

CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL AGRICULTURE & DEVELOPMENT (CSRAD)



Technical Brief on Wise-Use Principles for Conservation of Amanzule Wetlands in Western Ghana

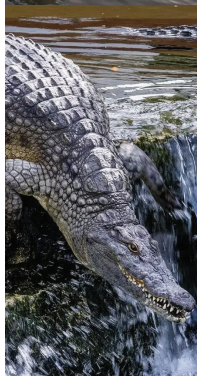
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SIGNIFICANCE OF AMANZULE WETLANDS



The Amanzule wetlands is a community managed natural resource in the Nzema area, specifically Ellembelle and Jomoro Districts in the Western Region of Ghana.

It covers an estimated area of about 50,000 ha spanning many catchment communities including Alla Bokazo, Aloakpoke, Ampain, Asem dauazo, Azulenloanu, New Bakanta and Old Bakanta (Ellembelle District) as well as Beyin, Effasu, Egbazo, Ekpu, Ellonyi, Ezinlibo, Half Assini, Metika, New Town, Nzulezo and Old Kabenlasuazo (Jomoro District).

It is the most extensive swamp forest in Ghana and characterized by a complex existence of fresh-and-sea bodies, estuaries, and mangroves.

It is the most highly treasured wetland in Western Ghana and one of the highly valuable wetlands in Ghana.

It hosts diversity of national and globally significant biodiversity including some wildlife classified as endangered and critically endangered and thus of global conservation importance.

The wetland has been designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by Birdlife International. This is due to the presence of a large variety of birds that are of national and global conservation significance.

In addition to these, the sandy shores are known to be significant nesting areas for critically endangered marine turtles that usually come ashore to lay and hatch eggs.

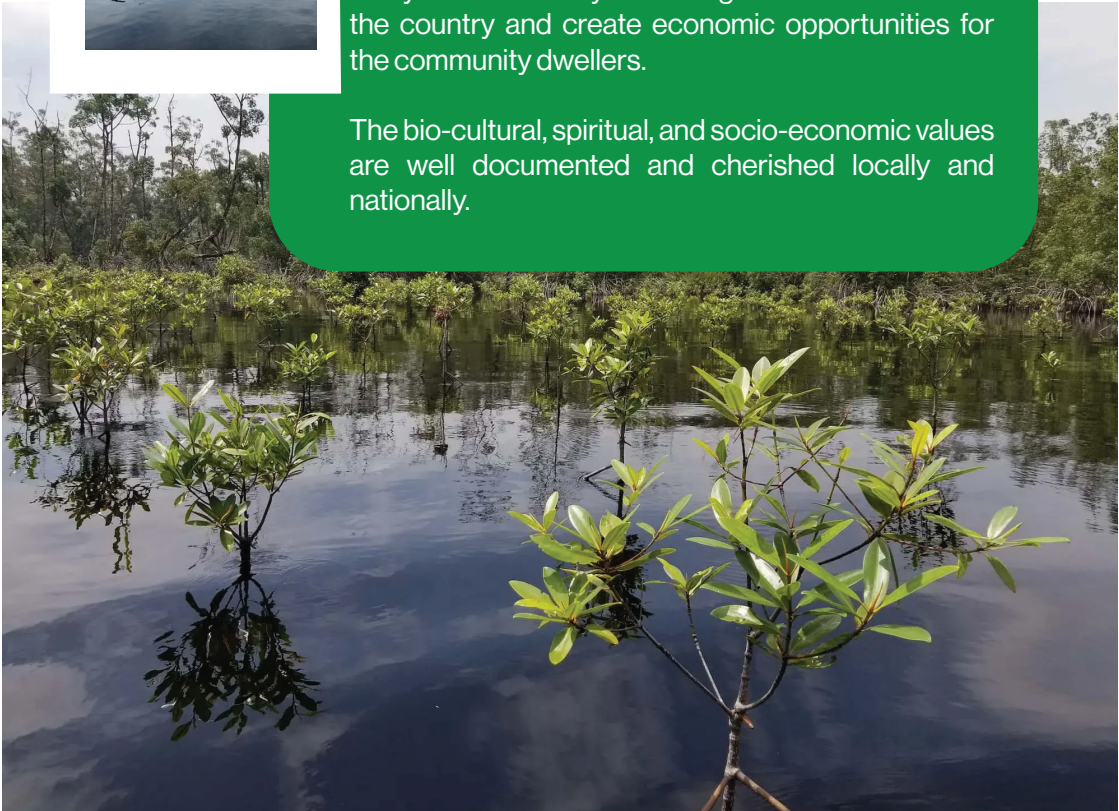


For many decades, the beaches have noticed to be roosting places for several globally important marine birds.

The wetland also has a prestige location as it is one of the only two coastal IBAs in Ghana.

Aside from these ecological benefits, the wetland contributes to the livelihood needs of many residents (e.g., water, fish, crabs, wood, tourism, recreation, etc.). For example, the Amanzule wetland hosts the nationally popular and important eco-tourism site, Nzulezo Stilt Village, which is a village built on the Amanzule river using raffia palm sticks and attracts many visitors each year. This generates revenue for the country and create economic opportunities for the community dwellers.

The bio-cultural, spiritual, and socio-economic values are well documented and cherished locally and nationally.



