



Ramsar Sites Information Service

Annotated List of Wetlands of International Importance

Costa Rica

12 Ramsar Site(s) covering 569,742 ha

Caño Negro

Site number: 541 | Country: Costa Rica | Administrative region: Alajuela
Area: 9,969 ha | Coordinates: 10°52'N 84°45'W | Designation dates: 27-12-1991
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Caño Negro. 27/12/91; Alajuela; 9,969 ha; 10°52'N 084°45'W. Part of the International System of Protected Areas for Peace; National Wildlife Refuge. A shallow freshwater lagoon near the Nicaraguan border, surrounded by seasonally inundated marshes and woodland. Part of an important network of Nicaraguan and Costa Rican wetlands used seasonally by many species of breeding or migrating waterbirds. The site supports small numbers of the endangered stork, Jabiru mycteria, important populations of the reptile Caiman crocodilus fuscus and the fish Atractosteus tropicus. A scientific research station is maintained. Ramsar site no. 541. Most recent RIS information: 1991.

Cuenca Embalse Arenal

Site number: 1,022 | Country: Costa Rica | Administrative region: Alajuela, Guanacasta
Area: 67,296 ha | Coordinates: 10°30'N 84°51'W | Designation dates: 07-03-2000
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Cuenca Embalse Arenal. 16/03/00; Guanacaste, Alajuela; 67,296 ha; 10°30'N 084°51'W. Includes Protected Areas. A predominantly human-made lacustrine wilderness area, the site plays a significant hydrological, biological and ecological role in the natural functioning of the Embalse Arenal water catchment in the central part of the country. It holds special value for one or more endemic species or communities of flora and fauna in each of seven protected areas and contains 1,131 species of flora, 884 of them of potential ornamental use. It contains populations of endemic bromelia Pitcairnia funckiae and sustains threatened and endangered species of fauna, such as the mammals Tapirus bairdii (Baird's tapir) and Leopardus pardalis (ocelot), and birds such as Cephalopterus glabricollis and the Amazilia boucardi hummingbird. The wetland provides benefits related to hydropower generation, irrigation, tourism (water sports), recreational fishing and consumption, grazing, domestic agriculture and irrigation, agriculture and aquaculture. A management plan was implemented in 1997. Approximately 80% of the existing legislation is being enforced to regulate activities in the wetland and other protected areas. Environmental education programs are being implemented to involve organized groups, farmers, community leaders, teachers and schoolchildren in the search for better opportunities for the wise use of natural resources. Ramsar site no. 1022. Most recent RIS information: 2000.

Gandoca-Manzanillo

Site number: 783 | Country: Costa Rica | Administrative region: Limón
Area: 9,445 ha | Coordinates: 09°37'N 82°40'W | Designation dates: 11-12-1995
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Gandoca-Manzanillo. 11/12/95; Limón; 9,445 ha; 09°37'N 082°40'W. Wildlife Refuge. A coastal lagoon consisting of coral reefs, seagrass beds, beaches and cliffs with flooded lowland areas between. The vegetation forms an unusual association of swamp forests composed of "yolillo" *Raphia taedigera* and *Camnosperma panamensis*, *Prioria coparifera*, and some mangroves. An important area for nesting sea turtles inhabiting the Caribbean. The site supports a high diversity of species, some of which are endangered or threatened, including birds, reptiles, molluscs and fish (marine, estuarine and freshwater), crustaceans, including lobster and 32 coral species. The fishery is an important source of revenue for local inhabitants. The site is part of the Talamanca-Caribe Biological Corridor and shares a border with Panama. Ramsar site no. 783. Most recent RIS information: 1995.

Humedal Caribe Noreste

Site number: 811 | Country: Costa Rica | Administrative region: Limón, Heredia
Area: 75,310 ha | Coordinates: 10°30'N 83°30'W | Designation dates: 20-03-1996
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Humedal Caribe Noreste. 20/03/96; Limón y Heredia; 75,310 ha; 10°30'N 083°30'W. The wetland includes lakes, grassmarshes, wooded swamps, gullies, streams and backwaters of large rivers as well as estuarine lagoons. The wetland area is the main stopover and entrance to Costa Rica for most Neotropical migratory birds, and the eagle *Morphnus guianensis*, the second largest bird of prey, has been recorded in the area. There are also several species of salamanders thought to be endemic to the area. The area is used largely for agriculture, and cattle ranching, tourism and fishing are also important activities. Ramsar site no. 811. Most recent RIS information: 1996.

