

The Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme



The Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB), proposes an interdisciplinary research agenda and capacity building aiming to improve the relationship of people with their environment globally. Launched in the early 1970s, it notably targets the ecological, social and economic dimensions of biodiversity loss and the reduction of this loss. It uses its World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) as vehicles for knowledge-sharing, research and monitoring, education and training, and participatory decision-making.

Today, with more than 553 Biosphere Reserves in over 107 countries, the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) provides context-specific opportunities to combine scientific knowledge and governance modalities to: Reduce biodiversity loss; Improve livelihoods; Enhance social, economic and cultural conditions for environmental sustainability; thus contributing to the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular MDG 7 on environmental sustainability.

The **Bia Biosphere Reserve** in Ghana (designated in 1983) is situated in south-western Ghana close to the border to the Côte d'Ivoire and covers an area of 7,770 hectares.

Many of Ghana's major forest animals can be found in Bia Biosphere Reserve, such as the forest elephant, the globally endangered bongo and many primates. Over 160 species of birds including hawks,

eagles, bulbuls, flycatchers, the black-collared lovebird and the threatened white-breasted guinea fowl live in this habitat. 404 species of butterflies have been documented in Bia. It is also the only known home of *Agama sylvanus*, a newly discovered species of Lizard.

About 14,000 people live in the biosphere reserve on a permanent and seasonal basis. Their main economic activity is agriculture, with cocoa serving as the major cash crop. The management of the site has put into place a rather original scheme to diversify income opportunities for local communities living around the protected core zone of the reserve: The African giant snail abounds in the nature reserve and is considered as a meat delicacy among West Africans. As animal species are protected in the reserve, collecting licenses coupled with a fee, have been provided to 3 village communities. Part of the fees is used by the reserve management to enhance the protection of the area, while the other part of the fee is returned to the village communities for community-based projects. Apiculture has also been introduced lately to promote income for local people.

The Research and Monitoring activities in the Bia Biosphere Reserve are:

- Elephant population research.
- Primate species monitoring.
- Studies on the giant African snails.
- Community based management of natural resources. ■

