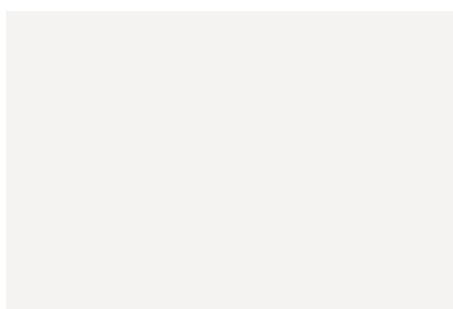
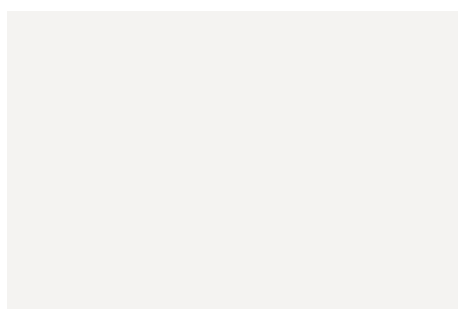
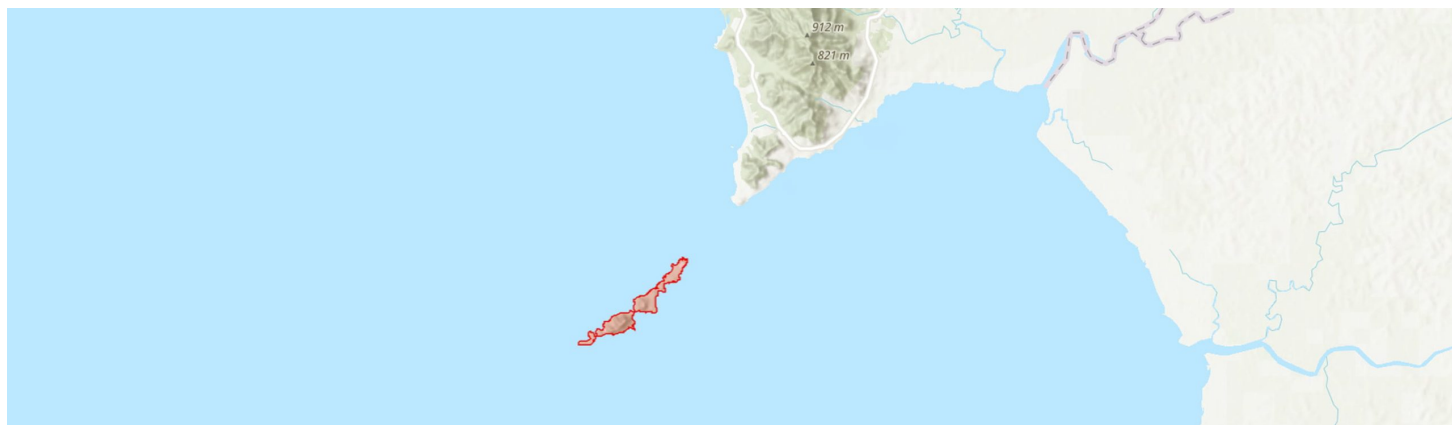


Banana Island Archipelagos

SIETIPA21



Country: **Sierra Leone**

Administrative region: **Western Area (Region)**

Central co-ordinates: **8.11647 N, 13.21159 E**

Area: **5.3km²**

Qualifying IPA criteria

A(i)

IPA assessment rationale

The Banana Island archipelagos qualify as an IPA under criterion A(i), due to records of seven vulnerable species, *Turraeanthus africana*, *Garcinia kola*, *Milicia regia*, *Ixora nigerica*, *Sterculia oblonga*, *Azizelia africana*, and *Zanthoxylum atchoum* with three additional three near-endemic species. Even though this IPA forms part of the remnant of the west African lowland evergreen and gallery forest, it does not trigger criteria C(iii). As a nationally threatened habitat it could house several other endemic species if more research is done.

Site description

The Banana Island Archipelagos IPA, an area less than 6 km² lies off the southwestern coast of the Freetown Peninsula, Sierra Leone

(Showers, 2015). It is an extension of the Freetown peninsula area, with a distance of about 40 km away from Freetown and a coastline length of approximately 1350 km. The island is made up of three archipelagos: Dublin, Ricketts and Mes Meheux (also known as Mesmieu). The two largest islands, Dublin and Ricketts, are inhabited and connected by a small land bridge that is covered at high tide, whereas Mes Meheux is uninhabited (Showers, 2015). Mes-Meheux, the third archipelago, remains pristine and uninhabited. The Portuguese first named the islands "Banana Islands" because their outline of them resembled a bunch of bananas (Garber, 2016). Dublin and Ricketts Islands have a combined population of about 900 people.

