Ghana

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Location and area

Ghana is a republic in western Africa, bordered on the north and north-west by Burkina Faso, on the east by Togo, on the south by the Gulf of Guinea, and on the west by Côte d'Ivoire. The total area of Ghana is 238,500 km^2. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Topography

Ghana is a lowland country, except for a range of hills on the eastern border. A coastal plain that is crossed by several rivers and streams, backs the sandy coastline. In the west heavily forested hills and many streams and rivers break the terrain. Ghana's highest point, in the eastern hills, is about 880 m above sea level. To the north lies an undulating savannah. The Black Volta and White Volta rivers, that join to form the Volta, drain the northern savannah. Lake Volta, in the east, is one of the largest artificial lakes in the world. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Climate

The climate of Ghana is tropical. Except in the north, two distinct rainy seasons occur, from April to June and from September to November. In the north the rainy season begins in March and lasts until September. Annual rainfall ranges from about 1,000 mm in the north to about 2,030 mm in the southeast. The harmattan, a dry desert wind, blows from the northeast from December to March, lowering the humidity and creating hot days and cool nights in the north. In the south the effects of the harmattan are felt in January. In most areas the highest temperatures occur in March, the lowest in August. The average annual temperature is about 26° C. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Land use

Much of the natural vegetation of Ghana has been destroyed by land clearing for agriculture. Forests cover about 28 % of Ghana's land area. The northern two-thirds of the country is covered by savannah. Almost all of Ghana's power is generated in hydroelectric facilities. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Peatlands

Markov et al. (1988) report the presence of swamps (up to 20 x 10 km large) with possible peat accumulation in the southwest of Ghana. Possible peatlands might also be included in the White Volta River floodplain, which has an extent of 8,532 km^2 in the wet season and of 1,022 km^2 in the dry season (Howard-Wiliams & Thompson 1985).
Davies (1967) reports the presence of peaty muds near Jimam on the River Oti. Cole (1973) mentions "small pockets of grass-herb swamps" from the coastal plain in Ghana west of Accra and in the savannah region north of Tamale.

According to the interpreted World Soil Map (Van Engelen & Huting 2002) 49 km^2 of histosols exist in Ghana and 7,824 km^2 of gley soils.

Still to be checked:

Maley, J. 1987. Fragmentation de la foret dense humide africaine et extension des biotopes monagnards au quaternaire recent: nouvelles donnés polliniques et chronologiques, Implication paleoclimatiques et biogeographiques. Paleoecology of Africa 18, 307-334. **39** Lake Bosumtwi, (6o30´N, 1o25´W), 100m , Ghana. Pollen.

Maley, J., Livingstone, A.A. 1983. Extension d´un element montagnard dans le sud du Ghana (Afrique de l´Ouest) au Pleistocène superieure et à l´Holocène inferieur: premières données polliiques. C.R. Acad. Sc. Paris296, II, 1287-1292. **39** Lake Bosumtwi, (6o30´N, 1o25´W), 100m , Ghana. Pollen.