

Venezuela: Cerro El Copey National Park

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Date of most recent on-site evaluation: September 2002

Date posted: November 2002

Location: Nueva Esparta State

Year created: 1974

Area: 7,130 ha

Ecoregion: Paria and Araya xerophitic shrubs

Habitat: Low to mid semi-deciduous piedmont forests, evergreen forests, evergreen montane shrubs.



Summary

Description

Cerro El Copey National Park is located in the highest mountain region of Nueva Esparta State, on the eastern side of Margarita Island. It was created in 1974 to protect an outstanding landscape feature harboring various plant communities, high levels of endemism, and the island's only permanent water source. Desert plains surround the park and in spite of its low elevation (1000 m), northeastern winds carry enough humidity to maintain evergreen forests and montane shrubs. Semi-deciduous and dry forests dominate the lower parts of the park, where plantations and local communities are already occasionally infringing on the park's boundaries. A proposal to double the area of the park was recently issued.

Biodiversity

Cerro El Copey is a significant area of species endemism. Four mammal subspecies have their principal natural refuge in this park. Four out of the 67 bird species living in the park are endemic to Margarita Island. Two vertebrate subspecies (one mammal and one bird) are critically endangered. Cerro El Copey's flora is very similar to that of the Coastal Mountain Range. There are reports of nine endemic species from different plant groups. Cerro Copey is named after a common shrub on the island (of the *Clusia* genus).

Threats

In spite of a good conservation status and reliable management team, the existence of Cerro El Copey National Park, is threatened by the serious budget crisis currently affecting INPARQUES. A summary of the primary threats to this protected area includes: insufficient personnel, lack of infrastructure, inadequate budget and research, presence of exotic species, poaching, rapid growth of the surrounding communities, land use changes, forest fires and incorrect zoning of the antenna area. For all these reasons, Cerro El Copey National Park is considered [vulnerable](#).

