

## Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

Official translation by Charles Akin

Siteref: **6CR002**

1. **Date this sheet was completed/updated:** ~August 1992~
2. **Country:** COSTA RICA
3. **Name of wetland:** Refugio Nacional de Vida Silvestre Caño Negro
4. **Geographical coordinates:** ~ 10°52'N 84°45'W ~
5. **Altitude:** 30 metres above sea level
6. **Area:** 10,000 hectares (approximate area of the reserve)  
3,500 hectares (approximate area of wetlands)

### 7. Overview:

This reserve includes a shallow freshwater lake of about 800 hectares which is also a sump for stagnant water from the nearby Río Frío and its tributary the Río Mónico. The areas bordering the lake are herbaceous swamps and seasonally flooded woodlands. During the dry season (January-April), the level of the water drops, and the large lake is broken up into smaller lakes cut off from each other. Laguna San Sebastián is the largest of these lakes.

### 8. Wetland type:

This area includes the following features: slow-flowing rivers, streams, mangrove swamps, seasonally flooded grasslands, lowlands, palm groves, and permanently and seasonally flooded woodlands.

9. **Ramsar criteria:** ~1a, 2a, 3b~

10. **Map of site included? Please tick yes -or- no**

11. **Name and address of the compiler of this form:**

~no information available~

12. **Justification of the criteria selected under point 9, on previous page:** ~no information available~

13. **General location:**

The park is located 30 kilometres southeast of Upala between

the counties of Los Chiles and Guatuso in the province of Alajuela.

14. **Physical features:** ~no information available~

15. **Hydrological values:** ~no information available~

16. **Ecological features:**

The region of Caño Negro is classified as transitional between humid and semi-humid tropical forest. The average annual precipitation is 2800 mm. Situated between the monsoon climate of the Pacific lowlands and the year-round humid climate of the Caribbean coast, this region is the only region in Costa Rica of true zonal precipitation. There is rain every month, but from January to April there is less than 100 mm of rain, and in March and April there is usually less than 25 mm of rain. During these two months, the soil on the slopes dries out, and the forest is semi-deciduous. But owing to a high water table, the forest in the lowlands is always green.

17. **Noteworthy flora:**

Up to 50 per cent of the lowlands where the Caño Negro mangroves are found is poorly drained and subject to repeated flooding by the rivers. Because of this, there are patches of *yolillo* (*Raphia taedigera*) that grow abundantly in the shallow water and a mixture of communities dominated by tall reeds, grasses and scattered trees. Because the soil is clay and hydromorphic, swamps and marshes cover large areas to the south and northeast of the lake with palm groves. Slightly higher ground, formerly covered with forest, occupies a third of the northwest shore.

Water lilies (*Nymphaea acuatica*) in deeper water and water cloves (*Jussieva repens*) in association in shallow water with water lilies and a species of *Cyanophita* are found in the reserve. There is also a species of free-floating *Salvinia*. Along the shallow borders, there is a *Polygonum* and several species of reeds and grasses that, in combination with green algae and other microscopic aquatic plants, provide basic food for millions of small animals such as insect larvae and frogs that are eaten by the waterfowl and fish.

18. **Noteworthy fauna:**

Until now, more than 230 species of birds have been recorded in the Caño Negro mangrove including resident waders and migrating ducks from North America. The marshes of Caño Negro are a link in the chain of regional sites (Costa Rica and

Nicaragua) that waterfowl frequent. It has been proven that there is an established flyway between Bajos del Tempisque, Caño Negro and the lower and middle courses of the Río San Juan used almost constantly.

In Caño Negro, there is a large population of caimans (*Caiman crocodilus fuscus*). It is also the favoured and almost exclusive habitat of the *pez gaspar* (*Atractosteus tropicus*) considered to be a living fossil. During the months of June and July, several couples of *galan sin ventura* (*Jabiru mycteria*) are found here, a species threatened with extinction and considered the largest bird in the Western hemisphere.

Annex I contains an extensive list of mammals, birds and reptiles found at the reserve.

19. **Social and cultural values:** ~no information available~

20. **Land tenure/ownership of:** ~no information available~

21. **Current land use:** ~no information available~

22. **Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land use and development projects:**

Long before Caño Negro was declared a wildlife reserve, the local inhabitants joined Río Frio to the lake with artificial canals. A large part of the sediment carried by the river has entered the lake producing a sharp drop in the depth of the water with a resulting negative influence on some species.

23. **Conservation measures taken:** ~no information available~

24. **Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:**  
~no information available~

25. **Current scientific research and facilities:**  
~no information available~

26. **Current conservation education:** ~no information available~

27. **Current recreation and tourism:** ~no information available~

28. **Jurisdiction:** ~no information available~

29. **Management authority:** ~no information available~

30. **Bibliographical references:**

Meza Ocampo, T.A. 1988. Areas silvestres de Costa Rica. San

José, Costa Rica. 120 pp.

Guevara Sequeira, J. 1988. Refugios Nacionales de Fauna Silvestre. San José, Cost Rica. 116 pp.