IUCN – Ramsar Collaboration

Supporting the Wise Use of Wetlands

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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.

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About The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

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". Each Contracting Party must designate at least one wetland site within their territory for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (the "Ramsar List").

www.ramsar.org

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I. About this document

Wetlands are central to IUCN's Nature 2030 Programme, which underscores the need for integrated conservation efforts to protect biodiversity, enhance climate resilience, and sustain human well-being. As part of its global strategy, IUCN promotes Nature-based Solutions that leverage wetlands for water security, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable livelihoods, ensuring their protection benefits both ecosystems and societies.

IUCN is proud to be the legal host of the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) – the Ramsar Convention – at its headquarters in Gland, Switzerland. Since 1999, IUCN has served as an International Organisation Partner (IOP) to the Ramsar Convention, contributing to its development and implementation. In this capacity, IUCN has collaborated with the Ramsar Convention 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 conservation and wise use of wetlands globally.

More information >



Women sorting fish catch and a fisher tending to his boat in Mon State, Myanmar © Tara Whitty

II. Global Initiatives for the Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands

Coastal Wetlands

Coastal blue carbon ecosystems such as mangroves, seagrasses, and tidal marshes are critical wetlands that support biodiversity, livelihoods, and climate resilience, while storing some of the highest carbon stocks of any ecosystem. IUCN works to advance the conservation and wise use of these wetlands by strengthening their integration into international policy processes, including the Ramsar Convention, and by promoting sustainable finance through the Blue Natural Capital Financing Facility which has deployed over €4M in grants, mobilised €17M+ in follow-up funding, supported 21 high-impact projects. In parallel, IUCN partners with more than 30 organisations through the Global Mangrove Alliance, supporting coordinated action on mangrove protection and restoration. These efforts are reinforced through the Mangrove Breakthrough, launched at UNFCCC COP27, which aims to mobilise global action and finance to secure the future of mangrove wetlands worldwide.



Mangrove restored area – Bouche du Roy Ramsar Site, Benin. © ECO-BENIN 2024

Freshwater Ecosystems

The importance of healthy freshwater ecosystems, including rivers and wetlands, is increasingly recognised in international agreements and global agendas. The Freshwater Challenge (FWC) is a country led effort to accelerate the restoration of 300,000 km of degraded rivers and 350 million hectares of degraded wetlands by 2030, while conserving intact freshwater ecosystems.

It brings together governments, civil society, and businesses to catalyse targeted interventions and embed freshwater priorities within national plans and strategies, with coordination and technical support provided by a consortium of partners, including the Ramsar Convention Secretariat and IUCN. Complementing this system-level restoration agenda, the Swimways Initiative focuses on maintaining free-flowing rivers and reconnecting migratory pathways from sea to source, thereby safeguarding fish populations and the ecological integrity of wetlands. Going forward, the initiative aims to strengthen policy integration by working through international frameworks, including Ramsar Convention and the Convention on Migratory Species.



© Photo: Pexels , Ron Lach

Glaciers

Several Wetlands of International Importance depend directly on glaciers, either because they were formed by past glaciation or because they continue to be sustained by glacial meltwater. However, glaciers are retreating at unprecedented rates. By the end of this century, ice loss outside Antarctica and Greenland is expected to expose a land and water area between the size of Nepal and Finland, giving rise to extensive post-glacial rivers, lakes, coastal zones, and terrestrial ecosystems. These rapid transformations have profound implications for wetland biodiversity, water security, hazard regulation, and livelihoods downstream. In response, the United Nations General Assembly has declared 2025–2034 the Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences to advance climate science, strengthen international cooperation, and raise awareness of the cryosphere's global importance.



© Photo: Pexels, Jedrzej Koralewski

IUCN brings unique strengths to this agenda through its Global Ecosystem Typology, the Red List of Ecosystems, and decades of experience in mountain ecosystem-based adaptation and transboundary water cooperation. Building on this expertise, IUCN is convening the Glacier Action Network, a Member-driven platform uniting governments, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, scientists, financiers, and civil society to drive coordinated action across glacier and post-glacial ecosystems.

GLACIER ACTION NETWORK

Peatlands

Peatlands are the world's largest natural terrestrial carbon store, holding more carbon than all other vegetation types combined, while also playing a critical role in flood risk mitigation and the provision of safe drinking water. IUCN is a member of the Global Peatlands Initiative, which seeks to elevate the political and scientific profile of peatlands. This includes advancing the Peatland Breakthrough, a global framework to halt the loss of undrained peatlands by 2030, restore at least 30 million hectares, and enable the sustainable and wise use of peatland ecosystems.



