
Abune Eyessus Moa

The ancient monastery of Abune Eyessus Moa is often referred to for its woody vegetation, however little remain of the original tree cover. Apart from a small secondary woodland, native trees are scattered among intensive cultivation. The semi-natural vegetation is threatened mainly by the rising lake level and *Cordia africana* is endangered because of unsustainable logging.



Name: **Abune Eyessus Moa**

Status: monastery
Site Code: WU06
Floristic Region: WU
Region: 3 (South Wello)
Altitude: 1920 m
Latitude: 11° 20' N
Longitude: 39° 41' E

Woodland/forest:
Status: secondary and relict
Size: <1 ha
Dominant species:

canopy: *Celtis africana*, *Grewia ferruginea*, *Olea europaea* spp *cuspidata*
shrub/ground: *Becium grandiflorum*, *Dodonaea angustifolia*, *Leucas martinicensis*

No of woody species: 39
No of species with less than 5 individuals: 3
Threats: agriculture, logging, rising lake level, shore line erosion, invasive species

Photograph: Although clothed with many trees, the only bit of semi-natural woodland remaining is found at the extreme left of the peninsula. Much of the area is secondary having regenerated as the lake level receded some few decades ago.

Formerly Abune Eyessus Moa was an island but following a drop in the lake level of several metres around the 1940s, it became connected with the mainland by an isthmus. The church is situated on the top of the hill and many buildings are scattered all around. Although people often talk about this monastery as an important woodland site, in fact very little of the tree cover remains. However, there are many trees scattered around the site in the form of an agroforestry system.

The only stand of trees is situated to the extreme North of the peninsula. Much of it is actually natural regeneration on ground formerly under water. There is only one large tree (*Ficus*) which used at or close to the former lake shore. Despite of the area's dryness the woodland has no prickly species but many acacias are present outside the woodland.

Much of the grounds are cultivated with variety of crops, the isthmus having a particularly well looked after irrigated vegetable garden. Some areas are used for grazing cattle and there is much cultivation of coffee on higher ground. Many exotic trees have been planted in recent years around much of the monastery.

The region does not appear to have any natural woodland left and even scrubby vegetation is sparse.

History

This monastery has a long history appears to have a thriving community of monks. Because of the large monk population all natural resources are fully used.

Conservation status

Due to its small size and probably transient nature the woodland has a limited conservation value, but nevertheless it appears to be the only woodland left in the local landscape. The site has probably greater conservation importance for birds than for plants.



The monastery was formerly an island and the isthmus to the left of the photograph used to be underwater. Once again the lake level is rising.



Much of the valuable tree *Cordia africana* is being cut down in order to raise essential revenue to keep the monastery financially afloat.

Threats

Systematic logging of *Cordia africana* to raise cash is unsustainable. Much of the shore line is eroding reducing agricultural land but is not currently threatening the woodland. However it is threatened by a rise in lake level observed over the past few years. This also threatens the garden on the isthmus that provides many vegetables. Two introduced species, *Argemone mexicana* and *Tagetes minuta*, are particularly weedy, the former being especially common in fields.

Management

Because the grounds of the monastery are so intensively cultivated there is little scope to carry out much management especially if one takes into account the rising lake level. Some effort should be placed into raising *Cordia africana* in order to replenish trees currently being logged.
