

INFORMATION SHEET ON RAMSAR WETLANDS

1. Country: Venezuela
2. Date: 6 September 1991
3. Ref: [6VE001]
4. Name and address of compiler:

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5. Name of wetland:

Refugio de Fauna Silvestre de Cuare
6. Date of Ramsar designation: 23/11/1988
7. Geographical coordinates: 10°55'N 68°20'W
8. General location:

Monseñor Iturriza, Estado Falcón, Venezuela. Nearby towns: Pto. Caballo and Valencia.
9. Area: 12,000 ha (approx.)
10. Wetland type: A, H, I, J
11. Altitude: 0 - 282 masl
12. Overview:

Marshland of great importance for waterbirds. Key breeding-ground for marine species of commercial importance. Vital area for the local communities.
13. Physical features:

Physical geography: 1) coralline keys; 2) an upland of approx. 2,500 ha, of Cretaceous origin and consisting of coral rocks; 3) an alluvial plain of fluvio-marine origin with 1:3 gradients, subject to flooding and to tidal influences; 4) a shallow gulf (max. depth 12 m, average 5 m) of approx. 2,300 ha.

Hydrology: peak rainfall periods are July and November-December; rains in summer between February and May.
14. Ecological features:

The coralline keys, coral-reefs and areas of marshland and saltpetrous bogs provide habitats. On the Chichiriviche upland there is dry forest with an abundance of *Bursera*

simarouba, while oak forests (chaparros) grow in the lower areas. Some 2,200 ha of mangrove swamp lie between the Golfete de Cuare and the lagoons.

15. Land tenure/ownership of:

(a) site:

Most of the land belongs to the Chichiriviche local community; the rest is owned by the State.

(b) surrounding area:

Private property; some land owned by the municipal authority.

16. Conservation measures taken:

Designated a wildlife refuge in 1972. (Continues to meet fully the criteria for this designation). It was neither managed nor even supervised until Fudena drew up a management plan in 1989 and began putting it into effect in 1990.

17. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

The administrative and environmental protection programmes of the management plan, which are the responsibility of MARNR (Ministerio del Ambiente y de los Recursos Naturales Renovables), have not been implemented in any respect.

18. Current land use: principal human activities in:

(a) site:

Small-scale fishing, recreation and uncontrolled urbanization.

(b) surroundings/catchment:

Tourism and recreation (active and passive).

19. Disturbances/threats, including changes in land use and major development projects

(a) at the site:

Projects exist for developing tourism within and outside the refuge, but these have not been well planned and represent a threat to the quality of the refuge's water.

(b) in the surroundings/catchment:

There is a management plan for the catchment area. However, sedimentation is increasing steadily as a result of poor management. There are plans to build dams, but these require modification.

20. Hydrological and physical values

- The refuge plays a very important role in absorbing floodwaters and increasing retention times. However,

mismanagement of the upper catchment area is limiting the efficiency of these processes.

- Sediment trapping is very important for the protection of the coral in the marine areas adjacent to the Parque Nacional Morrocoy and the refuge.

21. Social and cultural values

- The pre-Columbian petroglyphs of the Cuevo del Indio are an important cultural asset to the region, and the Cueva de la Virgen is of considerable religious importance.

- The area is very important for fishing, which is practised mainly at a subsistence level, although in recent years there has been an increase in commercial fishing.

22. Noteworthy fauna:

Crocodylus acutus, *Phoenicopterus ruber ruber*, *Eudocimus ruber*, *Eudocimus albus*, *Anas discors*, *Anas bahamensis*, *Odocoileus* [? = illegible] *virginianus* and *Mazama americana*. Migratory shorebirds are also important. Other species are mentioned in the annexes to the management plan.

23. Noteworthy flora:

Little is known about the vegetation in the refuge. Perhaps the most important species are *Bursera simarouba* and the following typical mangrove swamp plants: *Avicennia germinans*, *Conocarpus erecta*, *Laguncularia racemosa* and *Rhizophora mangle*.

24. Current scientific research and facilities:

Fudena research programmes include: a) monitoring of caymen populations; b) a hydrological study; c) monitoring of bird populations; d) a study on the marine turtle; and e) a community project covering three research areas, etc.

25. Current conservation education:

Community training programme
Local conservation education programme
Training programme for young teachers of nature studies

26. Current recreation and tourism:

Infrastructure projects for recreational sites are being planned and implemented.

27. Management authority:

Fudena (technical administration)
MARNR

28. Jurisdiction:

Municipal authorities of Monseñor Iturriza and Tucacas, Estado Falcón, in the west-centre region of the country.

29. Bibliographical references:

Request access to Fudena archives.

30. Reasons for inclusion:
 Contained in the decrees designating the area a wildlife
 refuge.