



ENTRO  
**NILE BASIN INITIATIVE**  
INITIATIVE DU BASSIN DU NIL

# Eastern Nile Basin Endowments

Ecological Regions|Wetlands|Transboundary Parks



**“We Work to realize shared benefits of Cooperative Water Resources  
Development and Management in the Eastern Nile”**



## Eastern Nile Basin: Key Facts

The Eastern Nile Basin (ENB), consisting of Egypt, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan hosts over a quarter of billion inhabitants. The ENB comprises almost half of the 3.4 million km<sup>2</sup> catchment area of the Nile River Basin and contributing much more than half of the runoff to the Main Nile.

The ENB is home to globally significant terrestrial and aquatic habitats, and ecosystems, some are classified as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The diversity of ecosystems within the ENB from tropical forests, high mountains, woodlands, savannahs, arid lands and deserts, has turned the ENB into a region of extraordinary biodiversity.

The ENB hosts some of the last remaining large mammals of the world such as Elephants, Buffalos, Giraffes, African lions, Cheetahs, White eared kobo, Gazelles, including their majestic



## Ecological Regions in the ENB

### Ethiopian Highlands

This is a biologically rich, but seriously threatened ecoregion. A number of Ethiopian endemic fauna is found in this region including large mammals such as the rare Walia ibex and Ethiopian wolf. The Simien Mountains National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is part of this region

### Sudanian Savannah

This ecoregion lies south of the Sahel and is divided by the Sudd in the South Sudan into western and eastern blocks. Parts of this habitat have been adversely affected by agriculture, fire and timbering.

### Sahelian Acacia Savannah

This is the largest ecoregion in the Nile Basin. The vegetation is characterized as Sahel acacia wooded grassland and deciduous bushlands.

### Sahara desert

The Sahara ecoregion covers parts of the northern area of the Sudan and nearly all of Egypt. Vegetation covers in the desert is extremely rare, however, a few desert antelopes may be found in small numbers.

### Saharan woodlands and steppe

The ecoregion extends from the western to north-eastern areas of Sudan as well as covers the Nile Delta and the Mediterranean coastline in Egypt. The steppes and woodlands are economically important as pasturelands and for irrigated agriculture.

### Nile Delta

The Nile Delta is one of the largest river deltas in the world. It is located in Northern Egypt where the Nile River spreads out and drains into the Mediterranean Sea covering 240 sq. Km. The Nile Delta is a rich agricultural region as well. With distinguished habitats it hosts a diverse group of plants, water birds, and reptiles.

## Wetlands: A Distinct Ecosystem in the ENB

Wetlands are distinguished ecosystems where lands are covered by water. They play a key role in maintaining environmental quality (e.g. ground water recharge, flow regulation); sustaining livelihoods (e.g. fisheries, fuel wood, timber, medicinal herbs) and maintaining biodiversity (home for fish, birds, reptiles, mammals).

The ENB hosts a number of Ramsar Sites (an international convention for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands). The Machar Marshes in South Sudan, the Lake Tana wetlands in Ethiopia both provide critical ecosystem and environmental services. Other Ramsar sites and wetlands in ENB include Lake Burullus in Egypt, Dinder National Park and Sunut Forest (located at the confluence of the White and Blue Niles) in Sudan.



## Transboundary Parks

The ENB has a large number of natural protected areas that host many rare and endangered fauna and flora species. Among these protected areas, some are transboundary parks that fall across the boundaries of two countries. Transboundary Parks can play a key role in addressing major conservation issues such as poaching, and drought by allowing wildlife to move from one place to another when conditions get worse.

### The Boma- Gambella National Parks

The Boma-Gambella landscape stretches across the South Sudan-Ethiopia border within the Baro-Akobo Sobat Subbasin. Considerable populations of unique fauna are hosted in these habitats. An estimated 1.3 million White-eared kob antelope migrate from Boma to Gambella National Parks during the summer and dry seasons.

### The Dinder-Alatish National Parks

Dinder National Park (in Sudan) and Alatish National Park (in Ethiopia) are two contiguous natural protected areas that fall on the Blue Nile drainage system. The two parks have high level of biodiversity, including animals of international conservation importance (African elephant, Buffalo, and African lions). They are also major migratory routes for birds from Asia and Europe.



## Sustaining Biodiversity: The Role of ENSAP

Eastern Nile terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems are facing multiple threats, including the expansion of irrigated and rain-fed agriculture, increasing land conversion for residential and industrial purposes, the growing rate of the expansion of cities and rising rate of harvesting of biomass energy-which are degrading the life support capability of the ecosystems and threatening the biodiversity of the ENB.

**If current rate of degradation continues unmitigated, the Eastern Nile could potentially lose all or most of its natural assets in the next decade or two**, which would be a tragedy not only for the Nile Basin, but for the entire world.

The Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), the only regional body that brings together all the Nile riparian countries, is best placed to provide unifying framework for transboundary governance and management for ENB environment and biodiversity. ENSAP-Eastern Nile Subsidiary Action Program- is an investment program under the NBI implemented by Egypt, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Sudan. ENSAP **seeks to develop water resources of the EN in a sustainable and equitable manner to ensure prosperity and security for its entire people.**

NBI has developed an approach to support the establishment of environmental flows management in the basin, which describes the quantity, quality and timing of water flows required to sustain freshwater and estuarine ecosystems and the human livelihoods and wellbeing that depend on these ecosystems. ENSAP is working to ensure that environmental flows are well managed in the preparation and implementation of water investment programs in the Eastern Nile Basin.



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