IUCN's most active peatland work is delivered through the IUCN UK Peatland Programme, which promotes peatland restoration and advocates their multiple benefits through strong science, policy engagement, and effective practice. A key component of this programme is the Peatland Code, a voluntary certification standard that enables the generation of independently verified carbon credits from peatland restoration.

Biodiversity Assessment and Knowledge

IUCN's Biodiversity Assessment and Knowledge Team (BAKT) generates data on freshwater species, particularly as an input into the future expansion of the Ramsar site 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. In December 2023, the first global freshwater fish assessment has been published, providing comprehensive coverage of freshwater fishes on the IUCN Red List. Fishes join the previously comprehensively assessed freshwater groups: freshwater decapod crustaceans (crabs, crayfishes, shrimps) and odonates.



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 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.

Ongoing work is underway to identify KBAs in Lake Tanganyika, including recognising the part of the lake adjacent to Rusizi National Park (already a Ramsar site and KBA) as a KBA for Labeobarbus leleupanus, bringing additional benefits of KBA recognition to the lake and associated fish species. 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.

Protected, Conserved and Heritage Areas

As the official advisor for nature under the World Heritage Convention, IUCN regularly consults with the Ramsar Secretariat on the about 100 sites globally that have both World Heritage and Ramsar designations, in view of supporting synergistic and complementary actions for the conservation of wetlands, migratory birds and World Heritage sites.

The World Heritage 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, as was the case for the 2025 IUCN World Heritage Outlook. As part of its work to improve management of Multi-Internationally Designated Areas (MIDAs), IUCN is working with the Ramsar Secretariat to ensure key priorities for Ramsar sites are included in an ongoing update of the 2016 manual on managing MIDAs.



Doñana National Park, Spain ©Tobias Salathé

How to protect wildlife from avian flu in World Heritage and Ramsar sites?

Highly pathogenic avian influenza, known as bird flu, caused significant mortality of wild birds and mammals globally. Previously affecting mostly domestic poultry, the virus has become a major risk for wildlife, including in sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, Biosphere Reserves and Ramsar sites recognised internationally for their importance to nature conservation. In 2024, IUCN supported the Secretariats of the World Heritage Convention, Convention on Migratory Species, and Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance with a series of webinars to increase visibility for the impacts of avian Influenza on wildlife in conservation areas of global importance; present scientific resources, policy recommendations and practical guidance including from the IUCN SSC Wildlife Health Specialist Group; and share experiences from affected World Heritage sites, Biosphere Reserves and Ramsar sites. One of the impacted sites was the Galápagos Islands, where IUCN Members such as Fauna and Flora International and the Charles Darwin Foundation supported the active surveillance of seabird populations and helped limit the spread of the potentially devastating virus.

https://whc.unesco.org/en/avian-flu



© Rashid Cruz, CDF | Researcher from the Charles Darwin Foundation, an IUCN Member, in the Galápagos Islands (Ecuador), both a World Heritage and Ramsar site.

Synergies between International Designations

The increasing overlap between the over 3,500 internationally designated areas (IDAs)—including nearly 300 natural World Heritage sites and more than 2,500 Ramsar Sites—comes with both specific management challenges and opportunities. IUCN develops tools and guidance to strengthen management effectiveness of international designations, harmonize the integrated management of overlapping designations, and simplify national reporting requirements where possible. With the support of the Republic of Korea and Jeju Special Self-Governing Province, IUCN has reinforced its collaboration with the Global Research and Training Centre for Internationally Designated Areas (GCIDA). In July 2025, GCIDA's first regional capacity-building workshop for site managers of IDAs across the Asia-Pacific brought together 35 participants to strengthen the knowledge and skills needed to manage the unique challenges of IDAs and MIDAs, including Ramsar and World Heritage.

https://iucn.org/news/202507/iucn-and-gcida-are-strengthening-collaboration-internationally-designated-areas

Ramsar Sites and the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas

IUCN promotes and supports equitable governance and effective management of Ramsar Sites by applying the IUCN Green List, a global Standard for accountable and inclusive conservation, offering a benchmark for continuous progress. By aligning site management and governance with the Green List criteria, the Standard helps ensure inclusive decision-making, respect for rights and local livelihoods and long-term conservation outcomes. This approach strengthens the credibility and resilience of Ramsar Sites while contributing to global biodiversity goals.



