

# Two new Ramsar sites in Brazil

8 March 2000

Brazil



Brazil names two excellent new sites

Brazil has designated its 6th and 7th Wetlands of International Importance, one of them a very extensive and complex coastal area in Maranhão state, the other a collection of three coral banks off the coast of the same state. Here are brief descriptions.

Baixada Maranhense Environmental Protection Area 29/02/00; Maranhão; 1,775,036 ha; 03°00'S 044°57'W. Extensive low, seasonally flooded coastal lands characterized by fields, gallery forests, mangrove swamps, and lacustrine basins along the northeast coast of Brazil. The site qualifies under all of the representative/uniqueness criteria (new Criterion 1) and most of the biodiversity criteria, including those for waterfowl and fish. The Maranhense coast concentrates large fluvial and fluvial-marine plains and flat lowlands, crossed by canals of brackish water, relatively unaffected by human activity due to a population density of only 26 inhabitants per square km. At certain times, seawater is able to reach far up the rivers, and the area is different from other seasonally flooded parts of the Amazon or perennially flooded areas of the Pantanal because of this marine influence and saline intrusion. The four significant rivers rise annually and flood their banks to fill the many lakes with water for gradual release over time. In the estuaries, mangrove swamps occur by penetrating the narrow natural waterways among the fields up to the limit of tidal influence. During Dec.-June rainy seasons the fields are flooded, leaving small islands called "tesos". Human uses include subsistence agriculture (mainly rice, corn, cassava and beans), fisheries, mineral exploitation of clay and sand, exploitation of plants (especially nuts from the Babaçu), and limited ecotourism. Potential threats include mangrove deforestation and growing urban and industrial development. An "ecological economic zoning project" is under study for implementation in 2000. Ramsar site no. 1020.

Parque Estadual Marinho do Parcel Manoel Luís including the Baixios do Mestre Álvaro and Tarol. 29/02/00; Maranhão; 45,237 ha; ca.00°30'S 044°45'W. State Marine Park. Three coral banks off the northern coast of Maranhão, at the northern distribution limit of several fish species endemic to the Brazilian coast. The area is very important for fishery production and of extremely high scientific value. Numerous shipwrecks have been found in the area and await further study. Though the area is attractive to amateur and professional divers, tourism is limited, and because of difficult local currents and distance from the coast, only experienced divers are encouraged. Threats include coral bleaching associated with climate change, the possibility of environmentally harmful shipwrecks where navigation is still hazardous, and pollution from hull washing by ships near São Marcos Bay. Owned by the federal government under the administration of Maranhão. Ramsar site no. 1021.

Source URL: <https://www.ramsar.org/news/two-new-ramsar-sites-in-brazil#comment-0>