



KENYA

Atlas of Our Changing Environment

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A Disappearing Lake: Lake Olbollosat, Kenya



Lake Olbollosat, the only lake in Kenya's Central Province, lies in Great Rift Valley to the northwest of the Aberdare Mountains. The Lake covers over 40 km², of which only a small part is open water. Its catchment is the Ewaso Nyiro North Basin, which covers over 200 000 km² and is the country's largest drainage basin. It is also an

internal basin, which along with a high evaporation rate, gives the Lake its elevated salinity level.

The lake and its catchment area provide a variety of important habitats including open water, floating marshes and swamps, open grasslands and riverine forests

along the rivers, and springs that feed the lake. The lake is earmarked for designation as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance because of the wealth of biodiversity it supports, particularly its migratory bird species.

A rapidly growing population threatens this valuable habitat. Impacts include catchment degradation, siltation, overgrazing, encroachment on riparian land, agricultural pollution, and excessive water abstraction. Lake Olbollosat's water volume has fluctuated over the years. While Lake Olbollosat has periodically dried up and then come back to life in the past, environmentalists are concerned that the increasing number of pressures may mean that if it dries up again, it could be the end of Lake Olbollosat.