

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

NOTE: It is important that you read the accompanying *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document before completing this form.

1. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

11. 12. 95

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Country:

Côte d'Ivoire

3. Name of wetland: Parc National d'Azagny

4. Geographical coordinates: The National Park territory lies between 5°09 - 5°16 N and 4°48 - 4°58 W

5. Altitude: (average and/or max. & min.) 1-50 metres

6. Area: (in hectares) 19,400 ha, with, in addition, a 2,450 ha buffer zone

7. Overview: (general summary, in two or three sentences, of the wetland's principal characteristics) Azagny National Park consists of a vast low-lying swamp (southern sector) overlooked in the north by low plateaux. The climate is equatorial with four seasons. Vegetation belongs to a range of coastal and lagoon ecosystems consisting of dryland formations (forest and savanna) and swampland (forest, savanna, swamp and mangroves). Wildlife is characteristic of the Guinean forest system (coast) with an input from lagoon species (manatee) and swampland birds (waders).

8. Wetland Type (please circle the applicable codes for wetland types as listed in Annex I of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document.)

a) natural

I S T X

b) man-made:

9, in the south of the National Park

Please now rank these wetland types by listing them from the most to the least dominant:

9. Ramsar Criteria: (please circle the applicable criteria; see point 12, next page.)

1a . 1b . 1c . 1d | 2a . 2b . 2c . 2d | 3a . 3b . 3c | 4a . 4b

Please specify the most significant criterion applicable to the site:

10. Map of site included? Please tick **yes** -or- **no** see map in annex II

(Please refer to the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document for information regarding desirable map traits).

11. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

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DIRECTION DE LA PROTECTION DE LA NATURE DPN
MINISTERE DE L'AGRICULTURE ET DES RESSOURCES ANIMALES (MINAGRA)
BP V 178 ABIDJAN
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Please provide additional information on each of the following categories by attaching extra pages (please limit extra pages to no more than 10):

12. Justification of the criteria selected under point 9, on previous page. (Please refer to Annex II in the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document).

13. General location: (include the nearest large town and its administrative region) Azagny National Park is located in the coastal part of Côte d'Ivoire. It is under the administrative authority of the Grand-Lahou Subprefecture and is located 75 km west of Abidjan. It lies between the Bandama river to the west, the Ebrié lagoon to the east and the Azagny canal to the south: the only link with dry land is to the north.

14. Physical features: (e.g. geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; catchment area; downstream area; climate) The Park has a Quaternary coastal and Tertiary sand and clay sediment base: soils are organic hydromorphic. The hydrology of the Park constitutes its originality. The southern part consists of a vast (9,000 ha) freshwater swampy depression (bounded on the south side by the man-made Azagny Canal) with no natural outflow. Only the south-western and south-eastern parts are subject to the influence of brackish water backflow (from the Bandama river and the Ebrié lagoon). The equatorial-type climate includes a long rainy season (end April-end July) and a long dry season (December-April) alternating with a short rainy season (mid-September- end November) and a short dry season (mid-July- mid September. Annual rainfall averages 1,664 mm and the mean annual temperature is 26° C.

15. Hydrological values: (groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilisation etc) Azagny National Park's originality lies in its hydrology: it is a coastal wetland, made up for the most part of fresh water. The floods in the southern part of the catchment, fed by the waters of the northern affluents, do not hinder wildlife movements: maximum recorded depths do not exceed 3m and buffalo and elephant can easily traverse the swamps.

16. Ecological features: (main habitats and vegetation types)

A. Natural vegetation

a) Forests

Closed primary evergreen rain forests (dryland): *Lophira alata*, *Anopyxis klaineana*, *Dacryodes klaineana*, *Scottellia chevalieri*.

Swamp forests: *Mitragyna ciliata* and *Symphonia globulifera* with *Xylopia rubescens*, *Uapaca paludosa* and *Spondianthus preussii*.

Littoral forests: *Saccoglottis gabonensis*, *Cola lateritia*, *Uapaca guineensis* and *Lophira alata*.

Secondary forests (small area): *Musanga cecropioides*, *Anthocleista nobilis*, *Ricinodendron heudelotii*, *Ceiba pentandra*, *Ficus exasperata*...

