, scientific assistance in the designation of Ramsar sites, providing help at site level management, and supporting the capacity to link local communities with government authorities to ensure the conservation of wetlands. Here are some brief highlights of IUCN’s recent work in support of the Ramsar Convention.

## IUCN Asia

IUCN Asia Regional Office (ARO) acts as the Secretariat for the Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative, which was jointly developed in 2016 by the Contracting Parties (CPs) from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. IBRRI is guided by the IBRRI Strategic Plan (2019-2024), which was co-developed by the CPs. The Strategic Plan consists of five operational objectives that align with the Ramsar Convention’s Fourth Strategic Plan. Broadly, these are to: share knowledge; conserve wetland species and resources; strengthen wetlands policy; raise awareness; and ensure the Regional Initiative’s sustainability.

From 2020-2022, IBRRI awarded 19 small grants, totalling over 300,000€ to CSOs and researchers to understand wetlands’ climate vulnerabilities and implement Nature-based Solutions to mitigate climate change impacts.

IBRRI developed the Indo-Burma Wetland Outlook, launched at Ramsar COP14, which analyses the current status and trends within the Ramsar sites and other wetlands. It aims to provide recommendations to support countries in safeguarding biodiversity and ensuring the continuity of ecosystem services.

### Rara Lake

In 2021, IUCN Nepal and ARO worked with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Nepal to develop a management plan (MP) for Rara Lake Ramsar site, the largest lake in Nepal.

The IUCN team worked with stakeholders to conduct a Rapid Assessment of Wetlands Ecosystem Services (RAWES), and use the Ramsar Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (R-METT) to understand the opportunities, gaps and challenges at the site. Consultations involved multiple stakeholders working and living around the lake, including local governments, community-based organisations, representatives from the National Park, and the Nepalese Army. The results indicated that unregulated tourism, infrastructure development, climate change, increased natural resource use and grazing posed the greatest threats to the site.

Thus, management approaches focused on developing sustainable ecotourism with local communities,



increasing management capacity at the site, and raising awareness of the Ramsar site at the national and international levels.



Community consultation for Rara Lake MP in Tuma Village  
©IUCN Nepal

The ARO has also developed management plans for the following Ramsar sites:

- Kaper Estuary-Laemson Marine National Park- Kraburi Estuary (Thailand)
- Middle Stretches of the Mekong River North of Stoeng Treng (Cambodia)
- Gulf of Mottama (Myanmar)



Kaper Estuary-Laemson Marine National Park- Kraburi Estuary, Thailand ©IUCN Asia

## IUCN Oceania

In 2019, the IUCN Oceania Regional Office (ORO) was contracted by the Fiji Government to produce the 2020-2024 Management Plan for Fiji's Ramsar site – The Upper Navua Conservation Area (UNCA). The UNCA management plan was developed in close consultation with local communities and in alignment with Ramsar Convention guidelines and principles. It was reviewed by the Ramsar Secretariat and has been implemented to support existing development plans for the villages of Nakorovou, Naboutini, Wainadiro, Nabukelevu, Navulivatu and Korovisilou.

The management plan also contributes to district and provincial development plans in the province of Serua. At the national level, it advances national strategies such as the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), National Development Plan, and other sector plans related to tourism, forestry and waterways management.



Upper Navua Ramsar Site, Fiji ©Powell Ramsar

## IUCN East and Southern Africa

The IUCN East and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) has engaged with Ramsar by supporting various wetlands-related events.

In May 2021, ESARO contributed to the 'Wetlands and Water' conference in Kenya by giving a presentation on wetlands and climate change. The presentation outlined the importance of wetlands in responding to climate change, and the strategies required to preserve their vital functions.



Sunrise over Lake Turkana, Kenya ©Ministry of Environment and Mineral Resources, Kenya/UNEP

In Rwanda, IUCN is regularly invited by the Government of Rwanda (GoR) to strategic meetings to provide inputs on various wetland-related projects implemented by GoR.

**Kigali City and Rweru-Mugesera Wetland Complexes**  
In 2021 ARCOS, funded by JRS, requested IUCN to conduct a Wetland Ecosystem Service Assessment of

the Kigali City and Rweru-Mugesera Wetland Complexes. The main objective was to carry out a total economic valuation of ecosystem services in the selected areas, and to develop a replicable methodology for ecosystem services assessment. Spatially explicit data was collected and analysed to identify and evaluate key ecosystem services in the two complexes, culminating in the report: 'Using Ecological Integrity Assessment and Information Management to Guide Wetland Management Decisions in Rwanda'.

The results of the assessment are being used to identify and prioritise management options and policy instruments to maintain and improve the flow of these vital ecosystem services for development processes in Rwanda.