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Description

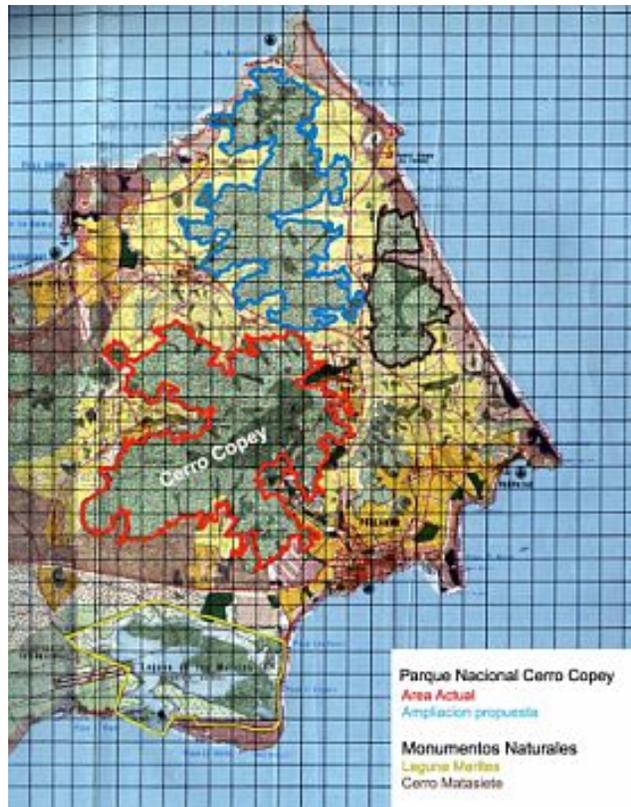
Physical description

Cerro El Copey National Park (also known as Jovito Villalba in memory of a famous local politician), is located on the eastern side of Margarita, Nueva Esparta State, between 10°57'34" and 11°04'18" north latitude and 63°51'31" and 63°18'08" west longitude. It protects the island's largest and tallest mountain formation, the Oriental Sierra, which summits at 960 m above sea level. The park contains the only permanent waterway on the island, River Asunción. Due to its elevation, Cerro El Copey constitutes a green oasis amidst an arid environment dominated by xerophitic shrubs, halophilous grasslands and dry forests, which characterize the Araya and Paria Xeric scrubland ecoregion (World Wildlife Fund 2001). While average annual rainfall on the rest of the island is under 400 mm, the park receives between 600 and 1,000 mm, depending on the altitude. June through August and November through January are the months that receive the majority of precipitation (MARN 1994, PDVSA 1995). Similarly, the average annual temperature inside the park (between 18 and 24 °C) is up to 9 °C below that of the rest of the island. These conditions have led to the development of plant communities normally found at higher elevations. In fact, the park's floristic composition shares many similarities with the Coastal Mountain Range (Huber 1999). The foothills are covered by semi-deciduous piedmont forest up to 300m, followed by a submontane evergreen forest up to 620m and mountain range is topped by montane evergreen shrubs, which extend to the highest elevations (Huber 1999).



Satellite image of Margarita Island's Eastern Mountain Range. Cerro El Copey National Park can be seen in the center, Cerros Matasiete-Guayamurí Natural Monument in the northeast, the city of Porlamar in the southeast and Marites Lagoon Natural Monument in the south. There is intense urban development on the flat lands surrounding the park. The mountain range continues to the north, an area which should soon be included in the existing National Park. PDVSA 1992

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Map of Cerro El Copey National Park and surrounding protected areas. The blue line indicates the proposed park enlargement. Modified from Ministry of Public Works 1973, in Hoyos 1985.

Formed in the early Cretaceous period, Cerro El Copey is composed of igneo-metamorphic rocks. The relief is highly fractured, with lesser slope gradients towards the foothills. Urban settlements have developed on the surrounding plains, which are covered with tertiary and quaternary sediments (PDVSA 1995). This is where La Asunción, Nueva Esparta's State capital, and Porlamar, the most important commercial area, are located. The park's main access is through the village of La Sierra, which lies within the park's boundaries. A 4 km-long road connects La Sierra to the highest peak, where several private phone and television companies, the Venezuelan Air Force and the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) have antennas.



View from Margarita's highest point (960m). Although at an elevation of only 960 m, the flora here resembles the flora found on the peaks of the Coastal Mountain Range (over 2,600 m).

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Cerro El Copey benefits from being located in the only Venezuelan state that actually complies with its land ordinance plan. As an indication of this, Nueva Esparta is the country's most intensely mapped state (1:5,000 scale maps) and displays the highest proportion of protected areas. Isla Margarita's three natural monuments and two national parks cover 35% of the island's territory. There is currently a plan to enlarge Cerro El Copey National Park in order to include all of the El Copey mountain range.

Biodiversity

Isla Margarita and particularly Cerro El Copey are especially important with respect to the numbers of endemic species they harbor. The island was connected to mainland until the Pleistocene. As a result, there is a predominance of typical continental bird families like Tinamidae, Dendrocolaptidae, Formicariidae and Furnariidae (Bisbal 2001), which are for example totally absent from the Antilles. 31 mammal species are found on the island, four of which (the red-tailed squirrel *Sciurus granatensis nesaeus*, the eastern cottontail rabbit *Sylvilagus floridanus margaritae*, the white-tailed deer *Odocoileus virginianus margaritae*, and the capuchin monkey *Cebus apella margaritae*) are endemic subspecies, with the main populations located inside the national park. The Margarita capuchin monkey is considered to be the country's most threatened primate species and is critically endangered (Rodríguez and Rojas-Suárez 1999).



The red-legged tinamou (Crypturellus erythropus margaritae), is endemic to the park and is critically endangered (Illustration: Mercedes Madríz).