The forests sometimes form real islands in the northern part of the swampland, reaching heights of 30-40m above the swamps.

b) Thickets

Littoral thickets: low-growing *Chrysobalanus icaco* subsp. *Iacaco* with *Diospyrus tricolor*, *D. ferrea* and *Ixora laxiflora*.

Thickets of *Drepanocarpus lunatus*, on alluvial sediment along the Bandama and *Calamus deeratus* along the river banks.

Thickets of *Phoenix reclinata* on sandy soils subject to temporary flooding.

c) Pre-lagoon savanna

Savanna on drained soils: *Borassus aethiopicum* (palm forest) with groves of *Phoenix reclinata*.

Grasscover consists of the tall Andropogoneae characteristic of Guinean savanna (*Andropogon* and *Hyparrhenia* spp.)

Swamp savanna: *Echinochloa pyramidalis* formations subject to flooding with woody groves on the high unflooded land including *Nauclea latifolia*, *Chrysobalanus icaco*, *Phoenix reclinata*. Stagnant waters are choked with *Nymphaea lotus*, *Nymphaea micrantha*, and various Poaceae including *Orhyza barthii* and *Leersia hexandra*.

d) Swamps

Cyclosorus striatus and *C. oppositifolius* swamps, with *Cyrtosperma senegalense* and Cyperaceae (*Fuirena umbellata*, *Rhynchospora corymbosa*).

Raphia (raphiales) swamps: with *Raphia hookeri*, and *R. palmapius*, often associated with *Syzygium guineense* var. *littorale*

Pandanus candelabrum swamps forming very characteristic circular islets.

e) Mangroves

Typically, stands of *Rhizophora racemosa* and *Avicennia africana* with specimens of *Dalbergia ecastaphyllum*, *Hibiscus tiliaceus*, *Drepanocarpus lunatus*, *Acrostichum aureum*.

B. Plantations

Some of the northern parts of the Park have been planted with perennials (coffee, cacao) and subsistence crops (manioc, sweet potato, rice, taro).

17. Noteworthy flora: (indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc) The Park's natural environment derives its value from the variety of vegetation present.

Many vegetation formations typical of the littoral area have disappeared or are present as relicts, following forest operations. They survive in the Park but could further degrade if they are not supervised: this is particularly the case for littoral forest and raphiales.

Pandanus candelabrum which form crater-shaped islets up to 100m in diameter in the interior of the *Cyclosorus striatus* swamps are unique to and typical of the park.

Mangroves, which are exploited in the unprotected littoral areas, are well preserved in the Park.

18. Noteworthy fauna: (indicating, e.g., which species are unique, rare, endangered, abundant or biogeographically important; include count data, etc.) (see list in annex I) The Park wildlife includes a broad variety of species typical of Guinea forests. Several large mammal species are endangered, vulnerable or rare in this protected area.

- Endangered: forest elephant (60), manatee. The pygmy hippopotamus, which is endemic in Western Africa, is still present, but in very reduced numbers.
- Vulnerable: dwarf buffalo (300), bush pig, chimpanzee, West African black and white colobus, Diana monkey, Nile crocodile and dwarf crocodile.
- Rare: royal antelope, van Beneden's colobus.

The presence of giant forest pig is still to be confirmed.

Most species are limited in distribution to the northern forest part of the Park.

Forest elephant, pygmy hippopotamus and manatee are important not only for the Park but for the whole of the Guinea forest, where habitats are continually being exploited and degraded, and for which poaching represents the most serious threat.

There is a wealth of birdlife, with a large concentration of several heron species in the swamps between April and October, including many migratory species or species on passage.

19. Social and cultural values: (e.g. fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological site etc.) Given the variety and wealth of its ecosystems Azagny constitutes an exceptional natural environment for Côte d'Ivoire and Western Africa:

- mosaic of original vegetation formations

- sanctuary for forest-dwelling wildlife which finds refuge in an environment which men can only reach with difficulty
 - a real laboratory for scientific research
 - good terrain for environmental education
 - exceptional site for developing ecotourism.
 - cultural interest in the surrounding area, particularly the south: traditional sea and lagoon fishing villages.
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20. Land tenure/ownership of: State-owned. Azagny National Park is classified, State-owned land, under the authority of the Ministère de l'Agriculture et des Ressources Animales

21. Current land use: Although the region still has a low population density (40/sq.km), strong growth was recorded between 1975-88 (+13.43%). The population is concentrated in villages and camps around the National Park perimeter.

