

# Seven new Wetlands of International Importance in Mexico

2 April 2008

Mexico



## Additional Ramsar sites in Mexico

As has become almost a tradition, the government of Mexico has used the occasion of World Wetlands Day to designate a considerable number of additional Wetlands of International Importance. At ceremonies in Mazatlán, Sinaloa, on 2 February 2008, Secretario de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, Juan Rafael Elvira Quesada; the Gobernador del Estado de Sinaloa, Jesús Aguilar Padilla; and the Comisionado Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas, Ernesto Enkerlin Hoeflich, joined the celebrations and announced that Mexico is designating 45 new Wetlands of International Importance to be dated as of World Wetlands Day 2008. The hopelessly understaffed Secretariat, in this case the Americas team of María Rivera and Mila Llorens, have been working hard on doublechecking that the data and maps submitted with the Ramsar Information Sheets conform to the standards set by the Parties in their COP Resolutions, and seven of the new sites have now been added to the Ramsar List. With, obviously, many more to come.

Brief site descriptions for the Annotated Ramsar List have been prepared by Mila Llorens in English and in Spanish.

Mexico now has 74 Ramsar sites covering 5,908,968 hectares.

Ensenada de Pabellones. 02/02/08; Sinaloa; 40,639 ha; 24°26'N 107°34'W. Área Natural Protegida. The site on the Gulf of California coast includes a series of lagoon complexes, estuarine waters, swamps, marshes and meadows supporting important biodiversity. Representing one of the most important refuges of waterfowl in Sinaloa, it supports more than 292 species of migratory and resident bird species. Because of its location in the Pacific Migratory Corridor, it is classified as a Priority Wetland in Mexico, in the Ib IUCN Category (Wilderness Area). The site is of regional importance for the American avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*), supporting 10% of the total world population of this species. *Rhizophora mangle*, *Avicenia germinans*, *Laguncularia racemosa* y *Guayacum coulteri* are amongst the noteworthy flora found in the site. The main land uses are aquaculture and fishing, with the latter negatively affecting the site. Ramsar site no. 1760. Most recent RIS information: 2008.

Humedal Los Comondú. 02/02/08; Baja California Sur; 460,959 ha; 26°05'N 111°48'W. Situated in Sierra La Giganta, the wetland is distinguished by three large oases. It supports threatened species such as *Geothlypis beldingi*, *Vireo bellii*, *Poliopotila californica*, and endemic species like the Xantus's Hummingbird (*Hylocharis xantusi*). The site is of great importance for 36 species of Neotropical migratory birds, providing them with shelter and food. The main land uses are grazing and agricultural practices, as well as water extraction for agricultural, livestock and urban purposes. The greatest threats to the integrity of the site include hurricanes (which provoke flooding), the introduction of exotic flora species like the Common reed (*Phragmites australis*), *Phoenix dactylifera*, the Buffelgrass (*Pennisetum ciliare*), and the Palay rubbervine (*Cryptostegia grandiflora*) causing the displacement of native species, and introduced fish species like the Guppy (*Poecilia reticulata*) and the Redbelly tilapia (*Tilapia zilli*). Ramsar site no. 1761. Most recent RIS information: 2008.

Laguna de Babícora. 02/02/08; Chihuahua; 26,045 ha; 29°20'N 107°50'W. Located in the biogeographic region of the Sierra Madre Occidental, this complex is composed of a series of small lagoons that bond together as the source of the basin recharges, arising to the surface. It is of great importance for 122 species of migratory birds including the Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*) and the Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*). Threatened species like the

Mexican Duck (*Anas platyrhynchos diazi*) and the Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*) find shelter in this lagoon, which also holds the greatest number of geese in the Mexican Highlands, 5 endemic flora species (new for Mexico) *Desmonim sp.*, *Helenium chihuahuense*, *Hydropectis estradii*, *Thynchosia macrocarpa* and *Tragon porrifolius* and two new for science: *Hydropectis estradii* and *Desmonium sp.* Agriculture and livestock are the main productive activities in the site. Among the threats the most damaging are drying of lagoons for livestock and agriculture purposes, agrochemical pollution, and urban waste waters. Babícora is part of the program Areas of Importance for the Conservation of Birds. Ramsar site no. 1762. Most recent RIS information: 2008.

