

Research paper on los katorios national park

[Environment](#), [Animals](#)



UNESCO: Los Katios National Park

The Los Katios National Park is found in the north-western territory of Columbia, near the Darien/Uraba region of the Choco and Antioquia Departments. The park was constructed in 1973, to cover 52, 000 hectares, but by 1979, the park was extended to 72, 000 hectares. The Natural National Park Division of the Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (INDERENA) currently manages the park and is directly accounted for by the Ministry of Agriculture. According to Thorsell, Sawyer and the World Heritage Committee (1992) the park is under a tropical rainforest ecosystems zone, which can be determined by the park's temperature ranging from 24 degrees to 25 degrees Celsius and rainfall with 1900 to 3100mm. Unlike other parks, the Los Katios does not have only one ecosystem. Two ecosystems are found in the park, namely the tropical rainforests found in the Darien Mountains and the floodplain of the Atrato River.

The park has low land swamp forests and tropical rainforests that hosts some of the rarest flora found in the region. According to the United Nation Environment Programme (2011), the low land forests resemble mid-elevation cloud forests which are filled with fern cover and epiphytes. These forests can be found in the northern end of the Choco-Darien moist forest area. According to the recent tally, up to 669 species are located in the park; 20-25% of these taxa are endemic. At least 71% of the tropical rainforest is made up of the flooded evergreen forest, second-growth forest and the lowland evergreen forest. There are at least three types of lowland swamp

forests in the park: the swamp margins filled with *Montrichardia arborescens* with *Polygonum acuminatum*, the Panganal consociation of *Raphia taedigera*, *Erythrina fusca*, *Pachira aquatica*, *Pitaria copaifera*, and *Ficus denodriocia*, and the Cativo. Cativo trees are floodland flora found only in Columbia, south Central America and Jamaica. Water hyacinths or the *Eichhornia azurea* can be found in the aquatic areas of the park. Flora found in lowland to pre-montane tropical rainforests can be classified into different types such as the *Cavanillesia platanifolia*, *Ceiba petandra*, *Hura crepitans*, *Anacardium excelsum* or wild cashew, and finally the palma mil pesos or the *Jessenia polycarps*. There is other taxa found in the park, and these are the *Ochroma lagopus*, *Cecropia spp.*, *Cochlospermum vitofolium*, *Brosimum utile* and the rubber tree *Castilla elastica*.

The Los Katios has been recorded to have at least 27% of bird species found in Columbia and 50% of bird species found in Panama. At least 450 species of birds are noted to have been spotted in the Park. Some of these species are threatened such as the black oropendola (*Psarocolius guatimozinus*), the Baudo (*Psarocolius cassini*), the Choco tinamou (*Crypturellis kerriae*) and the speckled ant-shrike (*Xenornis setifrons*). In one of the park's areas such as in the Serrania del Tacarcuna, some endemic species are also found such as the Tacarcuna wood-quail (*Odontophorus dialeucos*), the grey-headed chachalaca (*Ortalis cinereiceps*), rufous-cheeked hummingbird (*Goethalsia bella*) and the violet-capped hummingbird (*Goldmania violiceps*). The park also has near-threatened species such as the great curassow (*Crax rubra*), the green macaw (*Ara ambiguus*), the harpy eagle (*Harpia harpyja*), the northern screamer (*Chauna chavaria*), the russet-crowned quail-dove

(*Geotrygon goldmani*), the sooty-capped puffbird (*Bucco noanamae*) and the black-crowned antpitta (*Pittasoma michleri*)

Within the park, biological interchange happens instantly as plants, animals and insects would depend on one another to get food and energy. One excellent example is a giant anteater which needs ants and other organisms to fulfil its hunger. Plants serve as food for birds and other animals in the park; insects also choose eating plants to obtain nutrients. Some animals even eat insects and fish. Once these animals and birds die, they serve as natural compost for the plants. The park's unique position in the Darien region is a black hole to allow distribution of fauna and flora in the Americas, especially in the Tertiary and Pleistocene periods. The foot and mouth disease was also stopped by the barrier placed by the region in spreading in the area. Some individual species are located in specific areas in the park, and this process is continuously being done today. Some endemic species of both plants and animals can be located in a given area of the park; summarizing its adaptability in the environment they are located.

For years, the Los Katios National Park has experienced many threats from humans. The park also has cited instances that illegal fishing and hunting especially in the Tumarada swamps. Although the swamp is home to abundant fishes, the area is closely exploited without restraint. Some have even hunted "babilla" and "manati", reducing their population. Many are also alarmed with the reducing population of these species, due to the fact that some of them are illegally traded or eaten by the locals. These illegal activities are also damaging the riverside vegetation, needed by most

species in the Park.