Humedal Maquenque

Site number: 1,918 | Country: Costa Rica | Administrative region: Alajuela
Area: 59,692 ha | Coordinates: 10°40'N 84°07'59"W | Designation dates: 22-05-2010
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Humedal Maquenque. 22/05/10; Alajuela; 59,692 ha; 10°40'N 084°08'W; This new Ramsar Site is located in the northern part of Costa Rica and includes the total area of the National Wildlife Refuge Maquenque and the intermediate zone of the National Wildlife Refuge Biological Border Corridor Nicaragua-Costa Rica. The Ramsar Site consists of a lagoon complex and palustrine ecosystem distinctive of the very humid tropical ecoregion and characterized by its high biodiversity and support to endangered species such as the Lapa Verde (*Ara ambigua*), vulnerable species such as the Manatí (*Trichechus manatus*) and other important species such as the Jaguar (*Panthera onca*) and Pez Gaspars (*Atractosteus tropicus*). Furthermore, the wetland has an important hydrological value on the functioning of the surrounding basins. The main threats to this site are agricultural and forestry activities focused near the Colpachí and Manatí Lagoons. Both Protected Areas that form the Humedal Maquenque Ramsar Site have a management plan focusing on conservation activities. Ramsar Site no. 1918. Most recent RIS information: 2010.

Isla del Coco

Site number: 940 | Country: Costa Rica | Administrative region: Puntarenas
Area: 99,623 ha | Coordinates: 05°33'N 86°58'59"W | Designation dates: 10-04-1998
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Isla del Coco. 21/04/98; 99,623 ha; 5°32'N 086°59'W. World Heritage site; National Park. The island is of volcanic origin and its highest point is 634 m above sea level with 7,000 mm of rainfall per year. There are two plant associations, one the evergreen forest with South American similarity, on the hilly areas, and a coastal one (dominated by a sedge *Hypolitum amplum*). It is considered to be one of the areas of highest endemism in the country, with five endemic vertebrate species and 16% of the plant species. Surrounding the island there are coral reefs, with 18 species and more than 300 fish species, which in some areas reach concentrations of 1,500-24,000 individuals/km². A shelter for pirates during the 17th and 18th century. The site includes a swampy, coastal zone, a cloud forest and mountainous areas. The area is important for the reproduction of certain species, and large numbers of waterbirds nest in the area. The primary tourist activity is diving. Ramsar site no. 940. Most recent RIS information: 1998.

Laguna Respringue

Site number: 982 | Country: Costa Rica | Administrative region: Guanacaste
Area: 75 ha | Coordinates: 10°52'N 85°51'W | Designation dates: 06-05-1999
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Laguna Respringue. 06/05/99; Guanacaste; 75 ha; 10°52'N 085°51'W. The only freshwater swampy lagoon on the North Pacific coast of the country, the oldest part of Central America (said to be 88-200 million years old). The vegetation is dominated by Phragmites in most of the site. It has the driest climate in the country, and the strong winds of November-March have created very high dunes, in pristine condition. The site is relatively unaffected by human activities, largely because of the difficulty of access. Excessive agricultural and timber exploitation some 30 years ago were problematic, but the site is said to be recovering well. The site is especially important for capturing sediments. Present human uses include private farms and an environmental education programme in nearby Guanacaste. Ramsar site no. 982. Most recent RIS information: 1999.

Manglar de Potrero Grande

Site number: 981 | Country: Costa Rica | Administrative region: Guanacaste
Area: 139 ha | Coordinates: 10°51'N 85°46'59"W | Designation dates: 06-05-1999
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Manglar de Potrero Grande. 06/05/99; Guanacaste; 139 ha; 10°50'N 086°46'W. An area of near-pristine dry mangrove forest of uncommon alluvial origin along the mostly undeveloped north Pacific coast, adjacent to an important area of primary forest. Several types of threatened mangroves are present. The site is recovering successfully from exploitative practices that ended some 30 years ago; because of the establishment of forest reserves in 1977, there are few human uses, though some sporadic tourism occurs despite the difficulty of access. Ramsar site no. 981. Most recent RIS information: 1999.

