



MURCHISON FALLS ALBERT - DELTA WETLAND SYSTEM RAMSAR SITE

A Ramsar Site is a wetland designated under the Ramsar Convention (1971) for its international importance in biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, and therefore commonly referred to as wetland of international importance. Currently, there are 12 Ramsar sites in Uganda including Murchison Falls–Albert Delta Wetland System.

OVERVIEW

The Murchison Falls Wetland System was designated a Ramsar site under the Ramsar Convention in 2006. The wetlands are part of the larger Murchison Falls Important Bird Area, recognized for their significance to bird migrations and harbouring globally threatened bird species. The wetland also plays a critical role as a spawning ground for the Lake Albert fishery. The site covers 17,293 hectares and is partly (80%) protected as part of Murchison Falls National Park.

LOCATION

The site is located in North-west Uganda, at approximately 01°57'N, 31°42'E, constituting districts of Nwoya, Buliisa, Masindi, Kiryandongo and Pakwach. It forms part of the Victoria Nile–Lake Albert system, extending from the top of Murchison Falls to the Albert Nile Delta at Lake Albert.

The wetland is partly within Murchison Falls National Park, with a section in Buliisa district extending for 18km along the Nile outside the protected area.

ECOLOGICAL VALUES

The Murchison Falls–Albert Delta Wetland System is recognized for its rich biodiversity, critical habitats, and ecosystem services, supporting both people and wildlife.

- Supports over 470 bird species and serves as a key convergence point for migratory birds along the Europe–West Africa flyway.
- Is a critical fish breeding (spawning) ground for Lake Albert fish species.
- Hosts diverse taxa including 24 mammals, 17 reptiles, 19 amphibians, 148 butterflies and 326 plants.
- Acts as a natural system for water purification and flood regulation for the region.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC VALUES

- Supports household livelihoods through agriculture, fishing, small businesses, and wage labour.
- Provides domestic water supply, with 75% of households relying on it for drinking.
- Contributes to food security through fishing and marginal wetland cultivation for adequate food access throughout the year.
- Supplies natural resources that support household assets and economic activity, including land, fish, and livestock-related benefits.

KEY THREATS TO THE WETLAND

- Wetland degradation and habitat loss due to subsistence agriculture.
- Encroachment and unsustainable resource use.
- Unsustainable fishing practices by the community.
- Climate change impacts (flooding) have adversely affected and degraded the delta wetlands.
- Population growth and increasing pressure on use of natural resources.
- Infrastructure developments within the landscape including oil and gas exploration activities.



Therefore, sustaining the ecological integrity of the Ramsar Site requires urgent and coordinated action by stakeholders including policymakers, district leaders, and local communities.

All stakeholders will need to work together to;

- Strengthen enforcement of wetland protection.
- Integrate wetland conservation into district development planning.
- Support sustainable livelihoods of adjacent communities to reduce pressure on use of the wetland resources
- Promote cross-sectoral collaboration for effective wetland management.
- Invest in long-term conservation through restoration, effective management and monitoring.