Vjosa River National Park protects one of the last free-flowing rivers in Europe.
© Photo: Ulrika Åberg, IUCN

Vjosa River National Park

IUCN is currently guiding the management of the Vjosa River National Park in Albania implementing the Green List Standard and effectively conserve one of Europe's last free-flowing rivers. In addition, IUCN supported the drafting and review of the Ramsar STRP Technical Briefing Note on "Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) for the conservation and wise use of wetlands".

Nsumbu Tanganyika Conservation Programme

Nsumbu National Park in Zambia protects the most intact section of Lake Tanganyika—one of the world's most biodiverse freshwater ecosystems. The Nsumbu Tanganyika Conservation Programme (NTCP)—a partnership between the Frankfurt Zoological Society and Zambia's Department of National Parks and Wildlife—works to safeguard the integrity of the Nsumbu-Mweru-Tanganyika landscape for long term social and economic benefit. As part of its IUCN Green List journey, NTCP refined its monitoring framework and recognized key natural values like the Lufubu River. A Grievance Redress Mechanism was also piloted to support community engagement. In 2024, following two years of dedicated efforts, Nsumbu was admitted to the IUCN Green List.



In Nsumbu National Park, also elephants swim in Lake Tanganyika.
Photo: FZS

III. Regional Action for Wise Use and Conservation of Wetlands

Asia

IUCN Asia Regional Office (ARO) acts as the Secretariat for the Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI), which was jointly developed in 2016 by the Contracting Parties (CPs) from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. IBRRI is guided by its second Strategic Plan (2025-2030), which was co-developed by the CPs. The Plan is consists of five operational objectives which are about site management, mainstreaming wetlands in policy, capacity building, sustainable financing and governance of the Regional Initiative.

Over the last two years, IBRRI has been working with AFD to develop a large-scale GCF proposal titled Wetlands-based Adaptation in South and Southeast Asia, which will support the Contracting Parties of Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam to conserve important wetlands landscapes in the region.

The Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI) is built around three components:

1. a grant programme to civil society organisations, cooperatives, management boards
2. an investment facility for wetlands-based businesses
3. support to governments for integrating wetlands into policy and planning

Promoting regional cooperation and transboundary management of Ramsar sites and other important wetlands



Fisherman in Stoeng Treng Ramsar Site © IUCN Cambodia

IBRRI is supporting the government of Lao PDR to hold consultations on Siphandone wetland on the Mekong mainstream, which is immediately north of the border with Cambodia, where the Middle Stretches of the Mekong River north of Stoeng Treng Ramsar site is located. The stretch of river between the two countries is ecologically diverse and critical for fisheries and local livelihoods. Strengthening the conservation of the river on either side of the international boundary would have large scale benefits for the river and its communities. IBRRI has previously supported the development of a management plan for Stoeng Treng in Cambodia.

www.iucn.org/our-work/region/asia

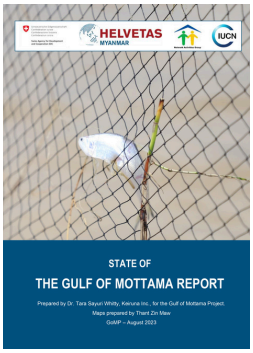
IBRRI developed a guide on *Identifying and Prioritising Wetlands for Ramsar Site Designation* in the Indo-Burma Region, outlining a Strategy and Guiding Principles for designation through a two-phase approach. The identification, designation, and management of Wetlands of International Importance ("Ramsar Sites") is a key commitment under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, to which all five Indo-Burma countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam) are Contracting Parties.

Read the full report >



Under the Gulf of Mottama Project, IUCN and partners released the *State of the Gulf of Mottama Report* in 2023, documenting the context of the Ramsar site in terms of ecosystems, biodiversity and social dimensions. The report highlights the threats to the site, and potential solutions implemented through the project, including promoting an ecosystem approach to fisheries management and co-management frameworks developed with local communities.

Read the full report >





Catch being unloaded at shore in Mon State, Myanmar © Tara Whitty

Liberia is home to approximately 600,000 hectares of freshwater wetlands, which serve as vital habitats for numerous resident and migratory bird species, as well as diverse fish and plant life. Without healthy freshwater systems, many of these species would not survive. The workshop marked a significant step in reinforcing Liberia's national commitment to the protection and conservation of freshwater ecosystems and laid the groundwork for incorporating these critical resources into the country's climate and biodiversity strategies.



