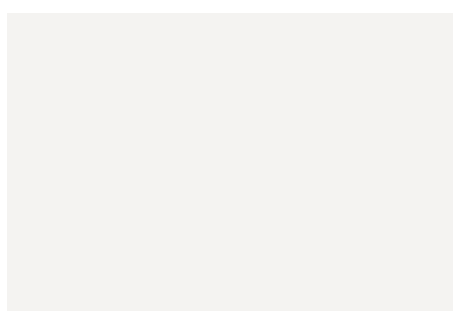
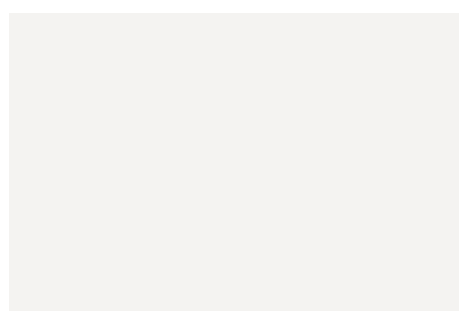
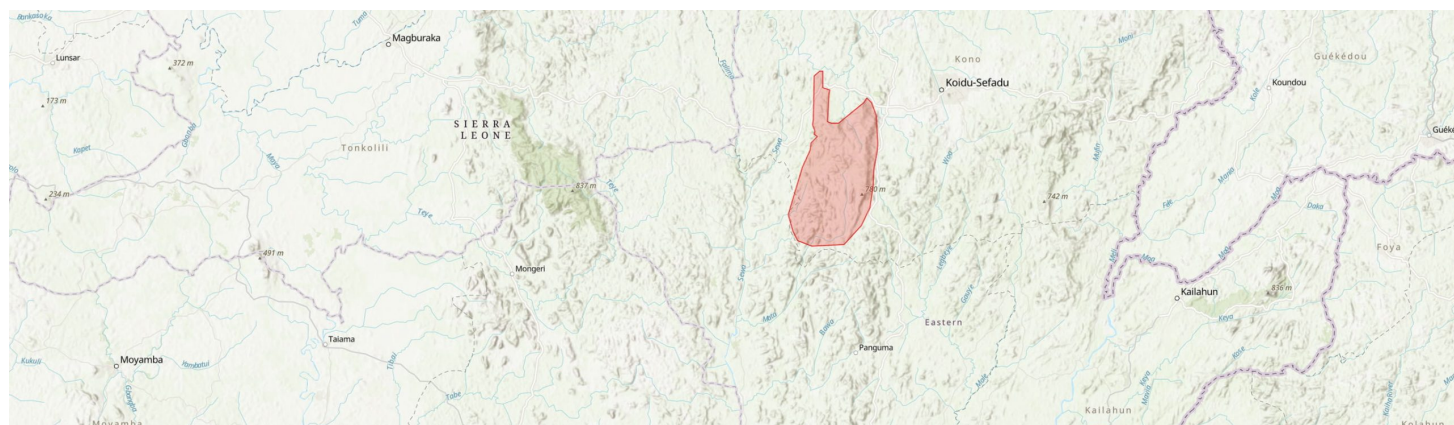


Nimini Hill North

SIETIPA19



Country: **Sierra Leone**

Administrative region: **Eastern (Province)**

Central co-ordinates: **8.07000 N, -11.00000 E**

Area: **352.8km²**

Qualifying IPA criteria

A(i)

IPA assessment rationale

The Nimini Hills North IPA hosts two globally threatened species and is recognized as the best site nationally for *Cola boxiana* EN, therefore meeting criterion A(i). Approximately 50% of intact forest within this IPA remains intact, suggesting there may be additional threatened species yet to be recorded in this area. Extensive research is necessary to confirm species presence. A well-structured management plan could potentially trigger criterion C(iii) for this IPA, which is currently accounts for 5% of moist evergreen forest in the country. However, the IPA is under immense threats of mining and logging activities.

Site description

The Nimini Hills Important Plant Area encompasses the Nimini Hills forest reserve, which is approximately 129 km², along with surrounding areas located in the southwest of Kono District. The Nimini Hills North forest shares boundaries with three chiefdoms: Nimiyama, Nimikoro, and Gorama. The nearest city, Koidu, is located about 40 kilometers away. The site is situated on distant mountains that are characterized by gaps and rolling hills, and it contains some good stands of undisturbed forests, totalling around 12,000 ha. However, mining and logging activities have significantly affected the portion of land shared with Nimikoro Chiefdom, resulting in existence of several substantial forest fragments within the IPA.

