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Important Bird Areas AMERICAS

VENEZUELA

Miguel Lentino & Diana Esclasans



The Critically Endangered Carrizal Seedeater (*Amaurospiza carrizalensis*), a bamboo specialist, had its type locality bulldozed away soon after its discovery to make way for a hydroelectric project. However, new locations for the species have recently been found.
Photo: Miguel Lentino



Country facts at a glance

Area:	916,445 km ²
Population (2007):	26,414,815
Capital:	Caracas
Altitude:	0–5007 m
Number of IBAs:	72
Total IBA area:	21,041,763 ha
IBA coverage of land area:	25%
Total number of birds:	1396
Globally threatened birds:	26
Globally threatened birds in IBAs:	25
Country endemics:	54

General introduction

Venezuela is located on the northern coast of South America, it has land borders with Colombia to the west and southwest, Guyana to the east and Brazil to the south. It also borders several Caribbean states over its marine territory. It is the sixth largest country in South America in terms of land area.

Venezuela is a federal republic with the executive branch of the government led by an elected president who is also head of state. The legislative branch consists of the unicameral *Asamblea Nacional*, made up of 167 seats and elected by popular vote. The country is divided into 23 states, grouped into nine administrative regions. Of Venezuela's 314 islands, three make up a state and the remaining 311 islands and cays are administered as a Federal Dependency. The capital, Caracas, is located within a Capital District.

The country has a warm and wet tropical climate, seasons are determined by rainfall, with a dry season running from December to April and a rainy season from May to September although there are some local exceptions to this pattern. Average annual rainfall varies from less than 300 mm in the most arid regions to more than 4000 mm in the Amazon and Guianan Shield. Average annual temperatures oscillate between 23 and 29 °C.

The Orinoco is Venezuela's largest river at more than 2400 km in length. Its source lies in the Sierra de Parima on the border with Brazil, in the south of the country. From here the river flows northeast to its mouth in the vast delta region opposite the island of Trinidad. The Orinoco receives 95% of surface waters in Venezuela.

Venezuela has been divided into four physiographic regions (Huber & Alarcón 1988), a brief description of each follows: 1) Insular and coasts; this region is generally dry with low rainfall (300 -1000 mm) and a high average annual temperature over 28 °C. It covers all coastal ecosystems on continental Venezuela, along 4006 km of coastline, as well as the 314 islands or cays in the Caribbean. 2) Plains; this region includes all lowland plains between 0 and



Canaima National Park (VE061) is one of three IBAs over 3,000,000 ha in size. As well as holding four Near Threatened species, important populations of restricted-range and biome-restricted species are present in the park.
Photo: David Southall

Important Bird Areas AMERICAS

250 m above sea level, average annual temperatures are above 24 °C and average rainfall varies between 500 and 4000 mm. The two largest sub-regions are the Orinoco Delta and the Llanos or Plains, the latter is shared with Colombia and extends east of the Andes, south of the Coastal Mountains and north of the Guianan Shield. 3) Hills; altitudes in this region range from 100 to 1000 m. There are two main areas, first, the Lara-Falcon mountains, characterized by dry forests and scrub where natural vegetation remains, although the region's ecosystems have suffered much from human disturbance. The other area is made up of the Guianan foothills, situated northwest of the

Guianan highlands and the Orinoco River. 4) Mountains; this region contains several mountainous areas, including the Cordillera de los Andes, the Andean chain that traverses the west of the country before entering Colombia and boasts Venezuela's highest point at 5007 m on Pico Bolívar. Other areas in this region include Sierra de Perijá, the northernmost chain of the Andes, reaching heights of more than 3600 m; the coastal mountains; Cerro Copey on Isla Margarita and the Guianan Highlands. In the latter subregion, tepuis or inselbergs, striking Precambrian formations towering above the forests, are characteristic of the landscape and reach average heights of 1500 to 2500 m.

Conservation and protected area system



Venezuela has one of the largest extensions of protected areas in the world (Bevilacqua 2003), making up a system of Areas under Special Administration, grouped under three large categories: areas with strictly protective, scientific, recreational or educational purposes; areas with controlled use; and geo-strategic areas with productive purposes. The 359 areas within this system cover 276,656 km², or 30.2% of the country. Areas are administered by different dependencies of the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources. Venezuela's first national park was created in 1937 and was later named in honor of Henri François Pittier Dormond, founder of the national park system. A type of management plan is drawn up for each area containing guidelines and policies for its administration, including permitted, restricted and prohibited activities and land use as well as information on zoning. Currently, decrees with management plans have been issued for just less than half the national parks.