Botanical significance

This IPA represents a pristine lowland forest that has been significantly degraded in Sierra Leone, particularly in the nearby Freetown Peninsula area. It has potential to harbour useful plant species that are heavily impacted in Freetown. The site is home to seven threatened species, including the vulnerable *Turraeanthus africana*, *Garcinia kola*, *Azizelia africana*, *Milicia regia*, *Ixora nigerica*, *Sterculia oblonga*, and *Zanthoxylum atchoum*. Notably, three of these species are narrow endemics that have only been recorded in this area within the country. In addition to these threatened species, several other useful species have been recorded in this site. Limited research has been conducted in this area when it comes to flora

diversity, especially the uninhabited pristine areas . Additionally, this IPA is abundant in mangrove plantations, which holds significant ecological value. However, the list of threatened species within the Banana Island IPA is not comprehensive and may underrepresent their biodiversity potential.

Habitat and geology

Dublin spans 3 km with secondary forests, while Ricketts has a dense canopy and white sandy beaches. The climate on Banana Island experiences a typical monsoon climate, with seasonal rainy and dry seasons. Banana Island is made up of lateritic hard granite and igneous rocks that are rich in iron and magnesium (Sankoh et al., 2020).

Conservation issues

The IPA lacks protected management, conservation measures and laws. Furthermore, there is lack of information regarding the population dynamics of exploited species. For instance, illegal fishing and exporting activities are ongoing. For instance, fishing activities and other overexploitation activities can disrupt reliance of plants on nutrient cycling.

Despite its ecological role and economic importance to small coastal communities, there is little awareness about this resource (Showers, 2015). Additionally, coastal erosion due to rising sea level poses significant threat. Lack of proper tourism development management can result in habitat modifications without protective status.

Site assessor(s)

Fanny Massally, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Date of first assessment:

9th Jan 2026

Reviewed by:

Aiah Lebbie, The University of Sierra Leone

IPA criterion A species

SPECIES	QUALIFYING SUB-CRITERION	≥ 1% OF GLOBAL POPULATION	≥ 5% OF NATIONAL POPULATION	1 OF 5 BEST SITES NATIONALLY	ENTIRE GLOBAL POPULATION	SOCIO-ECONOMICALLY IMPORTANT	ABUNDANCE AT SITE
<i>Turraeanthus africana</i> (Welw. ex C.DC.) Pellegr.	A(i)	—	—	—	—	—	Scarce
<i>Garcinia kola</i> Heckel	A(i)	—	—	—	—	—	Frequent
<i>Milicia regia</i> (A.Chev.) C.C.Berg	A(i)	—	—	—	—	—	Occasional
<i>Ixora nigerica</i>	A(i)	—	—	—	—	—	Scarce
<i>Sterculia oblonga</i> Mast.	A(i)	—	—	—	—	—	Scarce
<i>Zanthoxylum atchoum</i>	A(i)	—	—	—	—	—	Scarce
<i>Afzelia africana</i> Sm. ex Pers.	A(i)	—	—	—	—	—	Frequent

IPA criterion C qualifying habitats

HABITAT	QUALIFYING SUB-CRITERION	≥ 5% OF NATIONAL RESOURCE	≥ 10% OF NATIONAL RESOURCE	1 OF 5 BEST SITES NATIONALLY	AREAL COVERAGE AT SITE
Low-altitude evergreen forest and gallery forest	C(i)	✓	—	—	

General site habitats

GENERAL SITE HABITAT	PERCENT COVERAGE	IMPORTANCE
Forest - Subtropical/Tropical Moist Lowland Forest	—	Major
Wetlands (inland) - Seasonal/Intermittent/Irregular Rivers, Streams, Creeks	—	Minor
Marine Intertidal - Sandy Shoreline and/or Beaches, Sand Bars, Spits, etc.	—	Major
Marine Intertidal - Rocky Shoreline	—	Major
Marine Intertidal - Mangrove Submerged Roots	—	Major

Land use types

LAND USE TYPE	PERCENT COVERAGE	IMPORTANCE
Agriculture (arable)	—	Minor
Tourism / Recreation	—	Major

LAND USE TYPE	PERCENT COVERAGE	IMPORTANCE
Harvesting of wild resources	—	Major
Agriculture (aquatic)	—	Major
Residential / urban development	—	Major

Threats

THREAT	SEVERITY	TIMING
Residential & commercial development - Tourism & recreation areas		Ongoing - stable
Residential & commercial development - Housing & urban areas		Ongoing - stable
Agriculture & aquaculture - Annual & perennial non-timber crops		Ongoing - stable
Agriculture & aquaculture - Marine & freshwater aquaculture - Subsistence/artisinal aquaculture		Ongoing - increasing
Agriculture & aquaculture - Livestock farming & ranching - Scale Unknown/Unrecorded		Ongoing - stable
Invasive & other problematic species, genes & diseases - Problematic native species/diseases - Named species		Ongoing - increasing
Climate change & severe weather - Habitat shifting & alteration		Ongoing - increasing

Management type

MANAGEMENT TYPE	DESCRIPTION	YEAR STARTED	YEAR FINISHED
No management plan in place		—	—

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