Four new Ramsar Sites in Ecuador

28 January 2013

The Secretariat is very pleased to report that the government of Ecuador has added four new Wetlands of International Importance, bringing its present total to 18 sites covering 286,651 hectares. Three of the new sites are high Andean ecosystems at 3,000m asl or above, and the fourth is an area of coastal mangrove forest in proximity to the city of Guayaquil. Two of the new Ramsar Sites are part of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Podocarpus-El Cóndor (2007). Ramsar's Nury Furlan has prepared the following summary descriptions for the Annotated List:

Manglares del Estuario Interior del Golfo de Guayaquil "Don Goyo". 02/02/2013; Guayas; 15,337 ha; 02°24'17"S 079°55'50"W. Mainly constituted by mangrove forests, the site is important for the control and prevention of flooding and climate regulation. According to the National Red List, it supports several endangered species, like the Rufous-necked Wood Rail *Aramides axillaris* and the Red-lored Amazon *Amazona autumnali*. There are recent records of *Crocodylus acutus* presence, which according to the National Red List of Reptiles is Critically Endangered. A great number of endemic species can be found, like the Ecuadorian Ground Dove (*Columbina buckleyi*), the Pacific Parrotlet (*Forpus coelestis*), the Red-masked Parakeet (*Aratinga erythrogenys*), and the Pacific Pygmy Owl (*Glaucidium peruanum*). Waterbird species like the killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*), the Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipixcan*), and the Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*) are present, and the site has been identified by BirdLife International as an Important Bird Area (IBA).

Reserva Ecológica El Ángel (REEA). 07/12/2012; Carchi; 17,003 ha; 00°43'51"N 077°56'43"W. National Protected Area. One of the few sites in Ecuador that protects healthy mountain ecosystems (paramo, bogs, lagoons and forests), it plays an important role in the hydrological cycle of the region, since it is the source of several rivers that benefit directly human populations. The threatened fauna species that can be found in the site include Ecuadorian grass mouse (*Akodon latebricola*), the andean ondor (*Vultur gryphus*), the Andean bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*), and some regional herpetofauna, like *Centrolene buckleyi*, *Gastrotheca espeletia*, *Eleutherodactylus ocreatus*, *Eleutherodactylus grp. Devillei*, and *Riama simoterus*. Due to its location on the high occidental Andean mountain range (at 3,200-4,200m altitude) and the north occidental zone of Ecuador, it is a strategic area for the linkage of two biodiversity hotspots (*Hotspot Tropical Andes* and *Hotspot Tumbes-Chocó-Magdalena*), and it is thus also an important site for neotropical bird conservation. All the biodiversity supported by the site is pressured by the advance of agricultural frontiers, burning, hunting, fishing, climate and hydrological changes.

Sistema Lacustre Lagunas del Compadre. 15/12/2012; Loja, Zamora Chinchipe; 23,952 ha; 04°12'26"S 079°06'10"W. National Park, UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. A lake system formed by 50 glacial lagoons located in the central portion of the National Park Podocarpus. The site is source of some rivers of local importance, as well as of the bi-national basin Catamayo-Chira and the Zamora basin. This type of lagoon system and its vegetation can be found exclusively in the southern part Ecuador and the immediate Peruvian Andean region. This high Andean region has the highest index of mammalian endemism in the country, particularly the *Tapirus pinchaque* and *Tremarctos ornatus*. The avifauna of the site is represented by Andean species adapted to high altitudes. Among others, there are some relevant species that are also considered in the IUCN Red List, such as *Buthraupis wetmorei*, *Doliornis remseni*, Neblina Metaltail (*Metallura odomeae*), *Coeligena iris*, Montain Caracara (*Phalcoboenus megalopterus*), and migratory boreal birds like the Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*). The Ramsar Site is part of the nucleus zone of the Podocarpus-El Cóndor UNESCO Biosphere Reserve (2007). (Photo, right, by Jose Villa, 2010)

Sistema Lacustre Yacuri. 15/12/2012; Loja, Zamora Chinchipe; 27, 762 ha. 04°38'27"S 079°21'12"W. National Park,
UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. A lake system is formed by 48 glacial lagoons that are mainly located in the southern part of the National Park Yacuri and continue into the Peruvian Andean region. The site is associated with unique paramo ecosystems formed by elfin forests, bamboo areas, shrubs and grasslands. Together with other high mountain ecosystems, it supports many threatened species, such as *Tremarctos ornatus*, *Tapirus pinchaque*, *Puma concolor* and *Pudu mephistophiles*. Its ecological peculiarities permit it to host a paramo vegetation that is unique to the region. These ecosystems provide shelter to a wide range of endemic species threatened by the continuous habitat loss in the region, such as *Penelope barbata*, *Leptosittaca branickii*, *Hapalopsittaca pyrrhops* and *Doliornis remseni*; it also supports endemic vegetation like *Baleriana aretioides* and *Neurolepis nana*. The Ramsar Site is part of the nucleus zone of the UNESCO Podocarpus-El Cóndor Biosphere Reserve Podocarpus-El Cóndor.

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