The park has 67 reported bird species (Rojas-Suárez et al. 1998) four of which are endemic to the island: the ferruginous pygmy owl *Glaucidium brasilianum margaritae*, the pale-breasted spinetail *Synallaxis albescens nesiotes*, Margarita's brown-throated parakeet *Aratinga pertinax margaritensis* and the yellow oriole *Icterus nigrogularis helioeides*. Two bird species are endemic to the Eastern mountain range: the copper-rumped hummingbird *Amazilia tobaci aliciae* and the buff-throated woodcreeper *Xiphorhynchus guttatus margaritae*. The red-legged tinamou (*Crypturellus erythropus margaritae*) is a critically endangered bird species that is endemic to the park (Rodríguez and Rojas-Suárez 1999). Cerro El Copey has some of the only remaining habitat in the entire island for the scaled antpitta (anteater) *Grallaria guatemalensis*, a widely distributed

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species in the country. Another species that is restricted to the Venezuelan Caribbean and found in Cerro El Copey is the Margarita's carib grackle *Quiscalus lugubris insularis* (Bisbal 2001).

Very little is known on Margarita's reptiles and amphibians (Bisbal 2001); however, two endemic snakes (*Drymarchon corais margaritae*, *Leptotyphlops albifrons margaritae*) have been reported on the island (INPARQUES 2001).

A total of 14 mosquito species unregistered in Nueva Esparta State were collected during sampling at Cerro El Copey National Park. One of these 14 species had never been observed in Venezuela (Navarro 1998). A more thorough investigation of the park's invertebrate community is urgently needed.

Cerro El Copey's flora follows elevation gradients and follows a very similar pattern to the one observed in the Coastal Mountain Range (Huber 1999). Low to mid-sized semi-deciduous forests 10 to 25 m in height are found between 200 and 600 meters above sea level. The arboreal strata is relatively dense and you can find species like the naked Indian or gumbo limbo *Bursera simaruba*, *Tabebuia billbergii*, *Croton multicostatus*, *Aspidosperma vargasii*, *Maytenus karstenii*, *Coccoloba coronata*, *Machaerium roboniifolium*, *Ximena americana*, *Neea anisophylla* and the copey (*Clusia major*). This altitudinal range is home to two endemic species (*Mikania johnstoni* and *Argythammia erubescen*). Slash-and burn farming and other agricultural activities have had a major impact on the forest cover and plant composition (Hoyos 1985, INPARQUES 2001, World Wildlife Fund 2001).



The lowest part of the park (between 200 and 600 m) is dominated by semi-deciduous piedmont forest.

The next altitudinal range (between 500 and 800 m) is covered by submontane evergreen forest with the canopy at an average height of 10-20 m. This is the home to such tree species as *Tabebuia chrysantha*, *Myrcianthes compressa*, *Margaritaria nobilis*, *Guapira ofersiana*, *Nectandra coriacea*, *Dendropanax arboreus*, *Inga macrantha*, *Eutherpe karsteniana*, *Bactris setulosa*, *Chrysobalanus icaco* and the endemic epiphytes *Croton margaritensis* and *Clerodendrum margaritense* (Hoyos 1985, INPARQUES 2001, World Wildlife Fund 2001).

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Ferns are common in evergreen forests ranging between 500 and 800 meters above sea level.

The montane evergreen shrubs, also called dwarf humid forests, are dominant above 800 m (Hoyos 1985). These forests are composed of shrubby-herbaceous vegetation up to 3 m high; major species are *Clusia flava*, *Blakea monticola*, *Clidemia hirta*, *Macleania nitida*, *Rapanea guayanensis*, and the terrestrial and epiphytic forms of the bromeliad *Glomeropitcairnia erectiflora* (Hoyos 1985).



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Ferns, grasses, bromeliads (Glomeropitcairnia erectiflora) and Clusia flava forests dominate the mountaintop. The small stature of the vegetation is due to wind action.

A total of nine endemic species from this altitudinal range have been reported for the park: *Bactris setulosa* and *Coccothrinax barbadense* (Palmae), *Blakea monticola* (Melastomataceae), *Inga micrantha* (Leguminosae-Mimosaceae), *Mikania johnstonii* (Compositae), *Epidendrum johnstonii* (Orchidiaceae), *Argythamnia erubescens*, *Croton margaritensis* (Euphorbiaceae) and *Clerodendron margaritense* (Verbenaceae) (Hoyos 1985). The bromeliad *Glomeropitcairnia erectiflora* is found only in Cerro El Copey, Paria and Trinidad. Some species such as *Gettarda odorata*, *G. scabra*, *Cyathea arborea* and *Nectandra coriacea*, are commonly found in the Antilles but have never been reported for continental Venezuela (Hoyos 1985).