Venezuela has five Ramsar sites, Archipiélago Los Roques, Ciénaga de Los Olivitos, Cuare, Laguna de la Restinga and Laguna de

“Venezuela has one of the largest extensions of protected areas in the world.”

Tacarigua, totaling an area of 263,636 ha and designated between 1988 and 1996. There is also one Biosphere Reserve, Alto Orinoco-Casiquiare in the Venezuelan Amazon of 8,266,230 ha. The reserve was designated in 1993.

International treaties ratified by Venezuela include the Convention on Biodiversity (1994), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (1977), the World Heritage Convention (1990), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (1988), UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992) and the Kyoto Protocol (2004), among others.



Sierra de la Culata National Park (VE040) protects three Vulnerable species: Helmeted Curassow (*Pauxi pauxi*), Rusty-faced Parrot (*Hapalopsittaca amazonina*) and Slaty-backed Hemispingus (*Hemispingus goeringi*).
Photo: David Southall



Ornithological importance

Venezuela is considered one of the megadiverse countries of the world, it is placed sixth in terms of bird diversity, after Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Ecuador and Indonesia. Venezuela holds 36% of bird species recorded for the Neotropical region according to Stotz *et al.* (1996), this richness is due to the diversity of habitats or ecosystems within the country. Nine new species have been registered for Venezuela since the publication of the Tropical Andes directory (BirdLife International & Conservation International 2005). These species, not included in Hilty (2003) are: Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*; Williams & Beadle 2003), Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca*; Restal *et al.* 2006), White-tipped Sicklebill (*Eutoxeres aquila*; Rengifo *et al.* 2007), White-necked Puffbird (*Notharchus hyperrhynchus*; Remsen *et al.* 2008), Roraiman Antbird (*Schistocichla saturata*; Braun *et al.* 2005), Smoky-fronted Tody-tyrant (*Todirostrum fumifrons*; Salcedo *et al.* 2006) and Ring-necked Seedeater (*Sporophila insularis*; Restall 2002).


Of the 1396 species present in the country, 26 are globally threatened and a further 30 are classified as Near Threatened (BirdLife International 2007). The recently described Carrizal Seedeater (*Amaurospiza carrizalensis*) (Lentino & Restall 2003) is Venezuela's only Critically Endangered bird¹. A further 12 and 13 species are classified as Endangered and Vulnerable, respectively. The second edition of the national red list for birds (Rodríguez & Rojas-Suárez 2003) contains 76 listed birds of which four are Critically Endangered (*Crypturellus erythropus margaritae*, *Vultur gryphus*, *Aratinga acuticaudata neoxena*, *Carduelis cucullata*), 11 are Endangered and 17 Vulnerable.

There are seven EBAs within Venezuela (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998), containing 106 restricted-range species, three lie completely within the country: Caripe-Paria region (EBA 032), Cordillera de Mérida (EBA 034) and Cordillera de la Costa Central (EBA 033). The other four EBAs are shared with neighboring countries: Caribbean Colombia and Venezuela (EBA 035), Colombian East Andes (EBA 038) with Colombia; Orinoco-Negro white-sand forest (EBA 065) with Brazil and Colombia and Tepuis (EBA 064) with Brazil and Guyana. Four biomes are present in the country with total of 206 biome restricted species (Lentino *et al.* 2005).

“Venezuela is considered to hold the most important sites in northern South America for wintering Blue-winged Teals.”

Venezuela is important in providing habitat to migratory birds as stopover or overwintering sites, with 135 species coming from North America, 10 from the Caribbean and 23 from southern South America. Many coastal lagoons, beaches and mudflats represent the first landfall for millions of migratory species after a long flight over the Caribbean. Venezuela has also been considered to hold the most important sites in northern South America for wintering Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*), reaching numbers in excess of 35,000, mostly in wetlands in the east of the country (Morrison *et al.* 1985). Heron roosts in the Llanos region have been recorded to hold up to 32,000 individuals. Scarlet Ibis (*Eudocimus ruber*) is most numerous in this region, with 22 roosts holding more than 70,000 birds (Ramo & Busto 1985).