Kigali City Wetland Complex ©IUCN ESARO

[www.iucn.org/our-work/region/eastern-and-southern-africa](http://www.iucn.org/our-work/region/eastern-and-southern-africa)



## IUCN West and Central Africa

IUCN West and Central Africa's recent work with Ramsar Convention has involved developing restoration and management plans for the Tinkisso and Gambia Oundou-Liti Ramsar sites in Guinea (2021-2022); and the Dollol, Bosso and Tabalak sites in Niger.



Dollol wetland site ©NigerTZai

Additionally, the regional office (PACO) has supported the implementation of the Ramsar Convention by organising events, for instance on World Wetlands Day 2022, to inform and raise awareness across communities on the importance of wetlands.

The office has also elaborated a wetlands inventory in Chad, as well as a report on the state of wetlands in Guinea and in Niger, as part of the development of the national wetlands policy.

**Tinkisso and Gambia Oundou-Liti**  
To support the Republic of Guinea and its commitments to the Ramsar Convention (Article 3),

IUCN collaborated with the Guinean Office of Wildlife Areas and Reserves (OGPRNF) to carry out the development of restoration and management plans for the Tinkisso and Gambia Oundou-Liti Ramsar sites. A consultant was mobilised to (i) : characterise activities in the two sites through; an assessment of species and habitats, ongoing (economic) activities, and the effectiveness of their management, (ii) conduct public consultations to inform and raise awareness among stakeholders about the status and management of the sites, (iii) assess threats, (iv) revise the site boundaries to develop and update maps, and (v) propose a structured plan of intervention for the sustainable management of the two sites. The plans were discussed and approved by the central actors and those at the grassroots.



©PACO

<https://www.iucn.org/our-work/region/west-and-central-africa>

## IUCN South America

Member organisations of IUCN South America (SUR) have engaged with Ramsar in supporting the management of Ramsar sites within the region.

### Rio Negro

Since 2017, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Brazil have been involved in the consolidation of the Ramsar strategy in the region and in Brazil. It supported actions that culminated in the recognition of the Rio Negro Ramsar site in 2018, and it is currently working to support the Ministry of the Environment in efforts to form a governance system for this site.

Corporación Grupo Randi Randi (CGRR) have also helped produce background studies and documentation to enable the declaration of the Reserva Ecológica El Ángel site in Ecuador. Furthermore, it has promoted special management actions for wetlands within the national reserve's management plan.

In addition, Ekos Brazil Institute have helped develop the Rio Doce State Park management plan.



Rio Doce State Park ©Caldeira Claudiano/Ramsar

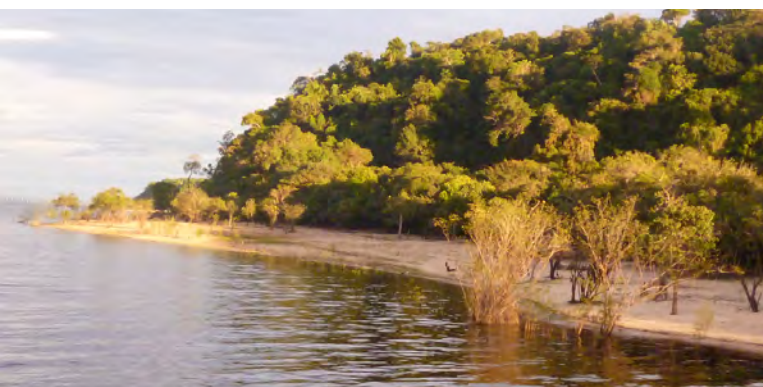
IUCN and the Andes-Amazon Initiative of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation have also joined efforts in a project called the Amazonian Green List, which supports the implementation of the IUCN Green List Standard for Protected and Conserved Areas within the amazon biome.

The main objective of the project is to consolidate good governance and efficient management in at least 20 protected and conserved areas, in five countries of the amazon biome: Colombia, Perú, Ecuador, Bolivia and Brazil.

To date, there are more than 8 million hectares of the Amazon that are covered by IUCN's Green List Standard. This includes the following Ramsar sites:

- Wetlands complex La Estrella Fluvial del Inírida
- Wetlands complex Cuyabeno-Lagartococha-Yasuní (Yasuní National Park and Cuyabeno Reserve)
- Biological Reserve Limoncocha
- Wetlands complex Ñucanchi Turubamba (Cayambe Coca National Park)

[www.iucn.org/our-work/region/south-america](http://www.iucn.org/our-work/region/south-america)



Rio Negro Ramsar site ©Paola Rodrigues/Ramsar



### Lake Titicaca

Shared between Peru and Bolivia, Lake Titicaca is an important Ramsar Site. It plays an essential role in shaping the Andean plateau's microclimate and supplying communities with fresh water for domestic, agricultural and industrial use. However, it faces tremendous and increasing pressure from global change: population growth has increased solid waste and wastewater pollution in the Lake; poorly managed agricultural and mining activities have generated polluting runoffs; and climate change has negatively impacted the glaciers and precipitation patterns that feed the Lake, resulting in receding water levels.