Management

Cerro El Copey' land use zoning plan and code was written in 1991 and has since been revised and updated. A second revision is currently under way, which contemplates an increase in the park's area and the exclusion of the village of La Sierra. Seven land-use categories have been defined:

- Integral Protection Zone: includes 2,000 ha (28% of the park) above an elevation of 300 m altitude, this area is dominated by cloud- and transition forests. Access is restricted and the only permitted uses are research and monitoring activities under the supervision of INPARQUES.
- Primitive Zone: Includes most of the area between the park boundaries and the Integral Protection Zone. With 4,650 ha, it is the park's largest category, predominantly covered by transition forests.
- Management Zone: Includes the road going from El Valle del Espíritu Santo to the communication antennas topping Cerro El Copey.
- Leisure Zone: There are two Leisure Zones, one in the higher part of the village of Fuentidueño and the other around the Félix Gómez Interpretation Center.
- Service Zone: Includes INPARQUES' offices, located in the Félix Gómez Interpretation Center and accessible via the roadway leading to the antennas.
- Special Use Zone: Composed of the areas subjected to human activities contrary to the park's objectives and which have been assigned a special form of management. These are:

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- La Sierra sector: Composed of the village of La Sierra and surroundings, as well as the road leading to La Asunción, for a total area of 211 ha in the park's lowest ranges.
- The Antenna sector: Covers a 1.2 ha area at the park's highest point and is there is open-access permitted to institutions who installed antennas.
- Valle del Espíritu Santo sector: Covering 25 ha in the park's lowest ranges, including the road uniting La Sierra with El Valle.
- Power Lines: Composed of the 10 m wide, 6.2 km long stretches crossing the primitive zone through the Cerros of Guaraguao, El Piache and El Güire, towards the southern and southeastern area of the park.

The park's management team is composed of seven rangers, a driver, an administrative employee and a secretary. Management is under the supervision of a superintendent (Licenciada Lídice González), who carries out control, monitoring and administrative activities. However, many of these people are also responsible for two other leisure parks and three natural monuments. Most personnel have occupied this position for more than eight years and come from nearby towns. The only ranger outpost is located in the Félix Gómez Information Center. The park can be accessed through the road leading to the telecommunication station, through a dirt road coming from Tacarigua-El Cujisal and from the Fuentidueño, Palma Real and San Antonio del Norte sectors. However, given present installations only the main road is being controlled. The park has a four wheel drive vehicle and two motorcycles.

In 2001, the monthly budget assigned by INPARQUES for the management of Cerro El Copey was 300,000 Bs. (US \$ 200). By the time of our evaluation, the park had still not received any funding from the central administration for the 2002 fiscal year, and staff had not been paid for several months.



The only park ranger station is also the only visitor center and serves as a toll booth for access to the antennas.

Human Influence

Park inhabitants

The park contains two human settlements: La Sierra (152 houses) and El Chorro (16 houses). Both

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are composed of modest income families with little or no formal education. The main activities of these non-native people are commerce and labor jobs outside of the park. La Sierra is the largest settlement and occupies approx. 221 ha of the park's territory, including a hospital. The fields and lots of individuals from neighboring communities like Tacarigua and Fuentidueño were included in the park at its creation and have been extended in recent years. However, INPARQUES and the Nueva Esparta State Territorial Land Use Zoning Committee exert relatively strict control on the activities performed in the park and its surroundings. From this strict control, Margarita Island benefits as the country's most intensely mapped area; the entire island has been mapped on a 1:5,000 scale. The island also enjoys the largest proportion of protected areas in Venezuela. There is a project - currently under revision - to increase the size of the park and eliminate a large portion of the 221 ha now occupied by the La Sierra settlement. The new area to be included is currently uninhabited.