© IUCN PACO

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.

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Reintroducing Azraq killifish to the restored water pools. 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 IUCN 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 buffalos 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.

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

CENTRAL ASIA

IUCN hosts the Central Asia Ramsar Regional Initiative (RRI-CA) through its Central Asia Office in Tashkent, supporting implementation of the Ramsar Convention across the region. Through RRI-CA, IUCN strengthens regional cooperation, provides technical support, and supports countries in aligning wetland governance and national policies with Ramsar commitments and global frameworks.



Ala kul lake, Karakol National Park, Kyrgyzstan © iStock_Anton Zhigayev

Strengthening One Health outcomes across Ramsar sites in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan

Through the One Health in Nature Conservation in Central Asia project, IUCN supports conservation action across Ramsar-designated wetlands in Kyrgyzstan—Issyk-Kul State Nature Reserve, Son Kul Lake and Chatyr-Kul—and in Kazakhstan's Alakol–Sasykkol Lakes System. Working with authorities, site managers, scientists, and local communities, IUCN applies an integrated One Health approach to strengthen wetland management and governance in line with the IUCN Green List Standard, enhancing ecosystem resilience, reducing zoonotic disease risks, and supporting long-term benefits for people and nature.

WESTERN BALKANS

In the Western Balkans, IUCN supports wetland conservation and wise use through strengthened Ramsar Site management and was instrumental in the establishment of Vjosa River National Park, a flagship protected area for free-flowing river conservation. Initiatives such as Vjosa Lifeblood, highlight the deep cultural, social, and ecological connections between people and Europe's last wild river.

Supporting Lake Ohrid re-proclamation

Lake Ohrid is a globally important wetland, recognised as a Ramsar Site and UNESCO World Heritage Site, and renowned for its exceptional endemic biodiversity, ecosystem services, and cultural value. To strengthen the long-term protection of Lake Ohrid, IUCN supported North Macedonia in advancing its designation as a national Monument of Nature. This included leading the development of a Valorisation Study and drafting the Management Plan in close cooperation with national authorities, local communities, and civil society. The draft law proclaiming Lake Ohrid a Monument of Nature entered parliamentary procedure in mid-2024, marking a key step toward strengthened governance and protection of this globally significant wetland.



Lake Ohrid, North Macedonia © IUCN Boris Erg

Buna: a community-driven approach to conservation

At the Buna River Velipojë Protected Landscape, IUCN supported a community-led approach to wetland conservation through the Living Buna project (2019–2022). By mobilising small grants for, capacity building, and multi-stakeholder governance, IUCN helped strengthen local stewardship, improve protected area management, and ensure conservation delivers benefits for both nature and livelihoods. With community leadership, collaboration, and investment, the Buna River's future depends on those who call it home.

https://iucn.org/our-work/region/eastern-europe-and-central-asia

Europe

IUCN supports the implementation of the Ramsar Convention by advancing the wise use of wetlands through EU policy engagement, knowledge exchange, and Nature-based Solutions. Through offices in Brussels and Bonn, IUCN contributes to European water, climate, and biodiversity policies and promotes wetland-based approaches to drought resilience and sustainable water management.

Nature-based Solutions for Drought Resilience in Europe (NBS4Drought)

Since 2025, IUCN has been contributing to the Horizon Europe project NBS4Drought (2025-2029), the first EU-funded initiative fully dedicated to addressing drought through wetland-based Nature-based Solutions. The project demonstrates how wetlands can store water, recharge aquifers, and enhance resilience to drought across Europe's major bioclimatic zones.



Polesie National Park Peatbog Conservation to safeguard sustainable water management, Poland. Copyright: NbS4Drought

Seven wetland case studies across urban, semi-urban, and rural contexts act as living laboratories to co-design and test solutions with local authorities, practitioners, and communities. As part of this project, IUCN leads work on policy, governance, and capacity building, identifying barriers and opportunities for scaling up wetland-based solutions and aligning project outcomes with EU water, climate, and biodiversity policies. The project supports evidence-based uptake of wetlands for drought management, in line with Ramsar principles on the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

https://iucn.org/our-work/region/europe

Mediterranean Cooperation

As part of the BRIDGE Programme, the IUCN, though its Center for Mediterranean Cooperatio,n, launched water diplomacy dialogues in Tunisia's Medjerda catchment, home to a Ramsar Site. It also provides technical support to MAW for Red Alert campaigns on Narta Lagoon and Camargue. In Egypt, through RESCOM, it supported wetland restoration planning at Lake Burullus with national stakeholders.