Otoch Ma'ax Yetel Kooh. 02/02/08; Yucatán; 5,367 ha; 20°38'N 087°37'W. Área de Protección de Flora y Fauna. Complex of lagoons, wide flooding depressions, and cenotes (a type of sinkholes containing groundwater), functioning for water retention and recharge of groundwater. The site is important for climate regulation at a regional level and supports a rich composition of flora and fauna species. It is known as one of the five potential focal points of action for the conservation of primates of the Yucatan Peninsula, in particular the black-handed spider monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi*). This complex of wetlands shelters a number of endangered species, including the King Vulture (*Sarcoramphus papa*), the Banded Anteater (*Tamandua mexicana*), the Black-handed spider monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi*), black howler monkey (*Alouatta pigra*), the Margay (*Leopardus wiedii*), and the Tayra (*Eira Barbara*). The most common land uses in the site include coal production, apiculture, subsistence hunting, ecotourism, and corn crops. The National Commission of Protected Natural Areas is in charge of the administration of this site. Ramsar site no. 1763. Most recent RIS information: 2008.

Parque Estatal "Cañón de Fernández". 02/02/08; Durango; 17,002 ha; 25°21'N 103°44'W. Parque Estatal. A riparian wetland crossed by the Nazas river, located in northwest Mexico. It supports a great number of vulnerable and endangered species, as well as threatened ecological communities, and is a hotspot of flora and fauna endemism. The landscape is dominated by xerophytic brush in slopes and plains. The site also supports a variety of species important for sustaining the biological diversity of the biogeographic region, constituting a germoplasm bank and an important shelter area for wildlife during droughts and extreme temperatures. This wetland contributes to the recharge of aquifers and the moderation of local climate. It works as a biological corridor between two ecosystems of regional importance (the Chihuahuense Desert and the Temperate Forests of the Sierra Madre Occidental). The main land uses are agriculture, livestock, fishing, industry and recreation. The main threat to the site is related to the mortality and morbidity of tree species, caused mainly by the dispersion of mistletoe (*Phoradendron sp.*), as it compromises the viability of the Montezuma Cypress (*Taxodium mucronatum*) and the Cottonwood (*Populus sp.*) populations. Other threats are related to the decrease of circulating water, the change in the regime of running and standing waters, and in general, the landscape changes created by the Francisco Zarco Dam. These are permanent threats that will remain as long as the dam is in operation. The Park has had a management plan since 2003. Ramsar site no. 1747. Most recent RIS information: 2008.

Santuario Playa Boca de Apiza - El Chupadero - El Tecuanillo. 02/02/08; Colima; 40 ha; 18o45'N 103o49'W. Natural coastal wetland with dominant thorn scrubs and low deciduous forest vegetation, and in the surroundings, coastal dunes, seagrass beds and mangroves. Three of the 7 species of marine turtles registered in Mexico hatch their eggs in these beaches: *Lepidochelys olivacea*, *Dermochelys coriacea*, and *Chelonia agassizi*. The Sanctuary provides a habitat for a number of resident and migratory, terrestrial and aquatic birds, many of which are threatened or endangered, such as the Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*), the Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*), the Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*), the Bare-throated Tiger-Heron (*Tigrisoma mexicanum*), and the Agami Heron (*Agamia agami*). Agriculture, livestock, fishing and tourism are the most common activities in the site. Among the threats are the hunting of female turtles during their hatching period to obtain meat, eggs, oil, depredation of nests by wild and introduced species, and contamination of nest zones, among others. The site is listed under IUCN Management Categories: Ia (Strict Nature Reserve), Ib (Wilderness Area), IV (Habitat/Species Management Area) and VI (Managed Resource Protected Area). The Park has had a management plan since 2003. Ramsar site no. 1764. Most recent RIS information: 2008.

Zona Sujeta a Conservación Ecológica Sistema Lagunar Catazajá. 02/02/08; Chiapas; 41,059 ha; 17°39'N 091°43'W. System of lagoons located in the physiographic region of the southern Gulf of Mexico, characterized by smooth slopes and the presence of multiple lagoons and floodplains. The site is of great importance for the conservation of three endangered species in particular: the Manatee (*Trichechus manatus*), the Neotropical Otter (*Lontra longicaudis*), and the Black Howler Monkey (*Alouatta pigra*). The main factors affecting this system include the rapid demographic growth, pollution, unstable socio-political situation in the area, tourism, agriculture and livestock. The site is under the IV IUCN Category (Habitat/Species Management Area) and is managed by the Natural History and Ecology Institute.

Catazajá comes from a Mayan word meaning "valley covered in water". The Park has had a management plan since 2003. Ramsar site no. 1764. Most recent RIS information: 2008.

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