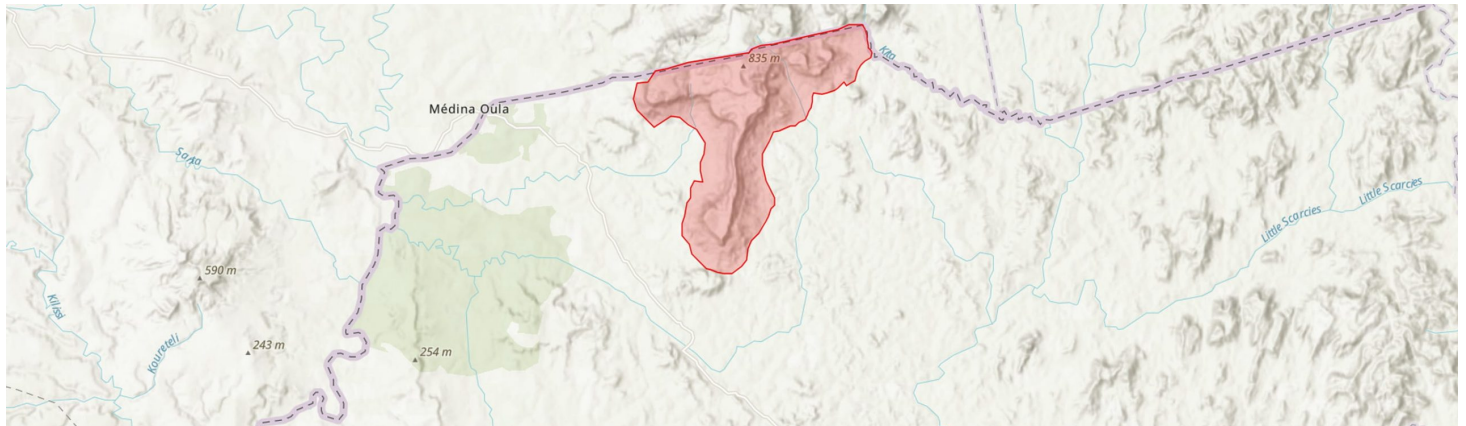


Kuru Hills

SIETIPA13



Country: **Sierra Leone**
Administrative region: **Northern (Province)**
Central co-ordinates: **9.86000 N, -12.29000 E**
Area: **94.3km²**

Qualifying IPA criteria

A(i)

IPA assessment rationale

The site qualifies under criterion A(i) due to the presence of eight globally threatened plant species, including the Endangered *Gilbertiodendron tonkolili* and several Vulnerable taxa. Even though it contains riverine systems with threatened Podostemaceae species and remnant of the Guinean forest threatened in Sierra Leone it does not meet the threshold of triggering criterion C(iii).

Site description

The Kuru Hills IPA is located in the northern part of Sierra Leone within the West African forest-savanna transition zone. The site is largely within the Kuru hills Nature reserve, covering about 94.6 km².

The vegetation ranges from mostly dense humid rainforest to grassy savannahs and montane grasslands. The main vegetation type is broad-leaved deciduous tree savannas with a continuous ground cover of perennial bunch grasses and forbs (Gomez Paloma and Acs 2012). Common tree species are *Pterocarpus erinaceus* and *Parkia biglobosa*, while typical grasses include *Andropogon gabonensis* and *Andropogon tectorum* (Amara et al., 2019)

Botanical significance

The IPA has a high botanical significance due to the presence of globally threatened plant species within a forest-savanna transition system. The site supports eight globally threatened taxa, including the Endangered *Gilbertiodendron tonkolili* and *Dichaetanthera echinulata*, as well as several Vulnerable species such as *Chlorophytum immaculatum*, *Landolphia macrantha*, *Neolemonniera clitrifolia*, *Guibourtia copallifera*, *Copaifera salikounda*, and *Stonesia heterospathella*. Other species recorded include the Near Threatened *Entandrophragma angolense* and some common indigenous species including *Combretum glutinosum*, and *Terminalia glaucescens*.

Two species, *Striga primuloides*, and *Chlorophytum immaculatum*, represents first records for Sierra Leone, denoting the need for more research in underexplored areas that may support additional plants of conservation concern.