¹According to the 2008 IUCN Red List, Venezuela now has two CR species given that Tachira Antpitta (*Grallaria chthonia*) has been uplisted from EN to CR, other changes are Helmeted Curassow (*Pauxi pauxi*) and Scissor-tailed Hummingbird (*Hylonympha macrocerca*) both uplisted from VU to EN, and Sun Parakeet (*Aratinga solstitialis*) from LC to EN. This directory uses IUCN 2007 categories throughout.



The Endangered Paria Redstart (*Myioborus pariae*) is endemic to the Paria Peninsula in northeast Venezuela, opposite the island of Trinidad. It is estimated to occupy just 270 km².
Photo: David Southall

IBA overview



The Venezuelan IBA program began in 1999 when funding was obtained by the Sociedad Conservacionista Audubon de Venezuela (SCAV) to begin IBA identification, initially in protected areas. The list of potential IBAs was presented to the ornithological community at a national workshop in Caracas on 3 December 2000. A second workshop was held in 2003 to further validate data.

As a result of the above process, 72 IBAs were designated in all 25 of Venezuela's administrative divisions, with the greatest number identified in the state of Amazonas (Table 1, Figure 1). IBAs in Venezuela cover almost 25% of the country's land area, representing one of the largest total area of IBAs in the Americas.

Table 1. Important Bird Areas in Venezuela

IBA code	IBA name	Adm unit	Area (ha)	A1				A2	A3	A4				
				CR	EN	VU	NT			A4i	A4ii	A4iii	A4iv	
VE001	Refugio de Fauna Silvestre Isla de Aves	Dependencias Federales	158,020							X		X		
VE002	Isla La Blanquilla	Dependencias Federales	5,250			1				X		X		
VE003	Parque Nacional Archipiélago Los Roques	Dependencias Federales	225,153							X				
VE004	Parque Nacional Cerro El Copey	Nueva Esparta	7,130						X					
VE005	Monumento Natural Laguna de las Marites	Nueva Esparta	3,674							X				
VE006	Parque Nacional Laguna de La Restinga	Nueva Esparta	18,862			1		X						
VE007	Parque Nacional Morrocoy	Falcón	32,090	2	2	1	X	X						
VE008	Refugio de Fauna Silvestre Cuare	Falcón	11,825	1	2	2	X	X	X					
VE009	Reserva de Fauna Silvestre Tucurere	Falcón	17,800			1	1					X		
VE010	Humedales Boca de Hueque y Sauca	Falcón	15,400			1	1	X	X	X		X		
VE011	Parque Nacional Sierra de San Luis	Falcón	20,000	1		1	X							
VE012	Parque Nacional Médanos de Coro	Falcón	91,280			1	1	X	X					
VE013	Refugio de Fauna Silvestre y Reserva de Pesca Laguna de Boca de Caño	Falcón	453									X		
VE014	Refugio de Fauna Silvestre y Reserva de Pesca Ciénaga de Los Olivitos	Zulia	26,000			2	X					X		
VE015	Parque Nacional Ciénagas de Juan Manuel	Zulia	226,130			3		X						
VE016	Reserva de Fauna Silvestre Ciénagas de Juan Manuel, Aguas Blancas y Aguas Negras	Zulia	70,680			3		X					X	
VE017	Zona Protectora San Rafael de Guasare	Zulia	302,000	3	3	5	X	X						
VE018	Parque Nacional Perijá	Zulia	295,288	4	4	5	X	X					X	
VE019	Parque Nacional Península de Paria	Sucre	37,500	2	2	2	X	X						
VE020	Parque Nacional Turuépapo	Sucre	70,000										X	
VE021	Parque Nacional El Guácharo	Monagas, Sucre	62,700	4	1	1	X	X						
VE022	Zona Protectora Macizo Montañoso del Turimiquire	Anzoátegui, Monagas, Sucre	540,000	4	1	2	X	X						
VE023	Humedal Chacopata	Sucre	700										X	
VE024	Parque Nacional Mochima	Anzoátegui, Sucre	94,935			1		X	X					
VE025	Humedales Boca del Río Unare	Anzoátegui	4,750			1			X	X				
VE026	Parque Nacional Laguna de Tacarigua	Miranda	39,100	1		1								
VE027	Parque Nacional Guatopo	Guárico, Miranda	122,464	1	2	4	X	X						
VE028	Parque Nacional El Ávila	Distrito Federal, Miranda, Vargas	85,192	2	3	4	X	X						
VE029	Parque Nacional Macarao	Distrito Federal, Miranda	15,000			1	2	X	X					
VE030	Monumento Natural Pico Codazzi	Aragua, Distrito Federal, Miranda	11,850			1	1	X	X				X	
VE031	Parque Nacional Henri Pittier	Aragua, Carabobo	107,800	2	4	6	X	X						
VE032	Parque Nacional San Esteban	Carabobo	44,050	2	1	4	X	X						
VE033	Palmichal	Carabobo	11,600			3	X	X						
VE034	Parque Nacional Yurubí	Yaracuy	23,670			2	X	X						
VE035	Parque Nacional Tirgua (General Manuel Manrique)	Cojedes, Yaracuy	91,000			1	X							
VE036	Parque Nacional Terepaima	Lara, Portuguesa	18,650	1	1	1								
VE037	Parque Nacional Yacambú	Lara	26,916	2	2	1	X	X						
VE038	Refugio de Fauna Silvestre y Reserva de Pesca Parque Nacional Dinira	Lara, Portuguesa, Trujillo	45,328			1	1	X	X				X	
VE039	Parque Nacional Guaramacal	Portuguesa, Trujillo	21,460			3	2	X	X					
VE040	Parque Nacional Sierra La Culata	Mérida, Trujillo	200,400			4	3	X	X					
VE041	Parque Nacional Sierra Nevada	Barinas, Mérida	276,446			4	6	X	X					
VE042	Parque Nacional Páramos Batallón y La Negra	Mérida, Táchira	95,200			3	2	X	X					
VE043	Parque Nacional El Tamá	Apure, Táchira	139,000	1	1	3	X							
VE044	Pedernales-Capture	Delta Amacuro	105,000							X		X		
VE045	Parque Nacional Mariusa-Delta del Orinoco	Delta Amacuro	331,000			1								
VE046	Reserva Forestal Imataca	Bolívar, Delta Amacuro	3,640,899			3		X						
VE047	Reserva de Fauna Silvestre Gran Morichal	Delta Amacuro, Monagas	129,700							X				
VE048	Caruachi	Bolívar	800,000	1										
VE049	Parque Nacional Aguaro-Guariquito	Guárico	585,750			2		X						
VE050	Reserva de Fauna Silvestre Esteros de Camaguán	Guárico	19,300			2		X						
VE051	Reserva Privada Hato Masaguaral	Guárico	34,000			2		X						

