



# Ramsar Sites Information Service

## Annotated List of Wetlands of International Importance

# Honduras

12 Ramsar Site(s) covering 305,927 ha

### Barras de Cuero y Salado

Site number: 619 | Country: Honduras | Administrative region: Atlántida

Area: 13,225 ha | Coordinates: 15°45'N 87°01'59"W | Designation dates: 23-06-1993

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Barras de Cuero y Salado. 23/06/93; Atlántida; 13,225 ha; 15°45'N 087°02'W. National wildlife refuge. An extensive complex of linked coastal, estuarine and riverine wetlands. Much of the area is composed of flooded forest and mangroves with coconut plantations lining the beaches. A group of families lives within the Refuge practicing traditional fishing and agriculture (palm plantations). The area provides an important source of drinking water, excellent summer grazing for cattle, and supports a rich fish fauna and a wide variety of resident and migratory waterbirds. Endangered fauna include the reptiles *Crocodylus acutus* and *Caiman sclerops fuscus*, and a small population of manatees (*Trichechus manatus*). Ramsar site no. 619. Most recent RIS information: 1993.

### Cuenca del Lago de Yojoa

Site number: 1,467 | Country: Honduras | Administrative region: Departamentos de Comayagua, Santa Bárbara y Cortés

Area: 44,253.9 ha | Coordinates: 14°51'20"N 88°00'W | Designation dates: 05-06-2005

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Cuenca del Lago de Yojoa includes the only lake of volcanic origin in Honduras. In 2021 Honduras extended the Site's area from 43,640 to 44,253.94 ha. It is formed by 16 ecosystems serving as a refuge for a wide diversity of aquatic and terrestrial species including 55% of birds, 44.2% of amphibians, and 43.6% of the reptiles present in the country. The Site, a river basin protected by law, provides shelter and habitat for species included in the IUCN Red List such as the critically endangered salamander *Dendrotriton sanctibarbarus* and the Guatemala spikethumb frog (*Plectrohyla guatemalensis*). There are also vulnerable species such as the Geoffroy's spider monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi*) and the Honduran emerald (*Amazilia luciae*), an endemic hummingbird. The main threats are deforestation, extensive farming, the advance of the agricultural frontier, and the introduction of exotic species.

## Laguna de Bacalar

Site number: 1,254 | Country: Honduras | Administrative region: Gracias a Dios  
Area: 7,394 ha | Coordinates: 15°07'59"N 85°10'W | Designation dates: 03-02-2003  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Laguna de Bacalar. 03/02/03. Gracias a Dios. 7,394 ha. 15°08'N, 85°10'W. A marine-coastal wetland on the Caribbean coast characterized by broad-leaf forest, swamps, and mangrove forest. The areas adjacent to the lagoons are dominated by mangroves, characterized by red mangrove (*Rhizophora mangle*), white mangrove (*Languncularia racemosa*), and buttonwood (*Conocarpus erectus*). The site's rich fauna includes endangered species like the Caribbean manatee (*Trichechus manatus*), uncommon birds such as the jabirú (*Jabiru mycteria*) and fish characteristic to this type of ecosystem, including schoolmaster snapper (*Lutjanus apodus*) and horse-eye jack (*Caranx latus*). The site is invaluable in providing flood control, sedimentation capture, and stabilization of the reflux between the sea and the lagoon, which is fed by the Sico Tinto o Negro river. Economic activity by small populations in the area, including agriculture, deforestation and illegal fishing remain as threats. However, government and non-governmental organizations remain active in promoting sustainable fishing practices and appropriate micro-basin management. Ramsar site no. 1254. Most recent RIS information: 2001.

## Parque Nacional Jeanette Kawas

Site number: 722 | Country: Honduras | Administrative region: Departamentos de Atlántida y Cortes  
Area: 79,382.2 ha | Coordinates: 15°49'07"N 87°38'23"W | Designation dates: 28-03-1995  
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Parque Nacional Jeanette Kawas is mostly made up of marine and coastal wetlands, including one of the best-preserved mangrove ecosystems in northern Honduras. In 2021 Honduras extended its area from 78,150 to 79,382.16 hectares. The Site is representative of the Honduran Caribbean, and serves as a refuge for a wide diversity of aquatic and terrestrial species; four mangrove species including the red mangrove (*Rhizophora mangle*) and the white mangrove (*Laguncularia racemosa*) are present. The site is also a refuge for threatened species such as the Nassau grouper (*Epinephelus striatus*), the elkhorn coral (*Acropora palmata*), the American manatee (*Trichechus manatus*), the American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*) and the leatherback (*Dermochelys coriácea*). The main threats to the Site's ecosystems, particularly the coral reefs, include deforestation, erosion, and pollution from rubbish and chemical contaminants discharged into the wetland's marine area.