Promoting Sustainable Tourism in Marine Protected Areas

With over 130 coastal Ramsar Sites in the Mediterranean—many near major tourist areashubs—balancing tourism and conservation is critical. IUCN Med Supports nature-positive tourism that benefit both people and .ecosystems. In partnership with ETC-UMA, IUCN Med published Mapping the Impact of Blue Tourism in the Mediterranean: Vulnerability Assessment of Coastal and Marine Ecosystems, which assesses vulnerabilities and provides science-based recommendations to reduce tourism pressures on marine and coastal biodiversity.



Learning about sustainable Posidonia beach management in Spain © IUCN MED

Supporting Wetland Restoration in Egypt

In 2024, as part of preparatory work for the proposed RESCOM Phase 2 project, IUCN conducted a mission to Lake Burullus, engaging with Egypt's Technical Committee for Enhancing Wetland Ecosystems and the Ministry of Environment. The visit supported national efforts to address ecological degradation and promote nature-based solutions. The mission will contribute to planning for restoration and improved governance in alignment with Ramsar principles, strengthening national collaboration for sustainable wetland management.



Restoration planning at Lake Burullos: Local team members collaborate in the field to identify conservation priorities and strategies for this key Mediterranean Ramsar site. © IUCN-Diego Pozzoli



Annual Report 2024

https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/52428

https://iucn.org/our-work/region/mediterranean

East and Southern Africa

IUCN serves as the Secretariat of the Southern Africa Ramsar Regional Initiative (SARRI), supporting the delivery of its mandate to promote the wise use of wetlands across the SADC region and to strengthen cooperation and synergies for the effective implementation of the Ramsar Convention. Through its regional office IUCN supports SARRI through coordination, technical assistance, and multi-stakeholder engagement, advancing Ramsar objectives across transboundary wetland systems and national wetland programmes. Formally adopted at Ramsar COP14 and officially launched at COP15, SARRI is overseen by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and operates under a strategic framework that promotes wetland conservation through cooperation, sustainability, inclusivity, and results-based implementation.



Signing of the La Reunion Declaration May 2024- SARRI © IUCN ESARO

A major achievement was the La Réunion Workshop (May 2024), convened by IUCN and partners, which brought together 12 SADC countries and resulted in the La Réunion Declaration, a collective commitment to wetland conservation for biodiversity, climate resilience, and community well-being.

Through SARRI, IUCN has provided technical support, strategic direction, and facilitated partnerships with OFB, MedWet, and NatureXpairs, ensuring that Ramsar's objectives are advanced through enhanced regional coordination, resource mobilization, and implementation of priority actions for wetlands and people.



© IUCN ESARO



Rice paddy in Kilombero - SUSTAIN © Maria Ana Borges

Sustainability and Inclusion Strategy for Growth Corridors in Africa (SUSTAIN Initiative)

Since 2014, the SUSTAIN initiative has supported integrated landscape management in the Kilombero landscape, which overlaps with the Kilombero Valley Ramsar site.

The initiative works closely with local government to strengthen capacities for sustainable natural resource management and cross-sector governance. At the community level, farmers have been trained in climate-smart practices, including the System of Rice Intensification (SRI), and demonstration plots have been established to showcase more sustainable rice production. SUSTAIN also collaborates with Kilombero Sugar Company (KSC) to restore degraded riparian zones and protect riverbanks critical for maintaining water flows into the Ramsar Site. This includes reforesting previously cultivated sugarcane fields near rivers to act as buffers, improving water quality and habitat connectivity for biodiversity. By involving the private sector alongside communities and government, SUSTAIN's integrated approach contributes to sustaining the ecological integrity of the Kilombero Valley Ramsar site.

www.iucn.org/our-work/region/eastern-and-southern-africa

West and Central Africa

The IUCN office in West and Central Africa (PACO) has been actively engaged in the development of national wetland and freshwater management strategies across several countries, including Chad, Mauritania, Guinea, and Niger. Additionally, wetland status assessments have been conducted in Guinea, Niger, and Mali to inform evidence-based conservation planning.

