



Ramsar Sites Information Service

Annotated List of Wetlands of International Importance

Jamaica

4 Ramsar Site(s) covering 45,860 ha

Black River Lower Morass

Site number: 919 | Country: Jamaica | Administrative region: Black River

Area: 13,713.2 ha | Coordinates: 18°02'10"N 77°48'20"W | Designation dates: 07-10-1997

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

This "Ramsar Site" on the south-western coast is one of the largest freshwater wetland ecosystems in the country. In 2021 Jamaica extended the Site's area from 5,700 hectares to 85,664 ha. It now includes a much greater area of herbaceous wetland, riparian forest, swamp forest, limestone islands, coastal flood plain, freshwater areas and dunes. The Lower Morass and its diverse ecosystems are essential for the maintenance of the overall biodiversity of the area. The Site provides habitat for 207 species of plants and over 300 species of birds. It also provides refuge and habitat for species of international importance included in the IUCN Red List, such as the hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) which is classified as critically endangered. It is also a refuge for vulnerable species such as the American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*), the Jamaican slider (*Trachemys terrapen*) and the West Indian whistling duck (*Dendrocygna arborea*). The Site, which is protected under national law, is a source of income for local communities that use it for cane farming, fisheries, timber harvesting, charcoal production, and pastureland during the dry season. However, it has been impacted by urban development, burning, and drainage of some areas for agricultural purposes.

Mason River Protected Area

Site number: 1,990 | Country: Jamaica | Administrative region: Clarendon and St. Ann

Area: 82 ha | Coordinates: 18°11'38"N 77°15'46"W | Designation dates: 12-06-2011

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Mason River Protected Area, Bird Sanctuary and Ramsar Site. 06/12/11; Clarendon, St. Ann; 82 ha; 18°11'38"N 077°15'46"W. Protected Area, Natural Heritage Site. A flattish area with several surface depressions, ponds, and sinkholes that seasonally store surface water, located in the hilly countryside of central Jamaica. All of its wetland types have an important ecological function in preventing downstream flooding by absorbing precipitation. The site is a representative and rare example of an upland peat bog and scrub savannah. There are approximately 430 plant species found there, with 11% of endemism, some of which are listed as vulnerable in the IUCN Red List, such as *Bactris jamaicana*, *Calyptrothos nodosa*, *Cordia troyana* and *Hyeronima jamaicensis*. The site also contains several species of the moss *Sphagnum* spp. which are essential for the existence of the bog. Likewise, it is also important for the endemic *Mellisuga minima*, the migratory species *Oporomis agilis*, and such carnivorous plants as the native *Drosera capillaries*, *Urticularia* spp., and *Dionaea muscipula*. It currently acts as an educational resource for students within the area and throughout Jamaica. Threats include invasive species, illegal bird shooting, fires, illegal removal of trees, and encroachment. Ramsar Site no. 1990. Most recent RIS information: 2011.

Palisadoes - Port Royal

Site number: 1,454 | Country: Jamaica | Administrative region: Kingston

Area: 7,523 ha | Coordinates: 17°55'N 76°49'W | Designation dates: 22-04-2005

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Palisadoes - Port Royal. 22/04/05; Kingston; 7,523 ha; 17°55'N 076°49'W. Protected area. Located on the southeastern coast just offshore from the capital Kingston, the site contains cays, shoals, mangrove lagoons, mangrove islands, coral reefs, seagrass beds and shallow water, thus hosting a variety of underrepresented wetland types. Endangered and vulnerable species occurring in the area include American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*), green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), Hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), West Indian manatee (*Trichechus manatus*) and bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*). To date 26 endemic new species have been discovered in the area. Historic and cultural values are very high, as the site includes forts on the dunes and part of the city of Port Royal, said to have been the largest city in the Americas, which sank in an earthquake in 1692 and is now a unique archaeological treasure. A management plan is in place, and the University of the West Indies operates research facilities. Ramsar site no. 1454. Most recent RIS information: 2005.

Portland Bight Wetlands and Cays

Site number: 1,597 | Country: Jamaica | Administrative region: St Catherine, Clarendon

Area: 24,542 ha | Coordinates: 17°49'N 77°04'W | Designation dates: 02-02-2006

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Portland Bight Wetlands and Cays. 02/02/06; St. Catherine, Clarendon; 24,542 ha; 17°49'N 077°04'W. Protected Area. Located on the south coast of the island, just west of Kingston, Portland Bight (or bay) includes some 8,000 ha of coastal mangroves, among the largest contiguous mangrove stands remaining in Jamaica, as well as a salt marsh, several rivers, offshore cays, coral reefs, seagrass beds, and open water. The site constitutes a critical feeding and breeding location as well as a general habitat for internationally threatened species such as the cave frog (*Eleutherodactylus cavernicola*), the Jamaican boa (*Epicrates subflavus*), the endemic hutia or coney (*Geocapromys brownii*), and the West Indian manatee (*Trichechus manatus manatus*). An endemic cactus (*Opuntia jamaicensis*) is also considered endangered under CITES. More than 3,000 fisher families make their livelihoods in the Bight, harvesting mostly finfish but also lobster, shrimp, oysters, and conch, and there are important sugar plantations in the surrounding area. Threats are feared from over-hunting and -fishing, pollution from sugar wastes, mangrove destruction for aquaculture, and invasive species. Ramsar site No. 1597. Most recent RIS information: 2006.