IBA code	IBA name	Adm unit	Area (ha)	A1				A2	A3	A4				
				CR	EN	VU	NT			A4i	A4ii	A4iii	A4iv	
VE052	Reserva Privada Hato Piñero	Cojedes	60,000					2		X				
VE053	Reserva Privada Hato El Frío	Apure	80,000					2		X				
VE054	Reserva Privada Hato El Cedral	Apure	53,000					2		X				
VE055	Parque Nacional Tapo-Caparo	Mérida, Táchira	205,000			1	1							
VE056	Parque Nacional Santos Luzardo	Apure	584,368					2		X				X
VE057	Monumento Natural Tepui Guanay	Amazonas, Bolívar	12,500							X				
VE058	Monumento Natural Tepui Yutajé	Amazonas	27,500							X				
VE059	Monumento Natural Tepui Yavi	Amazonas	1,400					1		X				
VE060	Monumento Natural Tepui Guaiquinima	Bolívar	109,600					2	X	X				
VE061	Parque Nacional Canaima	Bolívar	3,000,000					4	X	X				
VE062	Monumento Natural Tepui Roraima	Bolívar	4,500					1	X	X				
VE063	Monumento Natural Cerro Urutaní	Bolívar	250,000							X				
VE064	Parque Nacional Jaua-Sarisariñama	Bolívar	330,000							X				
VE065	Campamento Junglaven	Amazonas	150,000					1		X				
VE066	Reserva Forestal Sipapo	Amazonas	1,215,500			1			X	X				
VE067	Monumento Natural Tepui Parú	Amazonas	40,000							X				
VE068	Parque Nacional Yapacana	Amazonas	320,000						X	X				
VE069	Parque Nacional Duida-Marahuaca	Amazonas	210,000					2	X	X				
VE070	Yavita-Pimichin	Amazonas	250,000						X	X				
VE071	Parque Nacional Parima-Tapirapecó	Amazonas	3,420,000					3	X	X				
VE072	Parque Nacional Serranía La Neblina	Amazonas	1,360,000					1	X	X				