As part of this broader effort, management plans have been developed for several Ramsar Sites, including the Tabalak Pond in Niger; the Gambia Oundou Liti in Guinea-Conakry; and both the Cameroonian and Chadian portions of Lake Chad. For Lake Chad specifically, a comprehensive fish inventory has also been carried out to support sustainable fisheries management.

A central focus of IUCN's work in the region is strengthening cross-border governance and fostering regional cooperation. Transboundary initiatives aim to harmonize policies, facilitate the exchange of best practices, and promote sustainable, nature-based solutions that benefit both ecosystems and local communities. A notable example is the regional workshop on the transboundary Mano and Makona basins, which brought together representatives from Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone to advance cooperation and integrate nature-based solutions into water resource management.

www.iucn.org/our-work/region/west-and-central-africa



Dollol wetland site © NigerTZai

Implementation of the Freshwater Challenge in Liberia



Monrovia, Liberia – Technical Dialogue on integrating freshwater ecosystems into Liberia's updated NDCs 3.0, held December 2024.

As part of its engagement in the Freshwater Challenge, IUCN has supported Liberia, in revising its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to ensure that freshwater ecosystem restoration and conservation are firmly embedded within its climate action plans. Recognizing the critical role wetlands and their ecosystem services play in climate adaptation and mitigation, a two-day technical dialogue was convened. This workshop brought together key government stakeholders, including Ramsar Focal Points, civil society actors, and international partners, to discuss the integration of freshwater ecosystems into Liberia's updated NDC 3.0.

North and Central America and the Caribbean

In the Caribbean, technical information and training are provided to contracting parties to support advocacy efforts for integrating the Ramsar "Wise Use Approach" into national policies and legislation and implement concept integrated coastal zone management. This project, supported by the International Climate Initiative, assessed threats and vulnerabilities of Wetlands of International Importance in Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Suriname, evaluating potential ecological changes at each Ramsar site and their implications for Ramsar Site management.



National Workshop on Wetland Monitoring, Policy, and Governance in Jamaica, @IUCN

In Central America, inclusive evaluations of wetland management effectiveness have been carried out in protected areas and potential Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs). To strengthen understanding of OECMs and their contribution to GBF Target 3, a regional guide for Mesoamerica and the Caribbean was published, alongside targeted training workshops. In parallel, restoration and conservation actions have been implemented in priority wetlands in Honduras, Panama, Guatemala, and El Salvador.

Codrington Lagoon

Located on Barbuda in Antigua and Barbuda, Codrington Lagoon is designated as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. The site comprises a coastal saltwater lagoon that supports a diverse range of habitats critical to marine species, seabirds, and marine mammals. It provides nesting for species listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List, including the Leatherback Turtle (Dermochelys coriacea), Hawksbill Turtle (Eretmochelys imbricata), and Green Turtle (Chelonia mydas). The lagoon is also home to the Frigate Bird Sanctuary, the largest in the Western Hemisphere.



Mangrove restoration in Barra de Santiago, El Salvador, @IUCN

Since the beginning of 2025, IUCN has been conducting a comprehensive vulnerability assessment of the site including projected future conditions. This assessment will provide recommendations to complement the management plan and similar instruments of the site, with the goal of preserving its ecological character, composed by its key components, processes, and services.

https://iucn.org/our-work/region/mexico-central-america-and-caribbean

South America

Member organisations of IUCN South America (SUR) have engaged with Ramsar in supporting the management of Ramsar sites within the region. Through the Building River Dialogue and Governance (BRIDGE) Project funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, efforts have contributed to the conservation of Lake Titicaca—a transboundary Ramsar site on the border between Bolivia and Peru.

www.iucn.org/our-work/region/south-america



Lake Titicaca © Emilio Cobo

As part of its commitment to uplifting women's voices in water governance, BRIDGE supported Bolivian leader Rosa Jalja from Lake Titicaca to participate in hands-on workshops focused on transboundary water governance and pollution monitoring in the shared basin. Rosa's participation reflects a broader goal of BRIDGE: to strengthen the role of women in managing shared water resources by improving access to knowledge, tools, and opportunities for leadership. In recognition of her dedication to protecting wetlands and promoting sustainable water use, Rosa Jalja was honoured by the Ramsar Convention in March 2025 as one of twelve outstanding women leaders working for wetland conservation around the world.

