Brazil designates some of the world’s largest wetlands, from the Amazon basin to the island reefs

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Brazil has designated three new Wetlands of International Importance: the Rio Negro, the largest tributary to the Amazon basin; the Amazon Estuary and its Mangroves, one of the biggest continuous mangrove formations in the world, and Fernando de Noronha Archipelago, an oceanic archipelago with the only known oceanic mangrove in the South Atlantic.

The three new Ramsar Sites together cover an area of over 15.8 million hectares, and with these designations, Brazil now has 25 wetlands included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance covering over 24.6 million ha, making it the Contracting Party with the largest area protected under the Ramsar designation.

Rio Negro (Ramsar Site no. 2335), covering over 12 million ha, is the world’s largest Ramsar Site. It lies at the core of one of the largest preserved tropical rainforests on the planet. The Site includes more than 20 conservation units, and its designation greatly increases the connectivity of Brazil’s protected areas.

The Site’s rich biodiversity encompasses endangered species of mammal such as the giant river otter, the Brazilian bare-faced tamarin and the white-bellied spider monkey, and globally-threatened birds including the ash-breasted antbird, and plants including the Brazil nut.

The Amazon Estuary and Mangroves Ramsar Site (Site no. 2337) is located on the Marajó archipelago at the mouth of the River Amazon. It is the largest fluvial-maritime archipelago on the planet. The Site consists of a corridor of 23 conservation units with an area of over 3.8 million ha. On this stretch of coast lies one of the biggest continuous mangrove formations in the world: with over 8,900 km² stretching over 700 km, it holds 70% of the mangroves of Brazil.
The Site is also important for the connectivity of protected areas, as it is adjacent to a number of existing Ramsar Sites: Cabo Orange National Park (Site no. 2190), Baixada Maranhense Environmental Protection Area (Site no. 1020), Reentrancias Maranhenses (Site no. 640), and Parque Estadual Marinho do Parcel Manoel Luís (Site no. 1021).

The Site and the wider Amazon estuary and coastal basins ecoregion are extremely biodiverse and of great international importance. Around 40 species found in the Site are both nationally and globally threatened, and 21 more listed as threatened on Brazil’s Red List. Marine, freshwater and terrestrial species including mammals, reptiles, birds and fish are included among these.

Fernando de Noronha Archipelago (Site no. 2333), an oceanic archipelago in the north-east of Brazil with an area of 10,927 ha, has been for millennia a refuge for many endemic species because of its isolated location. Of the 28 coral species occurring in Brazil, ten are found in all phases of their lives here. There are also great concentrations of spinner dolphins (Stenella longirostris), pantropical spotted dolphins (Stenella attenuata), and an area where humpback whales (Megaptera novaeangliae) reproduce and rear their calves. The Site is also listed as a UNESCO Natural World Heritage property.