## Refugio de Vida Silvestre Punta Izopo

Site number: 812 | Country: Honduras | Administrative region: Atlantida  
Area: 11,200 ha | Coordinates: 15°43'59"N 87°21'W | Designation dates: 20-03-1996  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Refugio de Vida Silvestre Punta Izopo. 20/03/96; Atlántida; 11,200 ha; 15°44'N 087°21'W. Wildlife Reserve. Remnants of the last existing areas of pristine, tropical, broad-leaved forest. The site includes coastline, river valleys, flooded savannas, marshes, mangroves, rocky beaches, and lakes forming a large wetland of outstanding importance due to its biodiversity and numerous threatened or endemic populations supported. The site provides important breeding and feeding areas for birds and fish. Two ethnic communities inhabit the site and pre-Colombian remains have been excavated. Human activities include agriculture and ranching. Ramsar site no. 812. Most recent RIS information: 1996.

## Sistema de Humedales Cuyamel-Omoa

Site number: 2,133 | Country: Honduras | Administrative region: Cortes

Area: 30,029 ha | Coordinates: 15°39'18"N 88°11'48"W | Designation dates: 02-02-2013

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Sistema de Humedales Cuyamel-Omoa. 02/02/2013; Omoa, Cortes; 30,029 ha; 15°39'18" N 88°11'48.99"W. National Park. The importance of this wetlands system is based on its function as habitat of endangered species such as the Antillean Manatee (*Trichechus manatus*), the Jabiru bird (*Jabiru mycteria*), the Guasa fish (*Epinephelus itajara*), the crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*) and the sea turtle species *Dermochelys coriacea* and *Eretmochelys imbricate*. This Ramsar Site is also vital for aquatic species particularly during their early life stages as they maintain the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System fisheries and are the basis of the local economy. Furthermore, this wetlands system supports resident and migratory water bird populations as well as sea turtle populations that depend on the site's beaches particularly during the spawning season. Apart from the ecosystem services already mentioned, this site is essential for the regulation of water flux and the prevention of seawater intrusion and contamination of aquifers in the coastal areas where local communities are located. Among the adverse effects faced by this Ramsar Site are the expansion of cattle ranching, the growing number of African Palm crops and the growing construction sector among others. Ramsar Site No. 2133

## Sistema de Humedales de la Isla de Guanaja

Site number: 2,456 | Country: Honduras | Administrative region: Departamento de Islas de la Bahía, Honduras

Area: 13,148 ha | Coordinates: 16°27'40"N 85°53'08"W | Designation dates: 25-10-2021

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site hosts numerous ecosystems such as mangroves with associated coastal vegetation, seagrass meadows, white sand beaches and a complex reef system surrounding the island of Guanaja. It supports representative species of the area, including several listed on the IUCN Red List such as the American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*) and the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta Caretta*), classified as vulnerable, and corals such as staghorn coral (*Acropora cervicornis*) and elkhorn coral (*Acropora palmate*), which are both critically endangered. The mangrove forest is also home to a considerable diversity of fauna and flora, including 146 species of birds such as the brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*), the roseate tern (*Sterna dougallii*) and the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*). The Site's marine ecosystems provide shelter and food for dozens of marine species such as the goliath grouper (*Epinephelus itajara*), the Lahille's bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*), the yellow stingray (*Urobatis jamaicensis*) and the Atlantic nurse shark (*Ginglymostoma cirratum*). The Site also provides ecosystem services for the approximately 1,000 people living on Guanaja Island, most of whom depend on industrial fishing and artisanal lobster and conch fishing. It is also an area for recreation and ecotourism due to its unique landscape and rich biodiversity. However, its ecological value is under constant threat from extreme weather events such as Hurricane Mitch in 1998, which considerably affected the mangroves in the area, in addition to the increased water pollution due to the lack of an adequate sanitation system and uncontrolled development.

## Sistema de Humedales de la Isla de Utila

Site number: 2,134 | Country: Honduras | Administrative region: Islas de la Bahía  
Area: 16,226 ha | Coordinates: 16°06'N 86°51'57"W | Designation dates: 02-02-2013

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Sistema de Humedales de la Isla de Utila. 02/02/2013; Islas de la Bahía; 16,226 ha; 16°06'00"N 15°56'14"W. Bahía Islands Marine Park, which includes two Marine Special Protection Zones and one Wildlife Refuge. The importance of these wetlands is based on its diverse and interdependent ecosystems, which are part of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System. These ecosystems include coral reefs, marine grasses, mangroves, swamps, coastal lakes, rocky shores, hypersaline shallow waters, floodplains and above and below ground karstic systems among others. These ecosystems support numerous fauna and flora species including some endangered species such as the following sea turtles: *Caretta caretta*, *Chelonia mydas* (green sea turtle) and *Eretmochelys imbricata*. Endangered species of birds, fish and shellfish are also found at this Ramsar Site. Furthermore this site has the largest habitat and species diversity of the Norwest Caribbean region of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System and is home to numerous terrestrial and marine endemic species. This wetlands system also plays a vital role in supporting various species particularly during their first life stages. Utila Island is also a tourism hotspot, which is also a valuable and mostly unexplored, archaeological site having been home to Chibcha and Mesoamerican tribes. Ramsar Site No. 2134.

