



RAMSAR
SITE NUMBER
290

Bañados del Este y Franja Costera //

(Eastern Wetlands and Coastal Strip)



Area:
407,408.0 ha

Date of designation:
22.05.1984

Coordinates:
33° 48'S 53° 50'W

Summary

A series of wetlands linked to three important coastal lagoons in Uruguay: the Merín Lagoon, the Negra Lagoon and the De Castillos Lagoon. Thanks to the connectivity of the Ramsar site with the Atlantic Ocean and the rivers that flow into it, different types of wetland can be found including brackish lagoons, freshwater lagoons, forested wetlands, rivers, marshes. Likewise, part of the Ramsar site is made up of artificial wetlands such as the rice-growing areas.

International importance

This site was included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance due to the fact that it contains a large number of species of fauna and flora, many of which are endemic or classified as Vulnerable. The Ramsar site acts as a habitat, provides sources of food, breeding grounds and resting areas for a total of 60 species of fish, 33 species of amphibians, 44 species of reptiles, 70 species of mammals and 247 species of resident and migratory birds.

General location

This Ramsar site is located in the eastern region of Uruguay on its Atlantic coast and in some areas bordering on Brazil.



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Adverse factors

The adverse factors related to the current use and the potential changes in the use of land within and outside of the Ramsar site. Historically, the development of agriculture in the region has led to the drying out of wetlands and to pollution through the use of fertilisers and herbicides in rice production. Likewise, the potential adverse factors include the growth in unplanned development of tourism and the possible effects of climate change on such a diverse ecosystem.

Given the adverse factors that affected the site's ecological characteristics, the Eastern Wetlands and Coastal Strip used to be included in the Montreux Record and were removed from the latter in 2015.

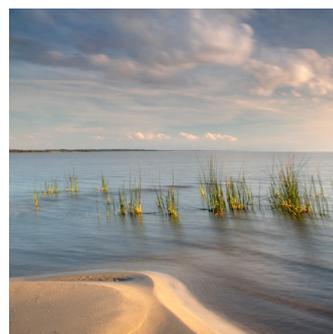
Services provided by wetlands

These wetlands provide food through fishing, shrimp catching, hunting, agriculture and livestock rearing. The last two activities are carried out on a large scale with rice-growing and livestock rearing rotation systems and contribute significantly to the country's economy.

On a lesser scale, tourist and leisure activities also take place in the site, especially in seaside resorts such as Cabo Polonio, contributing to the local economy since they receive over 40,000 visitors during the high season.

The wetlands also regulate and purify the water, refilling aquifers and reducing the effects of flooding. Similarly, they contribute to the country's biodiversity and are of great importance for scientific research and education activities.

In addition to the direct services these wetlands provide, it should also be noted that the departmental capitals of Treinta y Tres and Rocha are located near the site, as are several towns that benefit in one way or another from the services provided by these wetlands.





MARGAY
(*Leopardus wiedii*)

The margay is a species of cat of importance in terms of conservation at a national level. It occurs in the riparian forests alongside the rivers Yaguarón and Tacuarí.



PAMPAS DEER
(*Ozotoceros bezoarticus*)

The conservation of this species is a high priority since few individuals remain in Uruguay. It should be noted that this species was introduced in the Potrerillo de Santa Teresa protected area, which is part of the Ramsar site.



CAPYBARA
(*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*)

These wetlands form a fundamental habitat for this emblematic species, which is also of great sociocultural value for the local population that interacts with the capybara.



YELLOW CARDINAL
(*Gubernatrix cristata*)

The yellow cardinal is one of the many bird species found here that depend on this site for its survival, since it is currently listed as globally Endangered. The conservation of this species is of high priority in Uruguay and in the National System of Protected Areas.

Biodiversity

The site supports a high level of biodiversity. It is of particular importance for migratory birds, which arrive in large numbers. One of the site's emblematic birds is the black-necked swan (*Cygnus melanocorypha*). Other species for which these wetlands constitute an essential habitat include the capybara (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*), the coypu (*Myocastor coypus*) and the broad-snouted caiman (*Caiman latirostris*).



Management and conservation



The Ramsar site is part of the Bañados del Este Biosphere Reserve and also includes several protected areas: San Miguel National Park, the Cabo Polonio National Park Coastal Marine Area and the Cerro Verde Habitat and/or Species Management Area. The following sites are currently being included in the National System of Protected Areas: the Potrerillo de Santa Teresa Biological Station and the Castillos Lagoon Wildlife Refuge. Although no management plans have been drawn up yet, management plans for several of the protected areas are currently being prepared.

Wildlife monitoring and scientific research are also being carried out as are communication and education initiatives and activities to raise public awareness. For example, there are visitor centres, nature trails and campaigns are carried out on waste sorting as are environmental education activities with the local schools.

On the other hand, visits during the off-season are promoted and there is a project for social tourism facilitating access to the site for those who are unable to stay in the area during the summer.



The Ramsar Convention

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, commonly known as the Ramsar Convention, is a global inter-governmental treaty that provides the frame-work for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. It is the only global treaty to focus on one single ecosystem.