 For information on trigger species at each IBA, see individual site accounts at BirdLife's Data Zone: www.birdlife.org/datazone/sites/

A total of 57 IBAs were designated under criterion A1, covering 47 globally threatened and near threatened species in Venezuela meeting IBA criteria. In terms of threatened species (CR, EN, VU) alone, 96% are covered by one or more IBAs. Four sites have been confirmed for five or more threatened species, with Parque Nacional Perijá in the state of Zulia having the greatest number of threatened species at eight. Eight threatened species are only represented by one IBA, conversely, Helmeted Curassow (*Pauxi pauxi*) and Yellow-shouldered Amazon (*Amazona barbadensis*) are both present at more than 10 IBAs in the country (Table 2). Cerulean Warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*) has been recorded at 14 IBAs but has not been confirmed under IBA criteria due to lack of population information.

Of the 106 restricted-range species in Venezuela, 104 are represented in 44 sites meeting criterion A2. The two A2 species present in Venezuela at the extremes of their distribution but not confirmed for any IBA are Orinoco Piculet (*Picumnus pumilus*) for Orinoco-Negro white-sand forest (EBA 065) and Rufous-browed Conebill (*Conirostrum rufum*) for Colombian

East Andes (EBA 038), the latter species was reported for Venezuela in 1978 (Phelps & de Schauensee 1979). One hundred and ninety-three of 206 biome-restricted species are represented in 47 sites meeting criterion A3.

With respect to congregatory species, 19 sites meet criterion A4, 14 sites confirmed under A4i, five under A4ii and three sites confirmed under A4iii, Refugio de Fauna Silvestre Isla de Aves (VE001), Pedernales-Capure (VE044) in the state of Delta Amacuro and Parque Nacional Santos Luzardo (VE056) in Apure, all for containing more than 20,000 waterbirds.

In Venezuela, 68% of IBAs are totally protected, a further 7% are partially protected (Figure 1). Of these 54 sites, 35 are national parks, representing approximately 80% of Venezuela's national parks. All of Venezuela's five Ramsar sites have been designated as IBAs. The principal habitat type in almost 45% of Venezuela's IBAs is forest². Other habitat types present in more than 5% of IBAs are shrubland and grassland (Figure 2).

Table 2. Threatened species confirmed under IBA criteria

Scientific name	IUCN category	No. of IBAs confirmed for species
<i>Pauxi pauxi</i>	VU	16
<i>Amazona barbadensis</i>	VU	11
<i>Carduelis cucullata</i>	EN	8
<i>Ara militaris</i>	VU	7
<i>Grallaria excelsa</i>	VU	6
<i>Laterallus levraudi</i>	EN	4
<i>Clytoctantes alixii</i>	EN	3
<i>Hapalopsittaca amazonina</i>	VU	4
<i>Rallus wetmorei</i>	EN	4
<i>Diglossa venezuelensis</i>	EN	3
<i>Hemispingus goeringi</i>	VU	3
<i>Premnoplex tatei</i>	VU	3
<i>Phyllomyias urichi</i>	EN	2
<i>Odontophorus atrifrons</i>	VU	2
<i>Metallura iracunda</i>	EN	2
<i>Basileuterus griseiceps</i>	EN	2
<i>Agelaiocercus berlepschi</i>	EN	2
<i>Amaurospiza carrizalensis</i>	CR	1
<i>Thripophaga cherriei</i>	VU	1
<i>Schizoeaca perijana</i>	EN	1
<i>Hylonympha macrocerca</i>	VU	1
<i>Carduelis yarrellii</i>	VU	1
<i>Grallaricula cucullata</i>	VU	1
<i>Myioborus pariae</i>	EN	1
<i>Grallaria chthonia</i>	EN	1



The endemic Scissor-tailed hummingbird (*Hylonympha macrocerca*) has been uplisted to EN in the 2008 IUCN Red List due to habitat loss and ongoing conversion of forest to agriculture causing its small range to decline in size. Photo: David Southall

² See www.iucnredlist.org/info/major_habitats for further details on habitat types.

