

*Translation from Administration de Parques Nacionales document
(by Dave Fawcett 9 Dec 94).*

Protected areas of the Republic of Argentina to be included in the "List of Wetlands of International Importance"

PARQUE Y RESERVA NATURAL LAGUNA BLANCA

Location: [coords given] 30 km SW of Zapala, Neuquén province.

Area: 11,250 ha (8,250 ha National Park, 3,000 ha National Reserve). Within the protected area the lake represents slightly less than 1,700 ha.

Borders: ~not yet translated

Altitude: 1276 m

Biogeographic province: "*Patagonica*", Western District (Cabrera and Willink 1980)/ "*Patagonia*" (Udvardy 1975).

Wetland type: Freshwater lake and associated marshy area.

Site description: Permanent freshwater lake, with a maximum depth of 6 m fed by small rivers. the water level undergoes some fluctuations, and the lake partially ices over in winter.

Vegetation: The lake sustains important communities of rooted submerged plants, such as *Potamogeton pectinatus* & *Myriophyllum elatinoides*, as well as colonies of *Nostoc* sp. In some areas beside the lake shore, and likewise in the proximities of the watercourse supplies, meadows or "*mallines*" [small shallow permanent pools in the steppe, connected with the regional aquifer] develop. These wet areas are well vegetated, principally with juncaceae and ciperaceae. The rest of the area is covered by the semidesertified Patagonian steppe, with a predominance of shrubs such as *Nassauvia axillaris*, *Mulinum spinosum*, *Haplopappus pectinatus*, although in some sectors the gramineae and other herbaceae dominate (*Stipa speciosa*, *S. humilis*, etc.).

Land ownership: Under ownership and jurisdiction of the Nation, subject to the regulation of the law n° 22351 of National Parks, Natural Monuments and National Reserves.

Level of protection: Category II and IV (IUCN 1978). The Park and Reserve were created originally by Decree of Executive Power no. 63601 of 1940. The current borders were fixed by Law 19292 of 1971.

Land use: There are human inhabitants within the protected area, who herd livestock. The provincial road to Rahué crosses the park and borders the lake.

CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION:

Waterbirds: Important as breeding area for waterbirds. The census carried out in Jan/Feb 1982 included 300 *Podiceps rolland*, 1500 *Podiceps occipitalis*, 2000-3000 *Cygnus melancoryphus*, 300 *Cloephaga picta*, 500 *Anas sibilatrix*, 1000 *anas platalea*, 80 *Oxyura vittata*, 800 *Fulica armillata*, another five species of anatidae in smaller numbers, and several species of waders (Scott and Carbonell 1986).

Other fauna: Type locality of *Atelognathus patagonicus* (Gallardo 1962), leptodactilid amphibian endemic to the basaltic lakes of northern Patagonia. The abrupt walls which surround the lake shelter the chinchillid rodent *Lagidium viscacia*, and provide anesting place for the peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus*.

Threats: Livestock herding causes erosion, accelerated by the strong winds, and destroying potential nesting sites for birds. The boundary of the protected area leaves out part of the Laguna Blanca.

Research and conservation: The area depends on the Parque Nacional [National Park] Lanin for its administration and control. It has a permanent warden. Several general studies have been carried out on the limnology of the lake and flora and fauna of the park.

References: *see original*.