

Mujuzi Central Forest Reserve

UGATIPA17

Country: **Uganda**

Administrative region: **Central (Region)**

Central co-ordinates: **-0.59696 N, 31.78167 E**

Area: **57.56km²**

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. Further botanical surveys are required at the site to fully catalogue the diversity of this site.

Site description

Mujuzi Central Forest Reserve 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 has 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 FTEA, however, this has since been reidentified 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 & Stévant, 2021). Here the species may well be threatened by small-scale agriculture and so conservation at Mujuzi, the only protected area globally that this species occurs in, is needed to ensure this species does not become extinct.

Endangered tree fern, *Alsophila 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 2023). Conservation of this species within Mujuzi CFR is therefore important to prevent an increased risk of extinction.

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

The site needs more extensive botanical survey work, which may well reveal addition 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, recent surveys undertaken by the Uganda TIPAs project found trees such as *Pseudospondias microcarpa*, *Pycnanthus angolensis*, *Canarium schweinfurthii* and *Raphia farinifera* to be common. In the understorey, small trees of *Trichilia* sp. are 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 Central Forest Reserve 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, Ddimu and Bale, have associated fishing villages within the reserve. While 1990s surveys found that there was encroachment into the forest around Ddimu, particularly 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). UPDF officers were subsequently deployed to 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 for their livelihoods.

Site assessor(s)

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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
<i>Rinorea ituriensis</i> <i>M.Brandt</i>	A(i)	✓	✓	✓	—	—	Unknown
<i>Alsophila camerooniana</i> <i>(Hook.) R.M.Tryon</i> <i>var. ugandensis</i> <i>(Holtum)</i> <i>J.P.Roux</i>	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
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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 (arable)	—	Minor
Agriculture (pastoral)	—	Major
Harvesting of wild resources	—	Minor

Threats

THREAT	SEVERITY	TIMING
Residential & commercial development - Housing & urban areas	Medium	Ongoing - stable

THREAT	SEVERITY	TIMING
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
Agriculture & aquaculture - Annual & perennial non-timber crops	High	Ongoing - trend unknown

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	58

Bibliography

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

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

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

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