Botanical significance

The Nimini North IPA is biologically significant, it help protect an intact forest significant within the upper Guinean biodiversity hotspot and it contains two globally threatened plant species *Cola boxiana* EN and *Combretum fulvum*. The near threatened is also commonly found within this IPA *Trichoscypha longifolia*. Large tree species may include *Parkia bicolor*, *Uapacca guniensis*, *Cola chlamydantha*, *Pyncnanthus angolensis*, *Canarium schweinfurthii*, *Albizia zygia*, *Xylopia aethiopica*, *Piptadeniastrium africanum*, *Terminalia ivoriensis*, *Terminalia superba*, *Terminalia superba*, and *Chlorophora regia* with a diverse understory of small trees, shrubs, and herbs. The higher slopes support forest with smaller-stature trees, and abundant epiphytes (Vines).

Habitat and geology

The vegetation of Nimini Hills North is characterised by moist evergreen and semi-deciduous forests on hill slopes with disturbances largely occurring mostly in the southeast of the reserve and beyond (Terry, 2012). Intact moist evergreen and semi-deciduous forests constitute about 45 % of the area, while the remaining vegetation includes vine forest formations (24.3), likely influenced by soil type or slope, as well as disturbed vegetation such as farm bush and secondary forest mostly located outside the reserve (Terry, 2012).

The IPA is situated in a wet microclimate, where the rolling hills act as topographic impediment against wet-season inclement weather systems from the Atlantic, resulting in an average annual rainfall of 2,659 mm. The site's elevation ranges between 232 to 750 m above sea level, with the topography varying from flat bottomlands to steep hillsides, and rounded ridge-tops (Terry, 2012). Geologically, the site is part of an Archean greenstone belt, measuring 2 to 8 km wide, lying within the West African Craton of the African Shield. It is surrounded by granitoid rocks to the east and west, interbanded with sedimentary formations, including banded ironstones. The topsoil is deep and well drained with some laterite present, underlain by metamorphic rocks (Lebbie et al., 2023).

Conservation issues

The main threats within this IPA includes extensive mining of gold and diamonds, despite Nimini Hill North being designated as a forest reserve in 1921. In 2008, the Trans-Atlantic Logging Mompany conducted a forest inventory (results unpublished) in Nimini Hills North Extension 1, which led to a temporary logging ban and shut down of commercial logging in the district in 2009 (Terry, 2012). Currently, a mining company, Wongor Mining Company, has been allocated 2/3 of the land for gold mining, while another company, Treesdales Company, has been granted logging rights within sections of the forest reserve. The mining company occupies approximately 15% of the available land in the region; however, the boundary is unclear to community members as they currently have a 25-years lease agreement with the government (Terry, 2012; Lebby et al., 2023). Additionally, small-scale logging using power saws is rampant, with only a few saw owners obtaining timber licenses. The Nimini Hills Forest Reserve is already a significantly depleted and threatened forest, showing very few signs of wildlife and human footprints evident throughout the reserve, except in the far south. To preserve much of its forest cover in the future, a comprehensive inventory of all plant species, threats, and their status is required, alongside stringent management of the forest resources to maintain this vital resource. Control of small-scale logging with power saws are essential to prevent further depletion of standing timber in the reserve.

The road network to the site is in dilapidated and challenging condition.

Site assessor(s)

Fanny Massally, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Date of first assessment:

10th Apr 2026

Reviewed by:

Aiah Lebby, 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>Homalium smythei</i> Hutch. & Dalziel	A(i)	—	—	—	—	—	Occasional
<i>Cola boxiana</i>	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
Low-altitude evergreen forest and gallery forest	C(i)	✓	—	—	

General site habitats

GENERAL SITE HABITAT	PERCENT COVERAGE	IMPORTANCE
Forest - Subtropical/Tropical Moist Lowland Forest	50	Major
Forest - Subtropical/Tropical Swamp Forest	15	Minor
Artificial - Terrestrial - Arable Land	35	Unknown

Land use types

LAND USE TYPE	PERCENT COVERAGE	IMPORTANCE
Agriculture (arable)	—	
Nature conservation	—	
Extractive industry	—	

Threats

THREAT	SEVERITY	TIMING
Agriculture & aquaculture - Annual & perennial non-timber crops	Medium	Ongoing - increasing
Energy production & mining - Mining & quarrying	High	Ongoing - increasing
Pollution - Domestic & urban waste water	Medium	Ongoing - increasing
Biological resource use - Hunting & collecting terrestrial animals - Unintentional effects (species being assessed is not the target)	High	Ongoing - increasing

THREAT	SEVERITY	TIMING
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Protected areas

PROTECTED AREA NAME	PROTECTED AREA TYPE	RELATIONSHIP WITH IPA	AREAL OVERLAP
Nimini North Forest reserve	National Reserve	IPA encompasses protected/conservation area	129

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