Available from https://tipas.kew.org/site/lake-mape-and-mabesi/
[Accessed 14 July 2026]

Lake Mape and Mabesi

SIETIPA15

Country: **Sierra Leone**
Administrative region: **Southern (Province)**
Central co-ordinates: **7.20000 N, -11.70000 E**
Area: **95km²**

Qualifying IPA criteria

A(i)

IPA assessment rationale

This site qualifies as an IPA based on criterion A(i), hosting populations of two globally threatened taxa.

Site description

The Lake Mape and Mabesi IPA is situated within Pujehun District, in the Southern Province of Sierra Leone. This IPA is adjacent to the Moa River and in proximity to the coastline. The site encompasses the eponymous National Park. It also includes the Sulima Mangrove Swamp Strict Nature Reserve and Gbekema-Kanayema Forest Reserve (Protected Planet, 2024). Access to the site is notably restricted, being inaccessible by vehicle year-round and reachable only by motorbike during the dry season.

Botanical significance

This IPA is hypothesized to share botanical affinities with the Sulima IPA, approximately 16 km southward. Primary forest is documented at this site (Global Forest Watch, 2024). The IPA is critically important as it contains the only two documented occurrences of the globally threatened species Habropetalum dawei (EN), identified as a flagship species for Sierra Leone (Svahnström et al., 2023). Historical records also include notable species such as Fegimanra accumatissima (VU) and Terminalia scutifera (NT). Comprehensive botanical surveys are required to fully document the site's floristic diversity.

Habitat and geology

The IPA includes a mosaic of habitat types, including mangroves, coastal thicket, 'coastal park savanna', freshwater lakes, swamp forest and grassland (Cole 1968, UNCCD 2004, Sankoh et al. 2016). Mangroves are found in tidal creeks abutting small streams, and are less common than Avicennia (Acanthaceae) mangroves which are present on firmer dandy soil under more saline conditions. Rhizophora mangroves often merge with coastal thicket, dominated by Dichrostachys cinerea subsp. africana (Fabaceae) and coastal thicket is a continuation of closed forest vegetation of the upland near the coast (Cole 1968).'Coastal park savanna' (CPS) itself is a mosaic of woodland on sandy flats dissected by coastal thicket and forest on the ridges, visible in found on distinctive ridges that run parallel to the coastline on lateritic sandy soil (Cole 1968, Google Earth Imagery 2025). Species common in CPS are trees such as Chrysobalanus spp., Neocarya macrophylla and Terminalia scutifera, as well as caespitose grasses such as Ctenium newtonii and Panicum congoense (Cole, 1968). This IPA contains some of the most intact and largest stands of the CPS vegetation type. Swamp forest and grassland occur in seasonally flooded areas. Peatland has also been mapped in this region, however this is yet to be ground-truthed (Melton, J et al., 2022; Austin et al., 2025).

Conservation issues

Despite remoteness providing some natural protection, the area lacks a formal management plan and has negligible ranger presence, resulting in non-existent enforcement of park regulations.

The official designation date of the national park remains unclear. Major threats within the include rice cultivation and frequent anthropogenic bushfires (UNCCD, 2004).
Habropetalum dawei is frequently harvested locally for ropes and construction materials, observed at the Sulima IPA, where it faces reproductive limitations due to frequent fires and slash-and-burn agriculture. Similar threats may also occur at this site.

Site assessor(s)

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Date of first assessment:
15th Jan 2025

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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
Habropetalum dawei (Huchinson & Dalziel) Airy Shaw	A(i)	✓	✓	✓	–	✓	Unknown
Fegimanra acuminatissima Keay	A(i)	✓	✓	✓	–	–	Unknown

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

General site habitats

GENERAL SITE HABITAT	PERCENT COVERAGE	IMPORTANCE
Forest - Subtropical/Tropical Swamp Forest	–	
Forest - Subtropical/Tropical Mangrove Forest Vegetation Above High Tide Level	–	
Grassland - Subtropical/Tropical Seasonally Wet/Flooded Lowland Grassland	–	
Wetlands (inland) - Permanent Rivers, Streams, Creeks [includes waterfalls]	–	
Wetlands (inland) - Bogs, Marshes, Swamps, Fens, Peatlands [generally over 8 ha]	–	
Savanna - Moist Savanna	–	
Marine Intertidal - Sandy Shoreline and/or Beaches, Sand Bars, Spits, etc.	–	
Other	–	

Land use types

LAND USE TYPE	PERCENT COVERAGE	IMPORTANCE
Nature conservation	–	
Agriculture (arable)	–	
Agriculture (pastoral)	–	
Harvesting of wild resources	–	

Threats

THREAT	SEVERITY	TIMING

Protected areas

PROTECTED AREA NAME	PROTECTED AREA TYPE	RELATIONSHIP WITH IPA	AREAL OVERLAP
Lake Mape/Mabesi	National Park	IPA encompasses protected/conservation area	–
Sulima Mangrove Swamp	National Nature Reserve	IPA encompasses protected/conservation area	–

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