Honduras extends the boundaries of three Wetlands of International Importance

16 November 2021

Honduras has extended the areas of three Wetlands of International Importance: Sistema de Humedales de la Zona Sur de Honduras, from 69,711 to 75,031.13 hectares; Cuenca del Lago de Yojoa, from 43,640 to 44,253.94 ha.; and Parque Nacional Jeanette Kawas, from 78,150 to 79,382.16 ha. The three “Ramsar Sites” together cover an area of 198,667.23 ha.

Sistema de Humedales de la Zona Sur de Honduras (no. 1000 on the List of Wetlands of International Importance) 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 kempii), 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.

Cuenca del Lago de Yojoa (Ramsar Site no. 1467) is located 135 kilometres from Tegucigalpa and includes the only lake of volcanic origin in Honduras. The Site 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.

Parque Nacional Jeanette Kawas (Site no. 722) is mostly made up of marine and coastal wetlands, including one of the best-preserved mangrove ecosystems in northern Honduras. 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.

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