

information (e.g. current baseline surveys). These plans should be publicly available and developed and reviewed through an extensive consultative process with local fringe communities.

- Condition of PAs: there should include a legal requirement to monitor the condition of the PA and report on the progress of implementation of the management plan. These assessments should be publicly available.
- CREMAs: The Wildlife Division Policy for Collaborative Community Based Wildlife Management for the establishment of Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs) across Ghana should be given legal backing and expressed in PA legislation.
- Consent for proposed policies, plans, projects and activities within a PA: these should only be consented by the relevant authorities following a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and/or an environmental impact assessment to ensure

that proposed activities will not negatively affect the habitats and species for which it is designated.

- Invasive Alien Species: legislation should require that an Invasive Alien Species list, if applicable, be prepared for each protected area and regularly reviewed and updated.
- Climate change: PA legislation should be amended to make provision for mainstreaming climate change adaptation and mitigation measures that may help build resilience to achieve the conservation objectives of the area.

#### **Access to information**

- PA authorities should provide timely access to accurate, relevant and understandable information, as well as provide a reasonable opportunity for the public to provide meaningful comments where significant decisions are being contemplated on the Protected Area.



# **Ensuring Sustainable Land-Use THROUGH A Well-Managed Protected Area Network In Ghana**





FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

**Ghana Wildlife Society**

Accra Conservation Education Centre  
Adjacent Efua Sutherland Children's Park, Accra  
P. O. Box 13252, Accra, Ghana

 [www.ghanawildlifesociety.org](http://www.ghanawildlifesociety.org)  
 [info@ghanawildlifesociety.org](mailto:info@ghanawildlifesociety.org)

 [www.blog.ghanawildlifesociety.org](http://www.blog.ghanawildlifesociety.org)  
 +233 (0) 30 266 5197

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# Background

Bird migration remains one of the most captivating features of the avian world. The arrival and departure of migrants is a spectacular natural phenomenon with migratory birds being amongst the most distant of travelers. Each year on two occasions, billions of birds move across the world. Generally, these migrations follow a predominantly north-south axis, connecting breeding grounds in arctic and temperate regions with non-breeding sites in temperate and tropical areas. Some migratory birds use specific sites within West Africa, and well-managed protected areas (PAs) may provide suitable habitats for roosting aggregations or stopover congregations. Migrant bird population densities may be key general indicators of the capacity of the environment to retain wider biodiversity; the populations of many of these migratory birds have been in sharp decline over the last few decades. As yet the precise causes and geographies of such declines are relatively unknown.

PAs can safeguard important areas of native habitats where they are well managed and are vital for the conservation of nature. Importantly, they can also provide resilience against challenges such as food and water security, disease, disaster risk reduction and climate change. PAs are, however, not isolated reservoirs of nature, but have an important and dynamic relationship with the land surrounding them. This land can provide vital ecological connectivity – or insurmountable barriers - with other PAs. Yet many species of migratory birds occur more diffusely across the wider landscape where land use change, habitat degradation and uncontrolled development may be impacting the long-term sustainability of not just their populations but also Ghana’s broader natural environment. Protected areas can safeguard important habitats where effective policies and legislation are well implemented.

# Findings

- **Ghana Forest and Wildlife Policy, 2012:** Some legislative gaps are covered by practices outlined in the Ghana Forest and Wildlife Policy, 2012, notably in the preparation of individual management plans for each existing PA. Moreover, these plans have encouragingly been drawn up with some degree of local community consultation. The policy states that government aims at managing all national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, wildlife resource reserves and

other PAs in accordance with the duly approved wildlife management plans to ensure comprehensive biodiversity conservation and development in line with national conservation policies, strategies and Government of Ghana’s commitment to international conventions and protocols<sup>1</sup>. The policy also states that the Government will, for example, create biological corridors between existing networks of conservation areas to maintain genetic continuity of flora and fauna and promote trans-boundary corridor management with neighbouring countries, develop guidelines for the use of biodiversity offsets to rehabilitate degraded areas, increase community participation in wildlife management in all forest areas and develop an incentive system to promote investment in community-based eco-tourism and commercial wildlife conservation and development. This policy does not carry the force of law and thus does not carry a legally binding mandate for such necessary actions to occur.