BRIDGE, with the support of Agua Sustentable, continues to assist the Network of Women United for the Defense of Water at Lake Titicaca by strengthening their organizational structure through technical assistance aimed at achieving their legal recognition. Legal formalization will empower the women to take a stronger role in local, regional, and global decision-making on wetland conservation.

A key achievement of the network was the release of the book *Stories from Lake Titicaca: A Collection of Tales, Myths, and Legends*. This publication seeks to promote environmental conservation through cultural heritage and was distributed to various educational institutions in Bolivia.



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Several Ramsar sites in South America have made significant strides in aligning with the IUCN Green List Standard in recent years.

In Colombia, the Estrella Fluvial del Inírida wetland has built on its longstanding conservation efforts with reinforced support from WWF Colombia, particularly in strengthening local governance to meet IUCN Green List requirements.

In Ecuador, the Cuyabeno-Yasuní lacustrine complex has engaged in the IUCN Green List process with technical assistance from WWF Ecuador. This collaboration, focuses on applying the Standard and advancing species monitoring for emblematic fauna such as the jaguar and the Amazon river dolphin, in alignment with the Conservation Assured Framework.

In Argentina, the Villavicencio Natural Reserve, is currently under review for five indicators while it continues to assess the remaining ones. Conservation progress is supported by the Aguas Danone de Argentina S.A., which has managed the reserve since 2000 under a model of private conservation aligned with sustainable resource stewardship.

Oceania

In 2019, the IUCN, through its regional office Oceania 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.

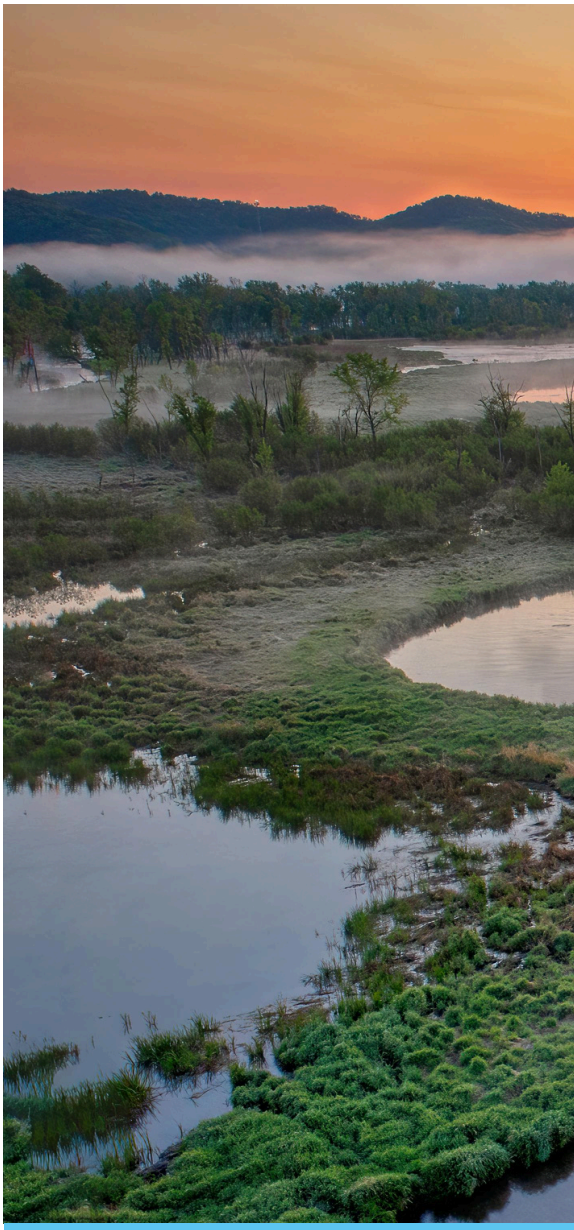


Upper Navua Ramsar Site, Fiji © Powell Ramsar

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.

In addition, work is progressing on mapping freshwater Area of Habitat (AoH) using the new Global Lakes and Wetlands Database (GLWD v2) to develop AoH maps for inland waters. This serves as a precursor to incorporating freshwater species into conservation planning and decision-support tools such as the Species Threat Abatement and Restoration (STAR) metric. This work also has the potential to contribute to National Wetlands Inventories, Ramsar gap analyses (e.g. through STAR and KBAs), and freshwater Red List of Ecosystems assessments.

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