
WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION – IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

SIBILOI/CENTRAL ISLAND NATIONAL PARKS (KENYA) EXTENSION TO INCLUDE SOUTH ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

1. DOCUMENTATION

- i) **IUCN/WCMC Data Sheet:** (3 references).
- ii) **Additional Literature Consulted:** McClanahan F.R. and T Young. 1996. **East African Ecosystems and their Conservation.** OUP.
- iii) **Consultations:** Kenya Wildlife Service staff.
- iv) **Field Visit:** January 1997. J. Thorsell.

2. SUMMARY OF NATURAL VALUES

Lake Turkana (formerly Lake Rudolph) is located in the arid hot region of northern Kenya's Rift Valley near the border with Ethiopia. It is 265km in length with an average width of 30km. In the Turkana basin, the existing World Heritage site of Sibiloi/Central Island covers 157,585ha and was inscribed in 1997 under natural criteria (i) and (iv). South Island, the proposed extension, is the largest island in the lake found 100km to the south of Central Island. It was established as a National Park in 1983 with a size of 3,900ha including a 1km extension into the surrounding lake. Similar to Sibiloi/Central Island, South Island National Park (SINP) is a breeding ground for crocodile, hippopotamus and a range of venomous snakes. It is key stopover point for palearctic migrant waterbirds with a population of some 220,000, about half of which are the Little Stint. SINP is one of Kenya's Important Bird Areas as defined by BirdLife International. Lake Turkana waters are the most saline of all the major lakes of East Africa but the waters surrounding the Park support 47 species of fish, 7 of which are endemic to the lake. The SINP is a part of Mount Kulal Biosphere Reserve which extends over the southern part of Lake Turkana

3. COMPARISONS WITH OTHER AREAS

Lake Turkana with its unique geochemistry and geological history is one of Africa's most important breeding areas for the Nile Crocodile. Its avifauna are shared with other Rift Valley parks in the region including Samburu, Kulal and Awash. Sibiloi has the additional feature as the locality for the rich source of hominid and invertebrate fossils at Koobi Fora. As the third national park in the Turkana basin, South Island is the largest of the 3 islands in the lake. Its much larger size than Central Island make it a more important site for birdlife and other terrestrial wildlife (particularly snakes).

4. INTEGRITY

As an island, the boundaries of the proposed extension are clear. The inclusion of the surrounding 1km lake frontage is similar to other components of the existing World Heritage site. A management plan (with support from the World Heritage Fund) for all 3 of the Turkana parks is now in preparation. Although the island is visited by local artisanal fisherman, its remote location and lack of freshwater has discouraged human occupation and it exists in a relatively undisturbed state. The inclusion of SINP in the site would add to the representivity of the Lake Turkana ecosystem by complementing the natural values of the existing World Heritage site. If approved, the total size of the site would increase from 157,585ha to 161,485ha, or 2.4%.

5. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The original nomination of Sibiloi/Central Island was submitted on the basis of both natural and cultural criteria. The Committee deferred inscription on cultural criteria but ICOMOS is expected to reassess the nomination with new data from a theme study of hominid fossil sites.

6. APPLICATION OF CRITERIA/STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Similar to the rationale for the inscription of the existing site, South Island reinforces both criterion (i) and (iv). It adds further to both the representation of volcanic features of the Rift Valley and the waters of Lake Turkana. It is particularly important for avifauna, particularly waterbirds, as well as providing more crocodile nesting habitat.

7. RECOMMENDATION

The Bureau recommended to the Committee the extension of Sibiloi/Central Island by the addition of South Island National Park. As requested by the State Party, the new name of the site would be **“Lake Turkana National Parks”**. The Bureau strongly encouraged the Kenyan authorities to complete the management plan for the three parks as an integrated unit.