Important Bird Areas AMERICAS

Figure 1. Location of Important Bird Areas in Venezuela

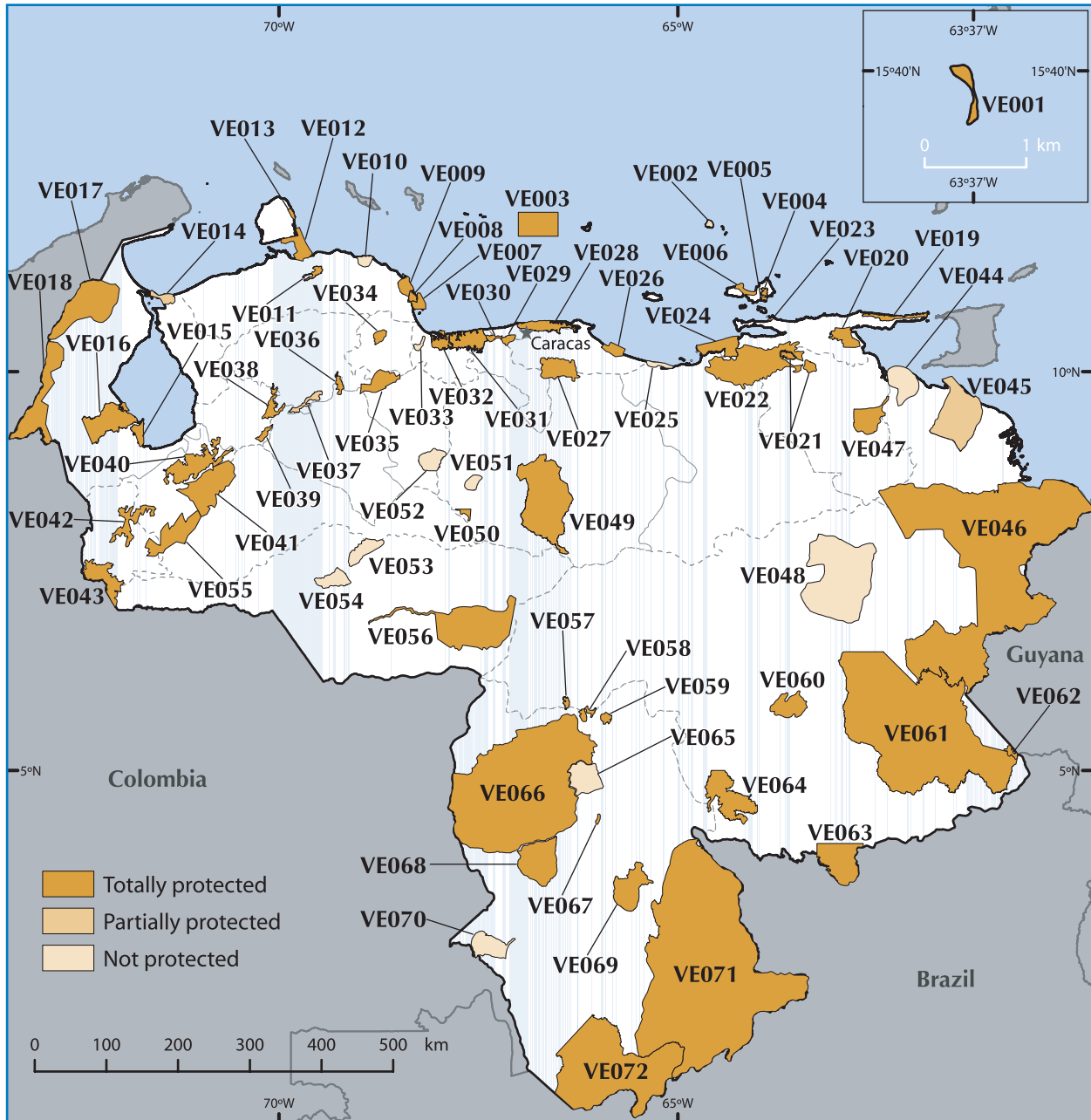
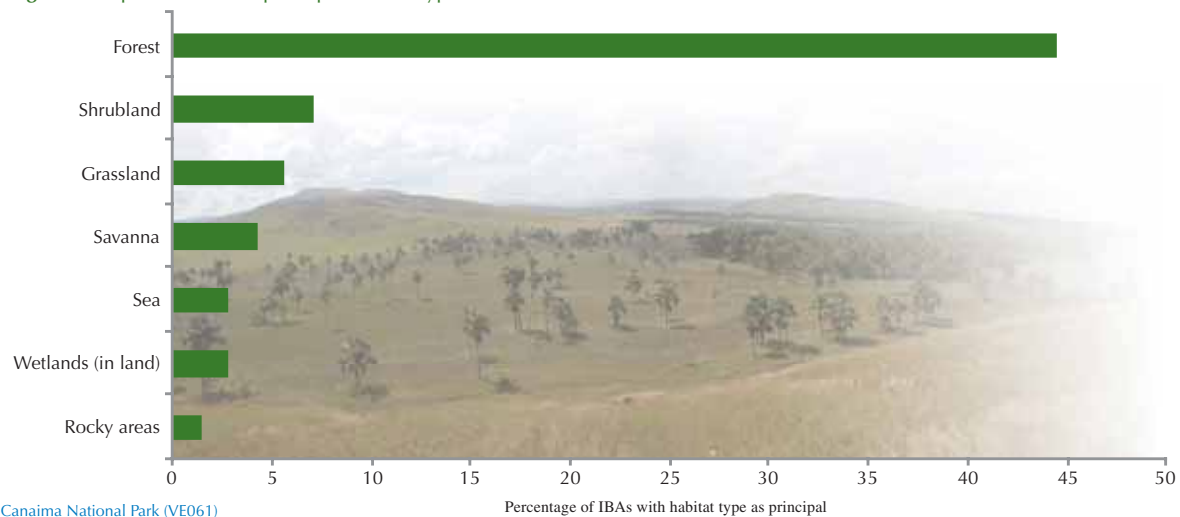