View of La Sierra. Most of the population lives inside the park limits, which includes areas with no vegetation cover.

Tourism

Margarita is Venezuela's most important tourism destination, receiving up to one million visitors annually (MARN 1994). The main attractions are the beaches, nightclubs and casinos. Regardless of its enormous natural beauty, nature tourism is very rare on the island. The nature tourism that exists is concentrated in La Restinga Lagoon National Park. However, due to its milder climate and beautiful forests, Cerro El Copey attracts many local inhabitants who come to exercise and enjoy the magnificent views on weekends. Some foreign tourists may also visit the park during one-day tours of the entire island. The village of Fuentidueño, to the west of the park, is famous for its nature tourism activities and guided tours to the park's various waterfalls and lagoons. Some tour agencies have included the park in their packages. In spite of all this, less than 100 people are reported to be visiting the park on a high-season weekend. Recently, however, the number of daily morning exercisers has increased. According to a newspaper article, 16,000 people visited the park's leisure area in 2001. The park has beautiful sites and the potential for ecotourism plans that would directly benefit its management.

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People from Margarita go to Cerro El Copey daily to get some exercise.



Leisure Zone visitor installations.

Conservation and research

Very little scientific research or conservation activities are being conducted in the park. However, the flora is relatively well known and a bird species list has been published by Provita (Rojas-Suárez et al. 1998). There is also a vertebrate inventory for the entire island (Bisbal 2001) and a study of the park's mosquito species, in which 14 species were reported that had never been observed on the island (Navarro 1998). Sanz and Márquez (1991) and Martínez et al. (2001) considered conservation of the endangered white-faced monkey (*Cebus apella margaritae*), which figure on the list of endangered species. Because of the park's importance as a refuge and remnant habitat for the island's wildlife, biological and ecological research efforts should be increased.

Threats

- Population growth and land use changes
- Hunting
- Forest fires
- Lack of personnel and infrastructure
- Lack of funding
- Presence of telecommunication antennas
- Exotic species introduction
- Lack of research and outreach

Current threats

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Population growth and land use changes

Since the creation of the park, settlements within the park have grown at a steady pace and are encroaching on areas that were still totally unoccupied in 1974. Farms that bordered the park have extended their surface area usage, and the construction of roads has led to the development of other services. This situation improved to some extent in 1991, when the park's management plan was decreed. However by that time, the La Sierra sector was already highly affected, which led to its classification as a special use zone. Since 1991, INPARQUES has maintained relatively strict control on further development, especially concerning construction and the modification of existing dwellings. In addition to this, the park now benefits from the low tolerance for immigrants displayed by the locals, which keeps immigration at very low levels. Nevertheless, the landscape around La Sierra's landscape does not correspond to that of a protected area. A private clinic and a restaurant for tourists were recently added to the picture. The latter generated a great deal of animosity among the town's inhabitants, since INPARQUES prohibits them to make changes to their houses. It should be noted that the restaurant project never received INPARQUES' approval. The State governor, a personal friend of the restaurant owner and previous president of the country, ordered its construction.



The hospital center and its surroundings are located inside the national park.



The restaurant's illegal construction caused a lot of resentment among INPARQUES employees and inhabitants of La Sierra.



The waste generated by the inhabitants of La Sierra causes sanitary problems and affects the park's scenic value.

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The villages of Tacarigua and San Luis have some of their shifting cultivation plots inside the park, and these have not been relocated since the park's creation. INPARQUES maps and keeps records of the amount of land utilized and the type of crop cultivated. Tacarigua specializes in the production of a variety of tomato called margariteño, while San Luis and Fuentidueño farmers concentrate on corn and fruits.



View of some agricultural plots inside the park.

Hunting

People from La Sierra, El Chorro and other nearby villages, hunt within the park's boundaries. The impact of this activity on the local fauna has not been evaluated. The superintendent believes deer and rabbits are the preferred game; both of these subspecies are endemic to the island. Hunting is practiced both for subsistence and commercial reasons. It is common for Margarita inhabitants to have deer as pets (Rosa Moscarella, pers. com.).

