Cameroon (Republic of)

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Location and area

Cameroon is a republic in west-central Africa, bounded on the north by Lake Chad, on the east by Chad and the Central African Republic, on the south by the Congo, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea, and on the west by the Bight of Bonny (an arm of the Atlantic Ocean) and Nigeria. The country has a total area of 475,442 km^2. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Topography

Cameroon has four distinct topographical regions:

1. The coastal plain in the south is a region of dense equatorial rainforests
2. The Adamawa Plateau in the centre reaches elevations of about 1,400 m above sea level This is a transitional area where forest gives way to the savannah country of the north
3. In the far north the savannah gradually slopes into the marshland surrounding Lake Chad
4. In the west is a high mountain area of volcanic origin, including Mount Cameroon (4,095 m). The country's most fertile soils are found in this region.

Among the principal rivers, the Sanaga and Nyong flow generally west to the Atlantic Ocean, and the Mbéré and Logone flow north from the central plateau into Lake Chad. A network of rivers in the Chad Basin, including the River Benue, links the country with the vast system of the River Niger to the east and north. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Climate

Cameroon has a tropical equatorial climate, humid in the south but increasingly dry to the north. On the coast the average annual rainfall is about 3,900 mm. On the exposed slopes of the Cameroon Mountains in the west, rainfall is almost constant and sometimes reaches over 10,000 mm per year. In the semi-arid northwest, annual rainfall averages about 380 mm. A dry season in the north lasts from October to April. The average temperature in the south is 25° C, in the plateau it is 21° C, and in the north it is 32° C. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Land use

Deforestation, overgrazing, and desertification are major environmental problems. Cameroon's hydroelectric potential is significant; the largest power station is at Edéa, on the Sanaga River. In 1999 97 % of the electricity was generated by hydroelectric facilities (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Wetlands

Markov et al. (1988) mentions the presence of swamps at the rivers Logone, Shari, and Buri, but affirms the absence of peatlands in these areas.
According to Wanzie (2000) the estimated area of mangroves in Cameroon is 2,725 (km^2?), one of the largest concentration of mangroves remaining in West and Central Africa, but the mangroves are destroyed and polluted by encroachers.

Peatlands

Bord na Mona (1985) and Shrier (1985) mention the occurrence of Histosols associated with Orthic Ferrasols and Humic Gleysols in Cameroon. Other potential peatland areas in Cameroon include the Toubouri depression (a 95 km^2 large area of shallow lakes and swamps in Cameroon and Chad, NE of Garoua), the swamp forests of the Nyong (6,688 km^2) and the Dja Rivers, Lake Chad and associated swamps (shared with Chad, Niger, and Nigeria), and the Yaérés floodplain (shared with Chad) (Howard-Wiliams & Thompson 1985).
Hurault (1972) reports on the presence of peat of pleniglacial age (24,500 and 18,000 BP) in the Mayo Wodeo terraces. According to the interpreted World Soil Map 4,007 km^2 of histosols exist in Cameroon and 18,812 km^2 of gley soils.

Still to be checked:

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trop. rain forest **41** Lake Borombi Mbo, (4o 20´N, 9o24´E), 300m, Cameroon. Pollen.
Maley, J. , Brenac, P. 1998. Vegetation dynamics, palaeoenvironments and climatic change in the forests of western Cameroon during the last 28000 years BP. Rev. Palaeobot. Palyn. 99, 157-187. **41** Lake Borombi Mbo, (4o 20´N, 9o24´E), 300m, Cameroon. Pollen.
Reynaud-Farrera, I. 1995.Histoire des paléoenvironnements forestiers du Sud-Cameroun à partir d'analyses palynologiques et statistiques de dépôts Holocènes et actuels. Unpublished Thesis, Univ. Monpt II., 198p.
Reynaud-Farrera, I. 1996. Late Holocene vegetational changes in South-West Cameroon.In: Dalfes, H.N., Kukla, G. and Weiss, H., eds. Climate change in the Third millenium BC , NATO ASI Series, Subseries I "Global Environmental Change" p. 641-652.
Reynaud-Farrera, I., Maley, J., Wirrmann, D. 1996. Végétation et climat dans les forêts du Sud-Ouest Cameroun depuis 4770 ans B.P. : analyse pollinique des sédiments du Lac Ossa. C.R. Acad. Sci. Paris, t.322, Série II a, p. 749-755.