IUCN, through the SDC-supported BRIDGE Programme, has been helping the governments of Perú and Bolivia set up a strong shared-waters governance framework to address these pressing issues. IUCN has also supported efforts to restore the Lake at the local level by working with *Mujeres Unidas en Defensa del Lago Titicaca*, a local, indigenous women-led group who have organised themselves to act as champions for the Lake. They started by conducting cleaning campaigns along the Lakeshores to raise awareness on how the Lake's poor water quality affected their daily activities. With IUCN's support, they have strengthened their capacities for water quality monitoring, incorporating citizen science into their claims, and

building political influence in their Municipalities. The group has been recognized by the Bolivian Government as a key actor in the governance of Lake Titicaca, proving that transboundary-water governance is possible at all levels - from local actions to bilateral governmental agreements that set the enabling conditions for such actions to prosper.



Mujeres Unidas en Defensa del Lago Titicaca ©IUCN SUR

[www.iucn.org/our-work/region/south-america](http://www.iucn.org/our-work/region/south-america)

## IUCN West Asia

The IUCN Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA) supported Jordan in ensuring that Ramsar sites are also declared as protected areas. This way the Azraq Wetland Reserve and the Fifa Nature Reserve in Jordan are protected under the jurisdictions of national environmental laws and are managed following the wise use principle outlined by Ramsar Convention.

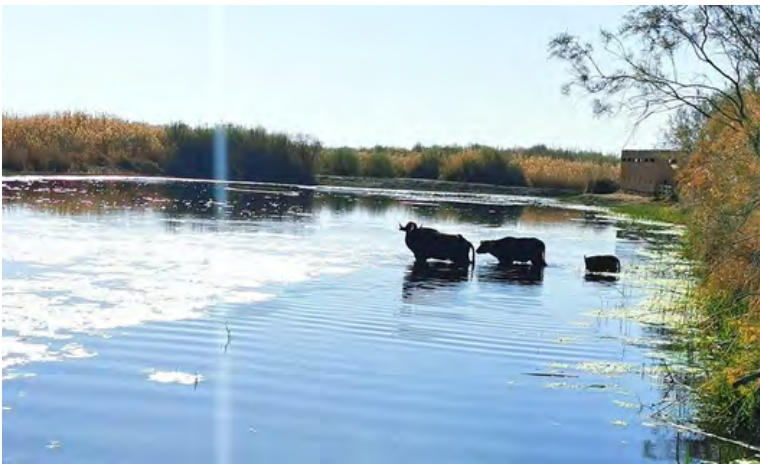
The Regional office's efforts in the Azraq Oasis are combine species conservation with improving livelihoods.



After the first restoration measures were implemented, special boardwalks and bird hides were built to allow visitors to observe birds which finally returned to the wetland. At the same time the local community was supported in traditional craft and produce marketing and ecotourism for local companies and individuals. The Azraq Oasis is now a source of income for around 60 families from the local community.



The visitor's centre pool drying out. Photo ©Hazem Khreisha



Azraq Oasis with water buffaloes and bird hideout. Photo ©Hazem Khreisha

### Azraq Oasis

The conservation of the endemic killifish (*Aphanius sirhani*) in the Azraq Oasis is a success story. After decades of dropping water levels due to excessive pumping of water from the wetland to large urban areas, the national Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature with the support of ROWA first focused on the physical rehabilitation of the Ramsar site, with a first restoration project implemented in the 1990s. In 2020, habitat restoration efforts continued and three existing pools in the reserve were rehabilitated. Those pools had become uninhabitable for killifish as a result of eutrophication, introduction of alien species and the destruction of

the pool's edges by water buffaloes that often enter the pools. To create a suitable habitat, the pools had to be dried out first, to remove exotic fish, algae and aquatic plants. Then heavy machinery was used to control peripheral reeds and to create gentle slopes and shallow habitats. These seemingly disruptive measures were necessary to form “new” water bodies free from alien species. During the process of reintegration and release of fish, many passed through water culverts to other pools. Thanks to the repopulation of killifish, the common kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) has again become a regular visitor to the site.