Traps and lures are used in Tacarigua town to catch doves (eared dove, *Zenaida auriculata*, and the common ground dove, *Columbina passerina*). Monitoring activities were able to eradicate 70% of the installed traps. Towards the end of 2001, the hunters attacked the rangers after they destroyed 80 traps, which angered hunters, who attacked them on one occasion.

Forest Fires

The park does not have sufficient equipment, personnel or material to halt forest fires. In 2001, about 30 ha were destroyed by 15 fires. This figure may seem insignificant, but with its 7,130 ha, Cerro El Copey is among the smallest national parks in the country. The proportion of land affected by fire in Cerro El Copey is comparable to El Ávila National Park for the same year; El Ávila is one of the most severely impacted of Venezuelan national parks ([See news](#)). The Firemen and National Guard do not appear to be providing much help.

Lack of personnel and infrastructure

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Cerro El Copey has seven park rangers, who are also in charge of the islands other protected areas. Even though most of them have worked in this area for more than eight years, Casto Rivas, the most experienced park guard, just retired due to lack of professional stimulus and salary problems. After 18 years of service and pursuing studies in environmental educational, this ranger was never promoted nor rewarded with salary increases. He is now a schoolteacher. At present, no new park ranger is being trained.

There is only one vehicle and one ranger station, which is insufficient for controlling the areas surrounding Fuentidueño, Tacarigua and other communities with access to the park. Even though there is a plan to increase the size of the park, the park is currently short on personnel, logistical support, and sufficient infrastructure to guarantee the adequate functioning of a larger park.

Lack of funding

INPARQUES is currently going through a serious budget crisis, which threatens to paralyze national parks around the entire country ([See News](#)), Cerro El Copey is no exception. Most personnel receive salaries less than 35,000 Bs. per month (~ US\$ 23), and this is used to pay for park expenses such as gasoline and other maintenance costs. The superintendent spends approximately half her salary in park related activities. INPARQUES does not have the money to pay for overtime or night shift bonuses. Park staff suffers from a total lack of motivation, which is evident in their work and the park's protection. Nightly shifts are no longer implemented and only a minimum amount of park surveillance during the day. At one point, surveillance operations were in place 24 hours a day, but this has been limited to between 7 am and 4 pm. The leisure area cannot provide the services it advertises and users are displeased by the absence of bathrooms and the poor state of the trails. Vehicle access to the road leading to the telecommunication antennas has recently been restricted due to poor maintenance. (The maintenance of this road is not only the responsibility of INPARQUES but also of the Ministry of Infrastructure (Minfra), Nueva Esparta's local government and Nueva Esparta's Roadway and Transport Institute). A commission was recently named to carry out the maintenance operations.

Telecommunication antennas

The Venezuelan National Telephone Company (CANTV), a formerly state-owned company, built a telecommunication antenna station on the island's highest peak, which now happens to lie in the middle of the Cerro El Copey National Park. As long as it was state-owned and CANTV had jurisdiction over the antennas and the land set aside for their installation, there had been no conflict with park interests. But the company's privatization led to an authority problem in the area. Several television and telephone companies, the Venezuelan Air Force and the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) currently own antennas at this station. It is actually a paradox that a geographic area involving national security interests could be placed under the jurisdiction of a private company. INPARQUES' personnel occasionally suffer the consequences of having these antennas in the park and their station on the road leading to them. During the country's recent coup in April, people trying to sever communication with the island violently removed park employees from their workplace. Trespassers that install illegal communication equipment also represent a threat to the staff's (and visitor's) security.

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A private company has jurisdiction over the antenna station, which suffers from inadequate zoning.

Introduction of Exotic Species

Margarita islanders are very fond of pets, most of which were taken from the wild. Apparently, populations of weeper capuchin (*Cebus olivaceus*) have been brought from the mainland and released in certain locations on Margarita, such as Cerro El Copey. This represents a great threat to the endemic and endangered populations of *Cebus apella margaritae* (Martínez et al. 2001).