GLOBALLY IMPORTANT WILDLIFE SPECIES

The Amanzule Wetlands host a diversity of globally important wildlife species. Prominent among these species are highlighted below including their global conservation status as indicated by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.



Common name
Slender-snouted
Crocodile

Scientific name
Mecistops cataphractus

Global conservation status
Critically endangered



Common name
Hawksbill Turtle

Scientific name
Eretmochelys imbricata

Global conservation status
Critically endangered



Common name
Green Turtle

Scientific name
Chelonia mydas

Global conservation status
Endangered



Common name

African dwarf Crocodile

Scientific name

Osteolaemus tetraspis

Global conservation status

Vulnerable



Common name

King Colobus

Scientific name

Colobus polykomos

Global conservation status

Endangered



Common name

White-bellied Pangolin

Scientific name

Phataginus tricuspis

Global conservation status

Endangered



Common name

Black-bellied Pangolin

Scientific name

Phataginus tetradactyla

Global conservation status

Vulnerable



Photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Southeast Region

Common name
Leatherback Turtle

Scientific name
Dermochelys coriacea

Global conservation status
Vulnerable



Photo credit: Bernard Gagnon

Common name
Olive Ridley Turtle

Scientific name
Lepidochelys olivacea

Global conservation status
Vulnerable



Photo credit: Bjørn Christian Terrissen

Common name
Eurasian Oystercatcher

Scientific name
Haematopus ostralegus

Global conservation status
Vulnerable

WETLAND WISE-USE PRACTICES

- Sustainable resource utilization (e.g. mangrove cutting) to favor natural regeneration.
- No sand winning along the beaches and riverbanks.
- No poaching of endangered wildlife, especially sea turtles.
- No mining activities within the wetland and its environs.
- No domestic and industrial waste disposal into or along the riverbanks and beaches
- Avoid fishing with chemicals which will drastically reduce fish stock.
- Introduce closed seasons to protect the parent fish stock and facilitate reproduction to replenish self-breeding and increase fish stock.
- Promotion of eco-tourism to enhance the economic status of residents and incentivize conservation efforts.

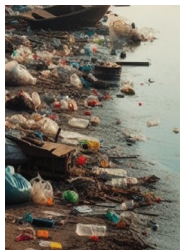


WETLAND CONSERVATION THREATS

Photo credit: Dave Hoefler

WETLAND CONSERVATION THREATS

The main threats to conservation of wetlands in Ghana including the Amanzule wetlands include:



Wetland Pollution

Haphazard dumping of domestic and industrial waste within and along the riverbanks and surrounding environment of the wetland can lead to death of young aquatic plants, contaminate the river, and endanger the survival of wildlife. Plastic waste can be swallowed by sea turtles, water birds and larger fishes and result in deaths. Other wastes can make the water bodies toxic and negatively affect the survival of fishes and other wildlife including humans who may use such water.



Excessive Utilization of Resources

Excessive harvesting of mangroves (as fuelwood for fish smoking, cooking, and other household activities) which exceeds the mangroves natural regenerative ability can lead to habitat loss for the endangered wildlife as well as limited potential of the wetland to support the livelihoods of residents on sustainable basis for the current and future generations.



Disruption of Stable and Healthy Climatic Conditions

Wetlands' mangroves have the potential to capture about four times carbon dioxide than other forest types and contribute greatly to climate change mitigation with global benefits. Excessive cutting mangroves affects climate change mitigation potential of wetlands as well as its ability to protect catchment communities from heavy winds or thunderstorms and floods.



Sand Winning

The beach environment of the wetland is a ground for laying of eggs and hatching by endangered sea turtles and roosting by some globally important marine birds. Excessive harvesting of sea sand for construction activities will negatively affect laying and hatching of eggs by endangered turtles and reduce their population.



Poaching of Wildlife

Poaching drastically reduces the population of wildlife, particularly the endangered sea turtles which swim to the shores or beaches to lay and hatch eggs. Poaching of turtles, which are basically the mothers who are ready to lay eggs or hatch them, will continue to reduce the population of these endangered wildlife.



Fishing with Chemicals

The use of chemicals to catch more fish has a detrimental effect on the fish stock and other wildlife. The chemical will end up killing the very young fishes and the parent stock that must lay eggs and reproduce to replenish the harvested fish stock. This in addition to the use of fishing nets with relatively smaller mesh sizes results in significantly reduced fish catch over time. Chemical use can also poison endangered fresh and sea water wildlife and further reduce their populations.



Mining Within/Around Wetlands

Mining within or close to the wetland will cause pollution of water and destruction of biodiversity.

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The booklet is intended for education and/or awareness creation among school children and other youth but it is useful for stakeholders involved in the conservation of Amanzule Wetland and other wetlands nationally and globally. The contents are based on the knowledge and experiences of the authors augmented with information from a variety of sources, notably the National Wetlands Conservation Strategy of Ghana, Key Biodiversity Areas Factsheet by the Key Biodiversity Area Partnership, BirdLife International, Ramsar Handbooks on Wetlands Wise Use 4th edition, Ghana Wildlife Society, Coastal Resources Center, and Hen Mpoano, and all sources are duly acknowledged. The contents are thus the views of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of NEBF and associated implementing partner organizations. The user is advised to make his/her own appraisal as to the appropriateness of the information.

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