Figure 2. Representation of principal habitat types in IBAs





Opportunities

Recent years have seen greater efforts to study globally threatened species in more detail, thus obtaining further information on their biology and distribution. Examples include, Venezuelan Wood-quail (*Odontophorus columbianus*) with studies carried out in the Henri Pittier National Park (VE031) (Bonaccorso & Barreto 2002, Bonaccorso & Barreto 2004, Bonaccorso *et al.* 2004); Grey-headed Warbler (*Basileuterus griseiceps*) and White-throated Barbtail (*Premnoplex tatei*) in the IBA Macizo Montañoso del Turimiquire (VE022) (Azpúrua 2006, Hernández 2006); Orinoco Softtail (*Thripophaga cherriei*) in the IBA Reserva del Sipapo (VE066) (Lentino *et al.* 2007). A project is currently underway for Carrizal Seedeater (*Amaurospiza carrizalensis*) with seven new localities discovered for the species in the Caruachi region (VE048) where it maintains small territories. In 2004, Recurve-billed Bushbird (*Clytoctantes alixii*) was newly discovered in the country in the Serranía de Perijá (VE018) and is also present in Serranía de Lajas, in the southern part of the IBA Zona Protectora San Rafael de Guasare (VE017) (Lentino *et al.* 2004, BirdLife International 2008). Further information on the distribution of Plain-flanked Rail (*Rallus wetmorei*) has been obtained, the species has been recorded in four IBAs on the Venezuelan coast.

“Seven new localities have recently been discovered for the Critically Endangered Carrizal Seedeater in the Caruachi region.”



Aerial photograph showing Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*) and Brown Noddy (*Anous stolidus*) colony captured from kite at Isla de Aves (VE001), Venezuela.
Photo: Rodrigo Lazo

The Threatened Species Initiative (IEA, in Spanish), coordinated by Conservation International and PROVITA, between 2003 and 2007 funded studies on the following threatened species: Red Siskin (*Carduelis cucullata*), Yellow-shouldered Amazon (*Amazona barbadensis*), Harpy Eagle (*Harpia harpyja*), Blue-crowned Parakeet (*Aratinga acuticaudata neoxena*). A study was also funded on the ecology of endemic and threatened species of the Serranía del Turimiquire (VE022). Three projects have been approved for 2008, on Clapper Rail (*Rallus longirostris*), Helmeted Curassow (*Pauxi pauxi*) and Northern Screamer (*Chauna chavaria*). For further information, see the PROVITA web page (<http://www.provitaonline.org>).