Reintroducing Azraq killifish to the restored water pools. Photo ©Hazem Khreisha

## IUCN Biodiversity Assessment and Knowledge

Part of the work of IUCN's Biodiversity Assessment and Knowledge Team (BAKT) is the generation of data on freshwater species, particularly as an input into the future expansion of the Ramsar network and for monitoring of biodiversity within existing sites. Data generated are published in species-level assessments on [The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™](#). These assessments include information on the distribution, population, habitats and ecology, use and trade, threats, conservation actions, and extinction risk (Red List status) of the species, which are used to support Ramsar site selection criteria.

IUCN has also developed and published a Global Standard for the Identification of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), including inland waters. There are currently 3,981 KBAs associated with freshwater ecosystems in the [World Database of KBAs](#), including 1,188 legacy Important Bird Areas (IBAs), which are now Regional KBAs. These KBAs recognise sites of global importance for the persistence of biodiversity in freshwater systems. There is currently an average protected area and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM) coverage of 44% in these KBAs, including by Ramsar sites. Over the next 10 years, the KBA Partnership will map KBAs for ecosystems, as well as for many other animal and plant species, thereby identifying the most important marine, freshwater, and terrestrial sites to conserve on the planet.

[www.iucn.org/our-work/biodiversity](http://www.iucn.org/our-work/biodiversity)



*Haplochromis (Labrochromis) ishmaeli*. This species has not been seen in the wild since 1991, and is assessed on the IUCN Red List as Critically Endangered (Possibly Extinct) ©Erwin Schraml



The endangered Purple Marsh Crab (*Afrithelphusa monodosa*)  
©Piotr Naskrecki

## IUCN Heritage, Culture and Youth

IUCN regularly consults with the Ramsar Convention on sites globally that have both World Heritage and Ramsar designations, and where sites nominated for World Heritage status overlap with Ramsar designations.

The Heritage, Culture and Youth team also regularly consult with the Ramsar Secretariat when undertaking periodic updates of the [IUCN World Heritage Outlook](#) for those sites with overlapping Ramsar designations and wetland values.



In March 2018, IUCN also participated in a Ramsar workshop on “The cultural and spiritual significance of wetlands – supporting the integration of nature and culture in their governance and management”.



Doñana National Park, Spain ©Tobias Salathé

Additionally, in 2020, IUCN and UNESCO collaborated with Ramsar in undertaking a reactive monitoring mission to Doñana National Park (Spain). The aim was to assess the potential impacts of current and future developments e.g. regarding water management on the criteria for which the site was inscribed as internationally important under the World Heritage and the Ramsar Convention. The mission findings were presented and subsequently adopted by the World Heritage Committee, for implementation by the State Party of Spain. Joint missions between multilateral agreements such as Ramsar, demonstrate cooperation amongst international institutions at the practical level, increases authority and impact of mission findings and recommendations.

Recent publications involving IUCN Heritage and Ramsar include:

- IUCN (2016) “Managing MIDAs. Harmonising the management of Multi-Internationally Designated Areas: Ramsar sites, World Heritage sites, Biosphere Reserves and UNESCO Global Geoparks”
- 2017 “Ramsar and World Heritage Convention: Converging towards success”
- UNESCO (2018) “World Heritage Review Vol.89” focusing on World Heritage and wetlands.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/ramsar/>

## IUCN Ocean

At the UN Ocean Conference in June 2017, more than 1,400 voluntary commitments were made to advance SDG14. Over 90 commitments were related to the restoration, rehabilitation, protection and management of mangroves and associated ecosystems. Following this, the UN launched 9 thematic multi-stakeholder Communities of Ocean Action. IUCN, with Ramsar, co-led the Community of Action on Mangroves. This involved supporting Community members in implementing their mangrove-related voluntary commitments by exchanging progress reports, experiences, lessons learned and good practices.

Together, IUCN and Ramsar's roles included:

- Generating multi-stakeholder interest and engagement in the Mangrove Community;

- Consulting broadly with the Mangrove Community to provide assessments of progress of voluntary commitments, and collect examples of successful implementation of voluntary commitments;
- Helping spur the creation and registration of new voluntary commitments by all stakeholders.



Mangroves are crucial for supporting the livelihoods of coastal communities, sustainable fisheries, climate change resilience and atmospheric CO2 sequestration ©Ray Bilcliff



## More Information

<http://www.waterandnature.org/toolkits>

## About IUCN

IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges. IUCN's work focuses on valuing and conserving nature, ensuring effective and equitable governance of its use, and deploying nature-based solutions to global challenges in climate, food and development.

IUCN supports scientific research, manages field projects all over the world, and brings governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

[www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)



## About The Ramsar Convention

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, called the Ramsar Convention, is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

The Convention was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and came into force in 1975. Since then, almost 90% of UN member states, from all the world's geographic regions, have acceded to become "Contracting Parties".

[www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org)



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