- **Conservation objectives:** The law does not require the statement of the conservation objectives of the PA. There is no requirement in law for management plans for each PA to be drawn up, nor a requirement to consider threats for Invasive Alien Species. There is no provision in PA legislation that explicitly provides for mainstreaming climate change into protected area design and management (though this in part can be explained in that Ghana’s legislation creating PAs was enacted before Ghana signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). Similarly, the study found that there are no express requirements in PA legislation that provide for protected area authorities to update species schedules, considering the fact that, the conservation status of migratory and other species change with time and environmental conditions. The study found no requirement in PA legislation that allows the public to request and receive information on PAs, and neither are the PA authorities required to collect and disseminate information proactively to the public regarding PAs.
- **Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs):** The study also found no requirements in PA legislation and regulations that require PA authorities, the Forestry Commission and the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources to ensure public participation in their decision making. However, the Government is in the process of establishing CREMAs across Ghana, which, when established, will give the authority to a community represented by a locally elected Natural

Resource Management Committee (NRMCM) to regulate and control access to wildlife in the area defined. At the time of writing, CREMAs have been established at Bia, Ankasa and Mole. A Community Resource Management Committee (CRMC) has also been set up to lead the management of each these areas. The CRMC helps to resolve human-wildlife conflicts and issues between the PA authorities and the communities.

- **PA establishment:** The last establishment of any new PAs in Ghana occurred on 1st December 1999 with the creation of five coastal Ramsar Sites and one inland Ramsar Site. There is no evidence of any intention to create new PAs beyond the two<sup>2</sup> proposed in the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. Some PAs and particularly Ramsar Sites have been severely degraded (see case study 1) and this indicates a lack of enforcement of the requirements/safeguards in environmental protection legislation. International Law requires Ghana, as a state party, to control activities outside conservation areas which are detrimental to the purpose for which the conservation areas were created and establish for that purpose buffer zones around their borders. Further, research showed that the payments of compensation to communities affected by the establishment of some protected areas have still not been done and this occasionally results in displaced persons returning to designated areas.

## TEXTBOX 1:

### ENCROACHMENT AT THE SAKUMO RAMSAR SITE

The Sakumo site was designated a Ramsar site under the Wetland Management (Ramsar site) Regulations, 1999 (L.I. 1659). It is a coastal wetland located in Tema with an area of 1,364.35 hectares providing essential ecological and social services to communities and serves as a habitat for fish and stopover grounds for migratory birds. Despite its importance, the wetland has been subjected to encroachment resulting in considerable risk of deteriorating water quality, biodiversity loss and drying up of most parts of the wetland. This is due to the conversion of the land to residential and agricultural uses and problems of domestic and industrial pollution. In 2017, the Metropolitan Chief Executive of Tema instructed for the demolition of structures constructed individuals and estate developers on the Ramsar site. Despite this, residential development is still ongoing on that site.

# Policy Recommendations

## International commitments

- The review highlighted the existence of many international commitments made by Ghana yet most of the commitments have not been transposed into existing or new domestic legislation. The effect is that such commitments are often not effectively implemented and monitored in Ghana. For instance, the Ramsar Convention of which Ghana is a party to is not effectively implemented. These agreements, if possible, should be transposed into existing laws or new legislations enacted to that effect.

## Protected Area Network (PAN)

- Creation of PAs: legislation should provide a mechanism that gives the public/stakeholders an opportunity to propose the creation of new PAs or amend the status of existing ones. This should

include a requirement in law for a mandatory wide and adequate consultation of relevant stakeholders in the establishment, reclassification or change of status of PAs.

- National PA system plan: a legal requirement for the PA network to be synchronized to reflect the importance of habitat connectivity and introduces legislation that will establish conservation corridors in PA design within and between Ghana and neighboring countries.

## Management

By connecting PAs through corridors, a balanced system of protection and sustainable use and land management may be created. The following is, therefore, recommended:

- Management plans: the production of PA management plans and their regular review by the FC should be based on sound empirical scientific

<sup>1</sup> See full report for a list of international conventions and protocol ratified by Ghana.

<sup>2</sup> Agumatsa Wildlife Sanctuary and Kyabobo National Park