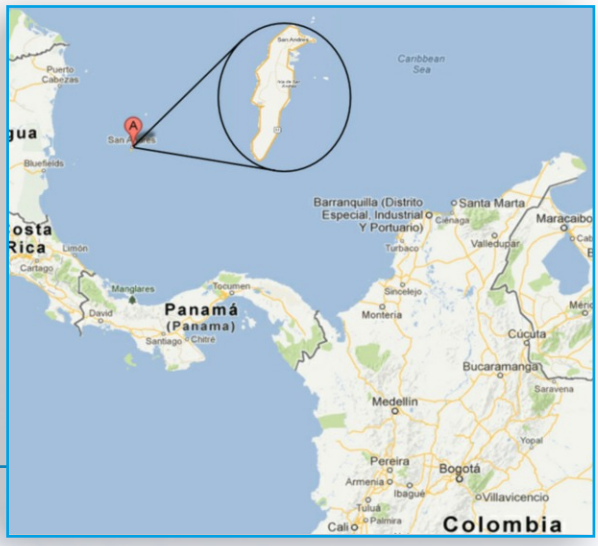
Factsheet

The Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Wider Caribbean (SPAW):

Seaflower Marine Protected Area

- A SPAW listed site -



Identification

Country: Colombia
Name of the area: Seaflower Marine Protected Area
Administrative region: San Andres Archipelago
Date of establishment: 1/27/2005
Geographic location:
Longitude X: -81.71751
Latitude Y: 12.555066
Date of listing under SPAW: 23 October 2012

Contacts:
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Introduction

The San Andres Archipelago includes 3 small inhabited islands and a number of uninhabited small cays, atolls, banks, and reefs extending for more than 500 km in the Southwestern Caribbean. The largest island and center of government, San Andres (SAI), is about 800 km northwest of Colombia and 100 km east of Nicaragua. Old Providence and Santa Catalina (OPSC) are 80 km north of San Andres. The Seaflower Marine Protected Area (MPA) is part of the Seaflower Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO 2000), which encompasses the total area of the archipelago. The MPA was designed to implement biosphere reserve objectives in significant marine and coastal ecosystems and includes the largest, most productive open-ocean coral reefs in the Caribbean.

The MPA includes 2,000 km2 of coral reefs, atolls, mangroves and seagrass beds, including: (i) the barrier and fringing reefs, lagoons, seagrass beds, and mangroves circling the inhabited islands; (ii) Courtown (ESE Cay) - a kidney-shaped atoll 6.4 km by 3.5 km; (iii) Albuquerque (SSW Cay) - a circular atoll with a diameter over 8 km; (iv) Roncador - an atoll 15 km by 7 km with a 12-km reef to windward and 30 km2 of live coral coverage; (v) Serrana - an atoll 36 km long and 15 km wide with a complex reef system 37 km by 30 km, with 75 km2 live coral coverage; and (vi) Quitasueño (Queena) - the archipelago's largest coral structure, 60 km long and 10 to 20 km wide with a 40-km reef wall and 496 km2 of live coral coverage (see annex for maps).

SPAW criteria met

Ecological criteria
- ☑ Representatividad
- ☑ Valor de conservación
- ☐ Rareza
- ☐ Naturalidad
- ☐ Hábitats críticos
- ☐ Diversidad
- ☐ Conectividad/coherencia
- ☐ Resiliencia

Cultural and socio-economic criteria
- ☐ Productividad
- ☑ Uso cultural y tradicional
- ☐ Beneficios socio económicos

Seaflower Marine Protected Area

Site description

General features of the site

Size: 65000 sq. Km

Terrestrial surface under sovereignty, excluding wetlands: 650 sq. Km

Wetland surface: 250 ha

Marine surface: 65000 sq. km

National status of your protected area: MPA

Marine ecoregion: 67. Caribe del Suroueste

Management structure, authority

Minister of Environment, Housing, and Territorial Development

Management plan

The Seaflower MPA and Integrated Management Plan (IMP) were developed in collaboration with local stakeholders, especially those who live off the marine resources such as artisanal fishers and watersports operators, along with other institutions with jurisdiction in the marine area. Not only were stakeholders consulted and involved every step of the way, but they had final decisionmaking power; meaning that they reached consensus and signed formal agreements on MPA objectives, zoning, and management structure.

The general goal of the new project is to fully implement the MPA's Integrated Management Plan (IMP). The project's specific objectives are: 1) to implement effective adaptive management in collaboration with stakeholders and in accordance with the IMP; 2) to design and implement sustainable financial mechanisms for the long-term funding of MPA management; 3) to render key economic activities in the archipelago compatible with the objectives, guidelines, and regulations set out in the IMP and associated plans; and 4) to implement a management-oriented monitoring and analysis system that supports adaptive management and informed decision-making.

- Draft Seaflower MPA Integrated Management Plan (IMP), Parts I (background), II (management), and III (operations) completed and under participatory review by stakeholders and technical experts
- Key Species Conservation Action Plans (shore and sea birds, lobster, sharks, and conch)
- Seaflower MPA management structure in place, including Stakeholder and Institutional Advisory Committees with formal agreements 2005

Main fauna populations and/or those of particular importance present (resident or migratory) in the area:

Seaflower MPA contains some of the largest, most productive and diverse coral ecosystems in the region. With respect to scleractinian coral species, Seaflower supports 48 documented species (of approximately 60-70 species known to exist in the Caribbean). There are at least 54 species of octocorals, including 3 black coral species and 11 undescribed species, with possible high endemism. A total of 44 species of octocorals was identified at Old Providence alone, the highest species diversity in the western Caribbean according to Sanchez et al. (1998). The highest gorgonian density in the Colombian Caribbean (up to 22 colonies per m2) was recorded in 2003 at Roncador (Heinemann et al. 2004).

Seaflower has documented just over 300 fish species, of which there is one known endemic fish. A total of 124 sponge species have also been documented. Little research has been conducted on other invertebrates such as molluscs, crustaceans, echinoderms, and tunicates. Of data available, there are at least 2 zoanthid species, 2 anemone species, 3 sea jelly species, 17 echinoderm species, 23 crustacean species, 28 mollusc species, 1 tunicate species and 5 annelid species. The mangroves are home to an endemic mud turtle, and beaches provide nesting sites for 4 marine turtle species.

The Seaflower Biosphere Reserve (which includes the Seaflower MPA) has been classified a secondary Endemic Bird Area and declared an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International. Of the 155 total bird species, 21 are classified as shorebirds and 22 as seabirds (see Annex 4).

Inhabitants inside the area or in the zone of potential direct impact on the protected area:

Not given.

International status and Date of designation

Biosphere reserve: Yes 1/1/00

Ramsar site: No

Significant bird area yes 1/1/04

World heritage site (UNESCO): No

Others: no

Links

- PA LISTING : www.spaw-palisting.org
- CaMPAM : http://campam.gcfi.org/campam.php
- UNEP-CEP : www.cep.unep.org/
- SPAW-RAC : www.car-spaw-rac.org