Outside the protected area farming is based on produce for export (perennials: coffee, cacao, rubber, oil palm, coconut palm) and on subsistence crops. Fishing is important both at sea and in the lagoon.

Within the Park, pressure from human activities in the northern sector and the buffer zone is reflected in removals of timber for domestic use and local craftwork.

Brushfires sweep through the savanna every year.

The greatest scourge, poaching, affects the whole Park

22. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land use and development projects:

(a) at the site: In the past, illegal land clearance operations have led to the formation of secondary vegetation growth.

Poaching is a major threat to forest animals and the characteristic wildlife in the lagoons (Manatee).

Brushfires do serious damage to natural formations, and affect land lying outside the savanna during particularly dry periods, destroying and degrading *Pandanus* stands.

(b) around the site: Main threats are logging, farming and poaching.

23. Conservation measures taken: (national category and legal status of protected areas - including any boundary changes which have been made: management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it has been implemented) Azagny National Park's status prohibits all exploitation of its natural resources, except for tourism.

A management plan implemented from 1983 onwards did not produce the expected results and the site is under serious threat from human activities.

24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented: (e.g. management plan in preparation; officially proposed as a protected area etc.)

Proposal for a two-year emergency management plan for the Park in the context of preparations for the PCGAP (Protected Area Framework Management Project):

revitalise the CAPNA (Azagny National Park Management Unit);

- rural ecodevelopment;
- ecotourism;
- natural resource protection.

These new arrangements reflect the desire to implement a new National Parks National Management Strategy by elaborating comprehensive management plans preceded by emergency plans tailored to suit each park.

25. Current scientific research and facilities: (e.g. details of current projects; existence of field station etc.) No in-depth research has been conducted in the park since 1979, except for:

- an aerial count of elephant and buffalo in 1987

- manatee population monitoring.

No finance has been earmarked for research in the park since the IBRD IVC 1698 loan made available between 1983-86.

26. Current conservation education: (e.g. visitors centre, hides, information booklet, facilities for school visits etc.) No overall conservation education programme has been defined. There has however been a popular education and awareness-building programme for manatee conservation (*Trichechus senegalense*) running for several years.

27. Current recreation and tourism: (state if wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type and frequency/intensity) The work carried out in 1986 (reception facilities for tourists, footbridges, roads, waterways) has had no follow-up and it is now difficult to visit the park.

Further measures need to be taken in the context of the Emergency Management Plan followed by the PCGAP to ensure that this protected area can be reopened to tourism as soon as possible.

28. Jurisdiction: (territorial e.g. state/region and functional e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment etc.)

National Authority: Ministère de l'Agriculture et des Ressources Animales (MINAGRA)

Local authority: CAPNA Azagny National Park Management Unit

29. Management authority: (name and address of local body directly responsible for managing the wetland)

Direction de la Protection de la Nature

Sous-direction des Parcs Nationaux

30. Bibliographical references: (scientific/technical only)

ROTH. H. H (1979) Etat actuel des Parcs Nationaux de la Comoé et de Taï ainsi que de la Réserve d'Azagny et propositions visant à leur conservation et à leur développement aux fins de promotion du tourisme. Tomes I II et III PN 73. 2085.6 FGU-Kronberg GmbH

AKE ASSI. L (1984) Flore de la Côte d'Ivoire: Etude descriptive et biographie avec quelques notes ethnobotaniques. Thèse de doctorat, Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)

AKOI. K (1982) Education et sensibilisation des populations pour la conservation du Lamantin ouest-africain (*Trichechus senegalensis*) en Côte d'Ivoire. Phase 1: région cotière Jacqueline-Fresco, Ministère de l'Agriculture et des Ressources Animales/ Wildlife Conservation International -Bronx N.Y. 10460

COULIBALY, A (1982) Rapport Annuel 1992. Cellule d'aménagement du Parc national d'Azagny (CAPNA) : MINAGRA, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

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