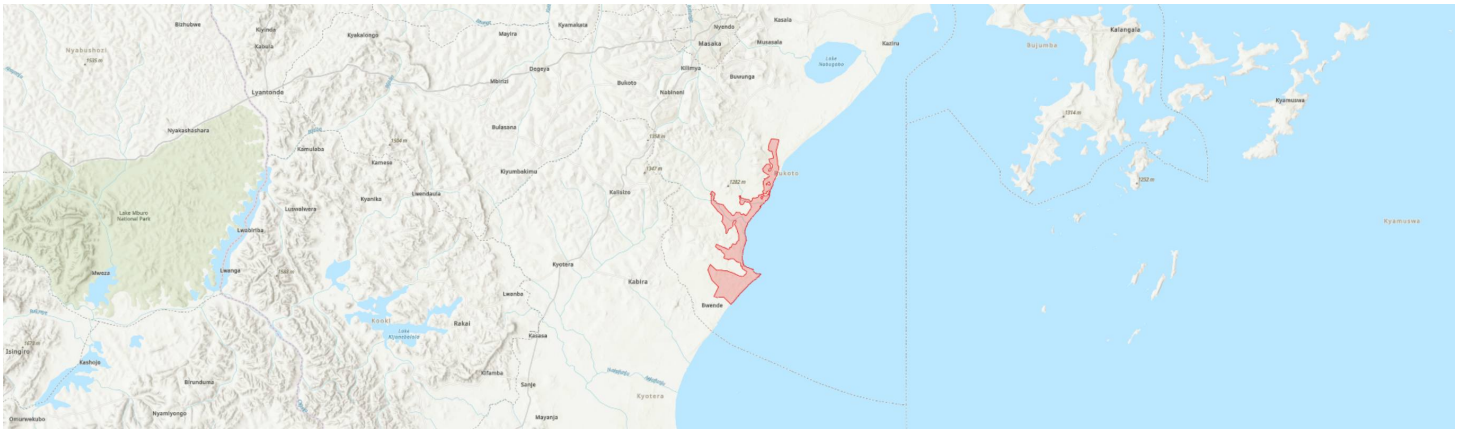
Available from https://tipas.kew.org/site/mujuzi/
[Accessed 16 June 2026]

Mujuzi

Mujuzi Central Forest Reserve (Test version)

UGATIPA17



Country: **Uganda**
Administrative region: **Central (Region)**
Central co-ordinates: **-0.59696 N, 31.78167 E**
Area: **57km²**

Qualifying IPA criteria

A(i)

IPA assessment rationale

Mujuzi CFR qualifies as an IPA under criterion A(i) as one of only two sites globally, and the only protected area, from which Rinorea ituriensis (CR) is known, as well as supporting populations of two other globally threatened taxa, Baissea leontonori (EN) and Alsophila camerooniana var. ugandensis (EN). Further botanical surveys are required at the site to fully catalogue the diversity of this site.

Site description

Mujuzi Central Forest Reserve (CFR) is located within Masaka District along the shore of Lake Victoria. Spanning a length of 25 km north to south, this site is relatively flat, covering around 60 m in altitude. Mujuzi has areas of intact lakeshore forest that have otherwise been widely lost around Lake Victoria, but the reserve has not received much survey effort, particularly for herbaceous species. This site was visited in 2023 as part of the Uganda TIPAs project.

Botanical significance

The site is of global conservation importance as one of only two sites known globally for the Critically Endangered species Rinorea ituriensis. The specimen from this IPA was originally described as Rinorea sp. B in the Flora of Tropical East Africa (FTEA), however, this has since been re-identified as Rinorea ituriensis. The Red List assessment of this species should probably, therefore, be downgraded to Endangered as it is now known from two sites. However, the second occurrence of R. ituriensis, the type specimen collected in 1908, occurs outside a protected area in the Orientale region of D.R. Congo (Paradis and Stévart 2021). Here the species may well be threatened by small-scale agriculture, therefore conservation at Mujuzi, the only protected area globally that this species occurs in, is needed to ensure this species does not become extinct.

The Endangered tree fern Alsophila camerooniana var. ugandensis, (Cyathea camerooniana var. ugandensis) is also known from this IPA. This species is endemic to Uganda and is only known from two other sites, Bwindi Impenetrable Forest and Buikwe District. While the former site is reasonably secure, the latter site is heavily transformed with much of this species' potential habitat lost (Google Earth 2025). Conservation of this species within Mujuzi CFR is therefore important to prevent an increased risk of extinction.

Finally, the Endangered forest liana Baissea leontonori is recorded from the northern end of this site, this being the only site for this species within the Uganda IPA network. The record for this species (K.A. Lye & A.B. Katende #6234) dates to 1971 and so there is a need to refind the species at Mujuzi CFR.

The Endangered tree Afrocarpus usambarensis was listed in field surveys by Lwanga (1996), although this species is not known from Uganda and was more likely to have been Podocarpus milanjianus or Afrocarpus dawei which are known from nearby Sango Bay.

The site needs more extensive botanical survey work, which may well reveal additional threatened and rare species.