Palo Verde

Site number: 540 | Country: Costa Rica | Administrative region: Guanacaste
Area: 24,519 ha | Coordinates: 10°20'N 85°19'59"W | Designation dates: 27-12-1991
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Palo Verde. 27/12/91; Guanacaste; 24,519 ha; 10°20'N 085°20'W. Added to the Montreux Record, 16 June 1993. National Park. Extensive estuarine complex of permanent, shallow, freshwater lagoons, associated marshes and seasonally flooded woodland and mangroves of the lower Tempisque River. An extremely important area for various species of nesting, staging and wintering waterbirds, Nearctic-breeding species, the stork *Jabiru mycteria* and in the dry season up to 20,000 *Dendrocygna autumnalis*. Other fauna include iguana and two species of crocodiles. Human activities in the surrounding area include rice and sugar-cane cultivation. Added to the Montreux Record in 1993 because of a major fire. Subject of a in 1998. Boundaries extended in September 2002. Ramsar site no. 540. Most recent RIS information: 2001.

Tamarindo

Site number: 610 | Country: Costa Rica | Administrative region: Guanacaste
Area: 500 ha | Coordinates: 10°18'59"N 85°49'59"W | Designation dates: 09-06-1993

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Tamarindo. 09/06/93; Guanacaste; 500 ha; 10°19'N 085°50'W. National Wildlife Refuge. A coastal area under tidal influence with permanent saline wetlands subject to seasonal flooding. About 80% of the area is mangrove forest, 75% of which are the red mangrove. Provides habitat for large numbers of waterbirds; reptiles include iguana and two species of crocodiles. Main land uses consist of traditional and recreational fishing, ranching, agriculture and commerce. Ramsar site no. 610. Most recent RIS information: 1993.

Terraba-Sierpe

Site number: 782 | Country: Costa Rica | Administrative region: Puntarenas
Area: 30,654 ha | Coordinates: 08°52'N 83°36'W | Designation dates: 11-12-1995

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Terraba-Sierpe. 11/12/95; Puntarenas; 30,654 ha; 08°52'N 083°36'W. Forest Reserve, National Wetland. The estuary of two rivers, adjacent lagoons, periodically inundated mangrove and "yolillo" palm swamp forest, sandy beaches and cliffs. Supports 55 species of fish, several commercial shellfish species, numerous bird species, mammals and reptiles. Human activities within the site consist of extraction of mangroves for fuel and tannins, traditional fishing, clam and crab harvesting. Ramsar site no. 782. Most recent RIS information: 1995.

Turberas de Talamanca

Site number: 1,286 | Country: Costa Rica | Administrative region: San José, Cartago, Limón
Area: 192,520 ha | Coordinates: 09°30'N 83°42'W | Designation dates: 02-02-2003

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Turberas de Talamanca. 02/02/03. San José, Cartago, Limón provinces. 192,520 ha. 09°30'N, 083°42'W. National Parks, Forest Reserve, Biological Reserve. A unique high mountain wetland (altitude 700-3821m) located in the Talamanca mountain range and considered an extremely heterogeneous area in terms of the ecosystems present: non-forested peatlands, paramos, meadows, cloud forests, and rain forests. The protected areas comprising the Ramsar site make up an immense biological corridor that allows numerous vulnerable animal species to move about in search of food and breeding sites, among them the Central American tapir *Tapirus bairdii*, the ocelot *Felis pardales*, and the red brocket *Mazama americana*. Numerous plant communities are present in the site's different ecosystems present - paramos, oak forests, and non-forested peatlands. Paramos are found between 2900-3100 meters above sea level, and contain a unique mixture of neotropical flora, including holartic, Andean, and endemic species, which show important adaptations to extreme conditions, seasonality, and high solar radiation. Oaks are the dominant feature in what is regarded as the country's largest forest mass, most notably the IUCN Red-Listed black oak *Quercus costaricensis* and the hook *Quercus corrugata*. Peatlands are "drowned" and thus are characterized by Ciperaceae, Juncaceae, Ericaceae, large ferns of the Blechnaceae family, plus Sphagnum and other mosses. The hydrological network in Tapantí National Park is of vital importance for Costa Rica in terms of hydroelectric power production and supply of a large portion of the drinking water for the country's largest cities. Chirripó National Park features the country's tallest mountain, Cerro Chirripó (3820m above sea level), as well as rare geomorphologic formations of glacial origin. The largest indigenous group in Costa Rica, the Bribri, are native to the mountains of Talamanca, thus giving the site a great cultural importance. Ramsar site no. 1286. Most recent RIS information: 2003.