## Sistema de Humedales de la Zona Sur de Honduras

Site number: 1,000 | Country: Honduras | Administrative region: Golfo de Fonseca, entre los departamentos de Valle y Choluteca

Area: 75,031.1 ha | Coordinates: 13°12'39"N 87°23'33"W | Designation dates: 10-07-1999

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

In 2021 Honduras extended the area of the Site from 69,711 to 75,031.13 hectares. It now includes a greater area of mangroves, winter lagoons, marshes and sandy beaches. The Site, mostly mangrove forest, is one of the country's most important ecosystems, serving as a refuge for at least 81 species of water birds such as the Wilson's plover (*Charadrius wilsonia*) and the black skimmer (*Rynchops niger*). It also provides habitat for threatened species such as the hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and the Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempi*), which are both classified as critically endangered. The Site's ecosystems also provide shelter for vulnerable species such as the American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*), the olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*), and *Avicennia bicolor*, a species of mangrove typical of the region. The Site is a wetland system consisting of seven areas, which are all protected by national law. However, it has been impacted by urban development. The structure and composition of its vegetation cover has been altered by the illegal extraction of the mangrove forest, extensive farming, and the advance of the agricultural frontier for the production of sugar cane, melon, pine nut and watermelon.

## Sistema de Humedales de Santa Elena

Site number: 2,334 | Country: Honduras | Administrative region: Departamento de Islas de la Bahía, Honduras

Area: 1,542.8 ha | Coordinates: 16°25'26"N 86°14'36"W | Designation dates: 22-03-2018

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site is located at the eastern end of the island of Roatan, in the north of the country. It includes a good example of a wooded wetland composed mainly of mangroves, and a marine wetland composed of seagrass beds and reef lagoons that are part of the Mesoamerican Reef System, the second longest barrier reef in the world. The Site is an important resting, feeding and nesting area for several species of resident and migratory birds. The reef area and the seagrass also act as a nursery and feeding area for marine species such as sea turtles, dolphins and sharks that are frequently found here. Among the threatened species that inhabit the site are the royal tern (*Thalasseus maximus*), the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), the hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and the corals *Acropora cervicornis* and *Acropora palmata*, among others. Despite changes in land use and the disposal of waste, the Site is well conserved and its fisheries resources support local communities. The mangroves and seagrass beds serve as natural barriers against extreme weather events, and they also filter nutrients and some pollutants.

## Sistema de Humedales Laguna de Zambuco

Site number: 2,189 | Country: Honduras | Administrative region: Atlántida

Area: 649 ha | Coordinates: 15°47'53"N 87°13'23"W | Designation dates: 22-04-2013

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Sistema de Humedales Laguna de Zambuco (SH-LZ). 22/04/2013; Atlántida; 649 ha; 15°47'54"N 087°13'23"W. The site, characteristic of the estuarine systems found in northern Honduras, supports numerous threatened or endangered species such as the Antillean Manatee (*Trichechus manatus*) and the leatherback and Hawksbill sea turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea* and *Eretmochelys imbricata* respectively), for which it provides nesting areas. It is rich in biodiversity and, to date, 59 species of plants, 34 of fish, 87 of birds (24 of which are migratory species), and 11 species of reptiles among others have been identified. In addition, the site supports numerous fish and crustacean species during their larval and juvenile stages, contributing to the maintenance of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef fisheries, and as it is located between two other Ramsar Sites (Parque Nacional Punta Izopo and Refugio de Vida Silvestre Cuero y Salado) it contributes to the creation of a Biological Corridor in northern Honduras. The area is also important for the Garifuna people, one of the nine ethnic groups present in Honduras, who depend on the site for their livelihoods. The main threats to the ecological character are related to deforestation of mangroves, expansion of African Palm crops, and population growth. Ramsar Site no. 2189. Most recent RIS information: 2013.

## Sistema de Humedal Laguna de Alvarado

Site number: 2,418 | Country: Honduras | Administrative region: Departamento de Cortes

Area: 13,846 ha | Coordinates: 15°51'05"N 87°57'21"W | Designation dates: 02-02-2019

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

A lagoon-estuary system located in the urban area of the city of Puerto Cortés on the north coast. It is part of the Mesoamerican Reef system that extends from Mexico to Honduras and is considered one of the seven underwater wonders of the world. The site plays a fundamental role in the connectivity of species and in maintaining the hydrological cycle between the 13 watersheds and micro-basins that produce water in the country. It provides shelter and habitat for various threatened fish species such as the critically endangered Nassau grouper (*Epinephelus striatus*), and the vulnerable glass goby (*Coryphopterus hyalinus*) and Atlantic Goliath grouper (*Epinephelus itajara*). Laguna de Alvarado is also an essential source of food for the subsistence of local communities as it is a spawning and breeding site for fish such as common snook (*Centropomus undecimalis*) and streaked prochilod (*Prochilodus lineatus*). In addition, it has some of the highest living coral coverage rates in the Caribbean, with the presence of critically endangered species such as the staghorn coral (*Acropora cervicornis*). Threats to the ecological value of the site include the expansion of African oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*) farming, as well as uncontrolled fishing.