

Neotropical News



CARIBBEAN

BAHAMAS

Protected areas system to double

Ten new protected areas have been created in the Bahamas, doubling the size of the country's national park system. The announcement was made by former Prime Minister, Hubert Ingraham, in the course of an address to the AGM of the Bahamas National Trust in April 2002. The initiative results from commitments made by the Bahamas under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. The new protected areas cover wetlands, coral reefs, and forests.

- *Newsletter of the Bahamas Natl. Trust* 8 (1): 1–2 (2002)

First IBA workshop in the Bahamas

The Bahamas held its first Important Bird Area (IBA) National Workshop in April 2002. Hosted by the Bahamas National Trust, participants included government officials, local ornithologists and NGOs. Ninety key areas were identified throughout the archipelago, with 45 considered 'vital' to maintaining bird populations and habitat diversity.

- *Newsletter of the Bahamas Natl. Trust* 8 (1): 7–8 (2002)

MIDDLE AMERICA

MEXICO

Gateway to Biosphere Reserve protected

In January 2002, The Nature Conservancy and a Cancún-based conservation organisation, Amigos de Sian Ka'an, purchased a critical coastal area on the Yucatán peninsula. Although only covering 25.6-ha, the new protected area at Pez Maya will form a barrier

between expected coastal development of up to 10,000 hotel rooms and the 640,000-ha Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve, Mexico's first UNESCO World Heritage Site.

- *Plant Talk* 28 (April 2002)

NICARAGUA

Seven new wetlands added to the list of Ramsar sites for Nicaragua

Since February 2002, the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources, Nicaragua, has added the following areas to the list of important international wetlands: Cayos Miskitos Marine Biological Reserve and its immediate surroundings, the coastal fringe north-east of the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (total area 85,000 ha); deltas of the Royal Estuarine and Apacunca Plains (81,700 ha) which is a key ecosystem for a diverse number of marine and estuarine species; Lake Apanas-Asturias, in Jinotega (5,226 ha) which holds many migrant ducks, including up to 3,000 Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*; Río San Juan Wildlife Refuge, in the south-east of the country (43,000 ha); Bluefields Bay Wetland System (86,501 ha) which is the largest natural resource site in the southern Caribbean region of Nicaragua; San Miguelito Wetland System (43,475 ha) which holds up to 5,000 Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*; and Tisma Lagoon System (16,850 ha) which harbours up to 20,000 Blue-winged Teal. For further information contact Martín Lezama-Lopez, Departamento de Ciencias Ambientales, Facultad de Ciencias, Tecnología y Ambiente, Universidad Centroamericana, Managua, Apdo. 69, Nicaragua, or by e-mail: mlezama@ns.uca.edu.ni.

- *La Tangara* 40 (May/June, 2002)

SOUTH AMERICA

BRAZIL

Expansion of National Forests system

Brazil's government is currently implementing a policy for sustainable forest production within an expanded system of National Forests ('Flonas'). By 2010, 50 million ha of new Flonas will have been created. The scale of this initiative is equivalent to the 1908 establishment of the US National Forest system, and is unprecedented in the tropics. The resultant mosaic of conservation areas, combining Flonas with fully protected parks and indigenous reservations, is expected to enhance biodiversity conservation and economic stability throughout the Amazon. Establishment of these Flonas is expected to foster development of large-scale sustainable forestry and make Brazil a world leader in conserving natural resources.

- *Science* 297: 1478 (2002)

CHILE

Latest on the Ruddy-headed Goose

Studies of the distribution and abundance of Ruddy-headed Geese *Chloephaga rubidiceps* were undertaken in its southern Chilean breeding range in December 1999 and March 2000. During December 1999, 737 individuals were counted, including 134 chicks, while the March 2000 count totalled 750 individuals. San Gregorio, in continental Chile, proved to be a key site, with 78% of breeding pairs. This species, with a stable and numerous population in the Falklands, is dwindling on the continent. Breeding sites were characterised by the presence of wet fields, offering protection from predators. These sites have been

heavily overgrazed in Tierra del Fuego, where foxes were also introduced. Breeding success is highly susceptible to disturbance, and it is suggested that action be taken to protect the main sites.

- *Bol. Chileno Orn.* 7 (2000)

COLOMBIA

Indigo-winged Parrot rediscovered

In July 2002, Jorge Velasquez and Alonso Quevedo photographed a flock of 14 Indigo-winged Parrots *Hapalopsittaca fuertesi* in the Colombian Central Andes. This constitutes the first documented record for 91 years, following an unconfirmed report in 1989. The researchers were funded by the BP Conservation Programme, administered jointly by BirdLife International and Flora & Fauna International.

- *The Guardian*, 21 August 2002

PARAGUAY

First cross-border conservation area in South America

In July 2002, the Instituto de Derecho y Economía Ambiental (Paraguay) acquired an additional c.4,000 ha in the Infante Rivarola area, at Canada del Carmen, in the Paraguayan Chaco. This protected area will be, together with the Bolivian private reserve El Corbalán, the first cross-border conservation area in South America. The international community has long realised the trans-boundary nature of most environmental problems, and the inefficacy of unilateral efforts. Nevertheless, this event transcends the natural resources conservation spectrum: cross-border conservation areas provide a mechanism to promote sound ecological management of such cross-border ecosystems and opportunities for political, economic and cultural cooperation. Boundaries should be retained,

but their functions as lines of division should be reduced to permit them to assume more welcome functions as lines of positive and productive contact.

- S. Abed-Zavala, Instituto de Derecho y Economía Ambiental (IDEA) *in litt.* August 2002

URUGUAY

Important Bird Areas project in Uruguay

Aves Uruguay has identified 11 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in its first analysis, which includes sites throughout the country. A proposed National IBAs workshop was due to take place in August 2002 involving technicians and government authorities in order to reach a national agreement and achieve support from government organisations for the research. For further information contact Gabriel Roche, Coordinador Programa AIAs, Aves Uruguay, or by e-mail, gupeca@adinet.com.uy.

- *La Tangara* 40 (May/June, 2002)