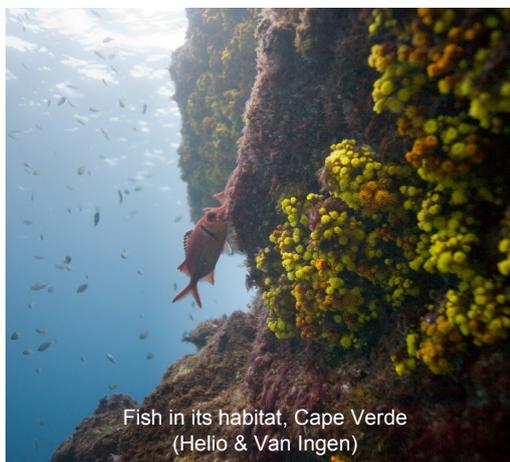


The West African Coast: A Wealth of Biodiversity

The 3,700 km of the West African coast is known for the richness and diversity of its ecosystems which produce vital resources for 35 million people. The coast envelops a wide variety of habitats from rich coral communities and vast mangrove forests to estuaries and long sandy coasts. These habitats are home to diverse species such as marine turtles, sea lions, marine hippopotami, dolphins, manatees, rays and sharks. As one of the most fish abundant coasts in the world, it is one of the most significant for migratory as well as colonial bird species.



Pelicans and Great Cormorants at Djoudj National Bird Park, Senegal. (Wetlands International Africa)



Fish in its habitat, Cape Verde (Helio & Van Ingen)

Species and habitats in danger!

Over the last 50 years, we have been witness to a massive destruction of marine and coastal resources. Over-fishing has significantly decreased available stocks such that certain species of fish are close to extinction. The demand for lumber as well as the un-sustainable harvest of molluscs and crustaceans has had an incredibly negative impact on mangrove ecosystems. In addition, the urbanisation of coastal zones, mass tourism, petroleum exploration and extraction, pollution, trawling, and sand mining pose serious dangers for the species and habitats of the sub-region, which must be addressed immediately. This situation is worsened by changes in climate which is already exacerbating coastal erosion.

BIOMAC: The West African Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Network

BIOMAC aims to coordinate conservation efforts in 7 countries: Senegal, Mauritania, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, and Cape Verde. For the last few years various actors (governments, NGOs) have been involved in conservation programmes, yet there is still much to be done to improve synergy and efficiency amongst these different initiatives. BIOMAC, which seeks to harmonise these actors and their activities, will drive the process of setting up an environmental early warning system and support capacity building from local communities to decision-makers alike.



Two young boys holding sea turtles in Cape Verde (Helio & Van Ingen)