Habitat and geology

The Kuru hills IPA is made up of diverse habitats of moist forests, wooded savanna, rolling hills grassland, vertical rocks, and riverine habitats. Moist forests with deciduous or semi-evergreen species are typically associated with the forest reserve, river, and stream banks within the IPA (Amara et al., 2019). The wooded grassland is also home to important primate species such as the two Critically Endangered species (CR): the western chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes verus*) and the African forest elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*).

The geology of the area is highly unique in the context of Sierra Leone, consisting of sedimentary, metasedimentary and granitic rocks of the Saionya Scarp Series extending from Guinea (Warnsloh, 2011). The climate is monsoon humid tropical, with a unimodal wet season from May to October (Gomez Paloma and Acs 2012; Amara et al., 2019). Annual mean rainfall is about 2,244 mm, and the mean temperature ranges between 23 and 29 °C (Hijmans et al. (2005). The topography of the site is characterized by low rolling hills with elevations range of 100 – 825 m above sea level (Google Earth 2026).

Conservation issues

The Kuru Hills IPA is subject to illegal logging (especially exploitation of rosewood), poaching, slash and burn agriculture, bush fires, mining and general natural habitats degradation. The woodland and grassland areas are more prone to recurrent fire, while the forest habitats are more targeted by farmers and timber harvesters because of their valuable tree species and fertile soils (Amara et al., 2019).

The site is included within the PAPFor (Protected Area Programme) in the OKKPS landscape, implemented by the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation (WCF) and Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary (TCS) which aims to improve forest management, combat desertification, combat land degradation, and conserve biodiversity (Gomez Paloma and Acs 2012). Even though CITES has recently banned the exploitation of rosewood in Sierra Leone, enforcement of regulations remains limited.

Site assessor(s)

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Date of first assessment:

6th Mar 2026

Reviewed by:

Xander van der Burgt, The Royal Botanic Gardens Kew

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>Chlorophytum immaculatum</i> (Hepper) Nordal	A(i)	—	—	✓	—	—	Scarce
<i>Landolphia macrantha</i> (K.Schum.) Pichon	A(i)	—	—	—	—	—	Unknown
<i>Neolemonniera clitandrifolia</i> A.Chev.	A(i)	—	—	—	—	—	Unknown
<i>Guibourtia copallifera</i> Benn.	A(i)	—	—	—	—	—	Unknown
<i>Gilbertiodendron tonkolili</i> Burgt & Estrella	A(i)	✓	—	—	—	—	Unknown
<i>Copaifera salikounda</i> Heckel	A(i)	—	—	—	—	—	Unknown
<i>Dichaetanthera echinulata</i> Hook.f.	A(i)	—	—	✓	—	—	Unknown
<i>Stonesia heterosp athella</i> G.Taylor	A(i)	✓	—	—	—	—	Scarce

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
Waterfalls with endemic Podostemaceae	C(i)	✓	—	—	
Low-altitude evergreen forest and gallery forest	C(i)	✓	—	—	

General site habitats

GENERAL SITE HABITAT	PERCENT COVERAGE	IMPORTANCE
Savanna - Moist Savanna	—	
Forest - Subtropical/Tropical Moist Montane Forest	—	
Grassland - Subtropical/Tropical High Altitude Grassland	—	
Wetlands (inland) - Permanent Rivers, Streams, Creeks [includes waterfalls]	—	

Land use types

LAND USE TYPE	PERCENT COVERAGE	IMPORTANCE
Nature conservation	60	Major
Agriculture (arable)	10	Minor
Agriculture (pastoral)	10	Minor
Tourism / Recreation	10	Minor
Extractive industry	10	Unknown

Threats

THREAT	SEVERITY	TIMING
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Protected areas

PROTECTED AREA NAME	PROTECTED AREA TYPE	RELATIONSHIP WITH IPA	AREAL OVERLAP
Kuru Hills Forest Reserve	Forest Reserve (conservation)	IPA encompasses protected/conservation area	—

Management type

MANAGEMENT TYPE	DESCRIPTION	YEAR STARTED	YEAR FINISHED
Protected Area management plan in place		—	—

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