Habitat and geology

Much of the site is covered by medium altitude, semi-deciduous forest with swampy areas present at lower altitudes. Surveys by Lwanga (1996) found Piptadeniastrum africanum to be dominant throughout the site. In addition, surveys undertaken by the Uganda TIPAs project in 2023 found trees such as Pseudospondias microcarpa, Pycnanthus angolensis, Canarium schweinfurthii and Raphia farinifera to be common. In the understory, small trees of Trichilia rubescens dominate while herbs of Palisota schweinfurthii and, in wetter areas, Marantochloa purpurea are abundant. Hymenocoleous hirsutus was observed frequently on the forest floor within the interior. There are areas of open Hyparrhenia savanna within the reserve, which are likely derived from cattle grazing.

The site is underlain by loamy-clay soils, transitioning to sandy soils towards the lake shoreline.

Conservation issues

Mujuzi is a CFR gazetted in 1932 and is a collection of three former forest reserves, Mujuzi, Kiraala and Byante from north to south. Along the lakeshore, there are a small number of fishing landing sites, the largest of which, Ddimo and Bale, have associated fishing villages within the reserve. While surveys in the 1990s found that there was encroachment into the forest around Ddimo, particularly for extraction of timber and fuel, satellite imagery suggests that agricultural encroachment near the village of Katinyondo and north of Bale has resulted in greater forest loss since 2010 (Lwanga 1996; World Resources Institute 2023). During our visit to the site, we observed small-scale logging and charcoal burning in the lattermost area. While we did not observe grazing within the reserve, the grassy areas are likely kept open by cattle farming.

In 2022, a local campaign, “Save Mujuzi Forest”, was established when a local businessman claimed to have a mailo (freehold) land title on the forest. Part of the forest had been cleared for growing pineapples as a result of this claim (Kutamba 2022). Other legal cases are ongoing concerning those who have claimed land titles within the reserve (Ssekweyama 2022). Uganda Peoples Defense Force officers were subsequently deployed in this site and pineapple growers were ordered to vacate (Ssenyonga 2022). It is important that land rights are resolved in the area and that the granting of land titles within protected areas is halted as such disputes are undermining conservation efforts.

The Masaka District Forest Office estimates that 2,545 acres (ca. 10 km2) of forest cover has been lost to logging and cultivation overall (Ssenyonga 2022). But despite several threats, this forest is in better condition than Jubiya CFR to the north where fishing activities have been restricted, forcing communities to exploit forest resources as an alternative livelihood option.

Site assessor(s)

Sophie Richards, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Iain Darbyshire, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Samuel Ojelel, Makerere University Herbarium

James Kalema, Makerere University Herbarium

Date of first assessment:
29th Oct 2024

Reviewed by:
Juventine Boaz Odoi, NaFORRI

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
Rinorea ituriensis M.Brandt	A(i)	✓	✓	✓	–	–	Unknown
Alsophila camerooniana (Hook.) R.M.Tryon var. ugandensis (Holttum) J.P.Roux	A(i)	✓	✓	✓	–	–	Unknown
Baissea leontonori Dilst	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
Freshwater marshes (VU)	C(iii)	–	–	–	0.003
Medium Altitude Semi-Deciduous Forest (EN)	C(iii)	–	–	–	45.3

General site habitats

GENERAL SITE HABITAT	PERCENT COVERAGE	IMPORTANCE
Forest - Subtropical/Tropical Moist Lowland Forest	–	Major
Grassland - Subtropical/Tropical Seasonally Wet/Flooded Lowland Grassland	–	Major
Artificial - Terrestrial - Pastureland	–	Unknown
Artificial - Terrestrial - Plantations	–	Minor
Forest - Subtropical/Tropical Swamp Forest	–	Major

Land use types

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

Threats

THREAT	SEVERITY	TIMING
Residential & commercial development - Housing & urban areas	Medium	Ongoing - stable
Agriculture & aquaculture - Livestock farming & ranching - Small-holder grazing, ranching or farming	High	Ongoing - stable
Agriculture & aquaculture - Annual & perennial non-timber crops - Small-holder farming	Medium	Ongoing - increasing

Protected areas

PROTECTED AREA NAME	PROTECTED AREA TYPE	RELATIONSHIP WITH IPA	AREAL OVERLAP
Mujuzi Central Forest Reserve	Forest Reserve (conservation)	protected/conservation area matches IPA	55

Bibliography

World Resources Institute 2023. **Global Forest Watch 2023.**

Kutamba, W. 2022. **Conservationists protest Mujuzi Forest give away.** Daily Monitor, Vol 9 February

Lwanga, J. 1996. **Trees and Shrubs.** Mujuzi, Sesse Islands and Jubiya Forest Reserves Biodiversity Report (pub. Forest Department)

Paradis, A. H., & Stévart, T. 2021. **Rinorea ituriensis. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2021: e.T174470719A174514015.**

Ssekweyama, E. 2022. **Cultivators in Masaka Encroach on Mujuzi Central Forest Reserve.** Uganda Radio Network, Vol 4 February

Ssenyonga, I. 2022. **Security deployed to guard Masaka forest reserves.** The Cooperator, Vol 22 June

Google Earth . **Uganda.**