According to Porup, Raub and Reid (2009), there are also been reports of illegal occupations in the area. Some guerrillas are also found in the Darien Gap which is why rangers in the park have pulled out from the area, in fear of these guerrillas. The Darien border, in which the highway is set to be constructed, is known as one of the " most disruptive" out of all the five borders of Columbia. Despite the government's actions to reduce the violence in the area, moving around the park on foot is still dangerous due to the presence of smaller armed groups in the area. However, despite the park's status as a national park, this has not entirely stopped the terrorist activities, drug cultivation, illegal ranching, logging or even poaching .

Villegas and Sesana (2007) have cited that tribes and small communities have been contributing to the Park's status. Before, the Cunas are the known tribe that inhabited the area since they had fled to Panama in danger of the Katio-Embera group, who established themselves in the nearby Choco region. At present, there are still black communities located in the park, namely in the Collective areas of Cacarica, La Larga-Tumaradocito, Bocas Del Atrato-Leoncito, and Mayor Del Bajo Atrato. There are also tribes which live in the reservations, which include Atquia, Perancho, Peranchito and La Raya. Since their primary economic activity is logging, many of the park's trees have been extracted without permits. Cacarica farmers, who live in the outskirts of the Park, are anticipating the Columbian government's proposal to acquire their lands to complete the Pan-American Highway. This highway is set to connect the capitals to Alaska, and the Darien region remains to be the only place that construction is yet to be finished. Construction would also

allow physical access to the park which may negatively impact the species living in the park.

The Los Katios National Park, through the help of their state government and the various organizations that helps the park management, has enforced several area protection and conservation acts. Most of the park employees coach Park visitors with regards to the dangers of intruding the balance in the Park, especially when they see the various species in the park.

Deforestation is one of the most serious problems the Park experiences as illegal loggers and locals would normally burn crops to reduce the evidences of logging. Some even uses burning to clear crops, which cause to massive deforestation. Since the park was once a diversified farm filled with tree samplings, second generation trees generally comprise the grounds. Officials have prevented these instances by improving the park's infrastructure and added new resources to watch over strategic areas of the park. Local communities are given training in using alternative resources to prevent them from using the trees. With regards to fully preventing and manage forest fires, the park works hand in hand with the Darien National Park to coordinate and inspect the park through aerial and land assets. This also minimizes the chances of physical activity in the area.

Local authorities have already mobilized with the help of the national government to patrol the area in cases of criminal activity. Thanks to the site's status as a protected area under the UNESCO, the illegal activities in the region have already decreased. The government has prevented the use of chemicals in eliminating the illicit drug crops found in the area. Several tribes have also trained under the WWF to improve forest-management.

They are now using low-impact harvesting of timber and push for marketing of approved woodwork. Conflict management also enables authorities to manage environmental zoning and logging standards set up around the park .

Several protection acts have been enacted to maintain the park. Swamp areas and its coastlines are normally searched by authorities to stop illegal infrastructure and fishing pens in the area. In terms of Jaguar protection, the park applies the guidelines posted by the CITES or the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species as they have noted the decline of Jaguar population in the South American region. Under the CITES guidelines, the jaguar is considered as an Appendix I specie which means all jaguar trade is prohibited. Hunting jaguars are also prohibited by these guidelines not only in Columbia but also around the South American region. Water and medical provisions are also closely monitored by park authorities due to the possible contamination of water due to settlements near wetlands and swamps.

Despite the fact that there are human threats in the Park that are already addressed, there are still unchecked intrusions in the park that poses a threat to the endangered species. There are still cases that human communities return to the area to poach and cut down trees for their homes and families. There are still militias running around the park undetected, which can threaten the animals living in the area as they will be closer to chemicals that can hurt them. The government is still yet to address these problems as they lack the resources to maintain the park and establish the changes they want to happen. In 2009, the Los Katio National Park has been

added to the World Heritage List in Danger category due to the on-going security concerns and intrusions happening in the park .

References

Porup, J., Raub, K., & Reid, R. (2009). Columbia. New York: Lonely Planet.

Thorsell, J., Sawyer, J., & Committee, W. H. (1992). World heritage 20 years later. Cambridge: IUCN.

Villegas, B., & Sesana, L. (2007). Columbia Natural Parks. Bolgota: Villegas Asociados.