Black Noddy (*Anous minutus*) has been designated Critically Endangered by the Society

Yellow-shouldered Amazon (*Amazona barbadensis*) is present in 11 IBAs.
Photo: David Southall



The Near Threatened Venezuelan Wood-quail (*Odontophorus columbianus*) is currently being studied in Henri Pittier National Park (VE031).
Photo: David Southall

of Caribbean Ornithology (Schreiber 2000), it is also considered a rare species throughout the Caribbean by other authors, its total population for the whole region being estimated at 10–100 pairs (Chardine *et al.* 2000). However, at least 52 breeding pairs have been recorded in the Los Roques National Park and IBA (Esclasans 2003, Esclasans *et al.* 2009). Field work carried out in 2001 and 2002 has also confirmed that this IBA holds the second largest colony of Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) reported for the Caribbean (with at least 491 reproductive pairs). The main threat faced by these colonies of marine birds are removal of eggs by the inhabitants of the island.

Efforts are currently being made to consolidate and strengthen the Seabird Conservation Group in Venezuela, whose aims include obtaining information from the Venezuelan islands during a first phase and then from the Venezuelan coast. Rodrigo Lazo, a member of this group in Venezuela, has employed a new technique for counting seabirds involving a kite as a platform for obtaining aerial photographs of the colonies. Using this technique, he obtained detailed photographs of nesting areas of colonies in IBA Isla de Aves (VE001) in February 2007, facilitating counts of reproductive pairs. Censuses carried out in 2007 have confirmed that the IBA has the largest colony of Brown Noddy (*Anous stolidus*) described in the Caribbean (5509 pairs) as well as the principal colony of Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*) described for Venezuela (12,182 pairs).



Important Bird Areas AMERICAS

The Resident and Migratory Bird Monitoring Program in Paso de Portachuelo in the Henri Pittier National Park (VE031) has been implemented by the Venezuela Audubon Society since 1990 in collaboration with other NGOs. Over a period of 18 years of monitoring, more than 42,000 birds have been weighed, sexed, measured and banded. The long-term nature of the study has allowed long-term cyclical changes, rather than seasonal adjustments in bird populations to be observed. It is only from long-lasting studies such as these that measurable and comparable parameters are established with which to make valid projections. In addition to the biological information obtained, the program has been supported by volunteers and has served to train students, professionals and other actors interested in bird banding.

Among other initiatives that should be highlighted are the activities of Ecoturave, a civil society association which promotes observation and conservation of Venezuelan birds. The first group of specialized guides was trained in 2005, with support from the Venezuelan State (Tourism Corporation in the State of Anzoátegui) in the Laguna de Unare (IBA VE025). By means of this training program, local inhabitants of the region trained as guides have helped to raise awareness of the importance of the lake's conservation and maintenance for bird populations. For further information see the Ecoturave: www.ecoturave.org.ve



The Endangered Plain-flanked Rail (*Rallus wetmorei*) is endemic to a small stretch of Venezuela's northern coast where oil and housing development are threatening its mangrove habitat.
Photo: David Southall

Box 1

Education program in Los Roques aims to reduce theft of seabird eggs

Diana Esclasans and Juan Papadakis have been giving talks and organizing practical workshops since 2007 in the IBA Archipelago Los Roques (VE003) on issues such as the birds of Archipelago Los Roques, bird conservation and use of GPS in monitoring activities. The workshops have been supported by Fundación Científica Los Roques (<http://www.fundacion-losroques.org/>) as part of their environmental education program. Activities have focused on children and young people living in the area, with the aim of transmitting the importance of conserving the colonies of breeding marine birds in the Archipelago and understanding the effects of robbing eggs from their nests. The idea is to create awareness of this threat in the newer generations.



Training program for members of the "Brigada Ecológica" on Cayo Pirata, Los Roques.
Photo: Juan Papadakis.

Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*)
Photo: David Southall

Further information

Data sources

Information for this chapter was taken from BirdLife International & Conservation International (2005) and information in the World Bird Database.

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