

Treasures of the West African Mangrove Ecosystem

The unique functions and values of mangroves sustain a high level of biological productivity which is extremely profitable to both animal species and human beings. This ecosystem, rich with species of flora and fauna, plays an important ecological and economic role for countries along the West African coast. The abundant fish of the region depend on these sites for their reproduction. Mangroves allow neighbouring communities to meet household needs for lumber and other products of these forests, such as oysters, which are also an important source of local revenue. In addition, mangroves serve as an essential stop along the routes of migratory birds, as well as a home to a variety of marine species.



Pelican in mangrove waters
(Wetlands International Africa)



Human mangrove degradation
(Wetlands International Africa)

An alarming reduction!

The high rate of exploitation of mangrove resources has reached a critical peak. It is estimated that over 200,000 hectares of mangrove have been lost between 1990 and 2007. This situation has resulted in excessive demand on mangrove resources for use in construction, smoked fish, and agricultural activities. This is exacerbated by the effects of climate variations, which translate into drought particularly in the northern part of the sub-region. This leads to an accelerated degradation of the ecosystem; to resolve this will require an effective system of sustainable management based on a better understanding of the current situation and a wider consultation of actors.

West African Mangrove Initiative

Wetlands International Africa and IUCN are combining their efforts within the PRCM to promote a wiser use of mangrove resources. The West African Mangrove Initiative works at 2 levels in 6 countries from Mauritania to Sierra Leone; as well as supporting governments to define policies aimed at sustainable management of the mangroves, the initiative also works with local communities to carry out reforestation and to develop livelihoods activities that have a low impact on mangroves.



Oyster harvesting in the Saloum islands
(Wetlands International Africa)