



International conservation

NABU project region Lake Tana accepted as UNESCO biosphere reserve

Tennhardt: Major step towards the long-term conservation of Ethiopia's largest freshwater body and the source of the Blue Nile River



Paris – The International Co-ordinating Council of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) has added NABU's projekt region Lake Tana to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. "UNESCO's acceptance of Lake Tana as a biosphere reserve is a major step towards the long-term conservation of valuable ecosystems while creating new sources of income for local communities" stated Thomas Tennhardt, NABU's vice president and head of international affairs. NABU has been working towards the establishment of the Lake Tana Biosphere Reserve in cooperation with the government of the Amhara Regional National State and its partner Michael Succow Foundation since 2012.

The new Lake Tana Biosphere Reserve is part of the Eastern Afromontane Biodiversity Hotspot and considered to be a gene centre for indigenous agricultural crops such as Noug (*Guizotia abyssinica*), Teff (*Eragrostis tef*) and wild coffee (*Coffea arabica*). Lake Tana is Ethiopia's largest freshwater body and the source of the Blue Nile River. Many Palaeartic migrant water birds depend on the lake as feeding and resting grounds, including the Common Crane (*Grus grus*), the Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) and the Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*). Almost 30 different species of fish have been recorded of which almost 70 percent are endemic. Extensive wetlands dominated by Papyrus and Typha stands are located all around Lake Tana, some of them being the largest and ecologically most important units in Ethiopia and the entire Horn of Africa. The area is home to unique churches and monasteries of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church dating back to the 13th century. More than two million people live in the Lake Tana Biosphere Reserve and depend on its resources for agriculture, trade, fishing and tourism.

Within NABU's project 1,574 people in 75 communities have been trained in order to conduct the participatory zoning process of the area. The no-use core areas of the reserve now cover almost four percent (24.157 hectare) of the biosphere reserve extending over almost 700.000 hectare. "In addition, a management unit based at the regional government has been set up and a management and ecotourism plan for the biosphere reserve have been developed. Income schemes and restoration programs will support the biosphere reserve on its way to become a vivid model area" said Svane Bender-Kaphengst, head of NABU's Africa Program. The official inauguration of Lake

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Tana Biosphere Reserve is being planned by NABU and partners for November 2015.

The longterm conservation of Lake Tana and its environment through the biosphere reserve concept is the major aim of NABU's project 'For People and Nature: Establishment of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve at Lake Tana in Ethiopia'. The project is supported by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

More information:

<https://en.nabu.de/projects/ethiopia/tana>

www.laketana-biosphere.com

www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/twenty_new_sites_added_to_unescos_world_network_of_biosphere_reserves/#.VXgNQka7-3s

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