Lack of research and outreach

It is strange that a park of such importance as a refuge for endemic and threatened species should not be studied more thoroughly, especially with respects to biodiversity inventories of invertebrates and other taxa. Similarly, even though islanders recognize Cerro El Copey as a tourism attraction and respect it as a national park, they do not show much interest in park-related activities. With the exception of Fuentidueño inhabitants, who show an inclination towards nature tourism, local inhabitants need to be motivated in order to become advocates of the park and participate in its protection, especially those who live or cultivate crops inside Cerro El Copey.

Future Threats

Park enlargement

The enlargement of the park is not a threat in itself. However, in order for it to be successful, budget problems need to be solved and the number of park rangers and vehicles must be increased, along with improvement of the existing infrastructure as the park increases in size.

Recommended solutions

Current Threats

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Population growth and land use changes

These various processes started a long time ago and were mostly halted by the drafting and implementation of the land use zoning plan; however, many problems remain to be solved. Fortunately, INPARQUES has a word to say in the Nueva Esparta State Territorial Ordinance Commission, where decisions are taken after achievement of a consensus among the various participants. INPARQUES is currently finishing its proposal to increase the park's size and exclude impacted areas like La Sierra and its surroundings. A similar action should be taken to address the agricultural plots inside the park, but with INPARQUES' current budget crisis, the relocation and reforestation of these areas is not possible.

Budget, Hunting and Forest fires

The park's main problem is the inadequate budget. This problem results in a severe lack of infrastructure, personal motivation and sufficient personnel, decreased surveillance and an increase in hunting and fire pressures. The inadequate budget has affected the park for a long time, and the budget size is the consequence of a lack of political will from the various governments and INPARQUES's weak institutional capacity, which is forced to accept smaller budgets year after year. Due to budget restraints and the country's current political crisis, the only solution might be to draw the government's and the public's attention to the fact that all conservation activities will come to a halt if the situation does not change soon. The government will continue to believe that parks can function with a reduced budget as long as the superintendents and park rangers continue to pay park expenses out of their pockets. The only way INPARQUES will receive the budget it deserves is by proving the parks can no longer function with present budgets.

Personnel and infrastructure

The park holds a great potential for the development of nature trails and recreation areas for visitors and local schools. The island's appeal to visitors should be taken advantage of in order to promote nature tourism in the park. Fuentidueño people have some valuable experience in this field and could become instrumental in generating income for the park, which could help improve the services provided to visitors and the relationship with the local community. Along the same lines, initial investment in infrastructure improvements could come from tour agencies willing to provide these services within a concession-based system. The creation of new recreation or service areas in the park would result in the creation of employment. A way to increase personnel without cost to INPARQUES would be to form alliances with the Mayor or other sectors of local government.

Antennas

The antenna area should be declared a security zone in order to solve the current authority problem. This is compatible with the objectives and characteristics of the park. A governmental agency, like the Venezuelan Air Force, could take charge of the management and security of the land surrounding the antennas. This could be combined with surveillance activities that would benefit the park and relieve INPARQUES from certain costs and risks to its personnel.

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Lack of research and outreach, exotic species introduction

In order to solve a number of problems currently faced by the park, a thorough research program should be implemented. This could also raise interest for the park's ecologic potential. The Ministry of Science and Technology has an agenda with funds for this purpose; however, superintendents of individual parks must explicitly state their needs. Similarly, the existence of Cerro El Copey National Park should become familiar to islanders and to the thousands of tourists that visit the island each year. This could be done at relatively low cost by designing and printing flyers and through televised campaigns in educational or commercial tourism programs.

Conclusion

Cerro El Copey is not only a well conserved and relatively undisturbed park, it also has a skilled management team, both at the park and at the local government level (i.e. within the land ordinance commission). The park currently projects to increase its size, and exclude a large portion of the most highly impacted area due to the settlements occupying its interior. The various endemic and endangered species it harbors demonstrate a high biodiversity value. However, due to INPARQUES' perpetual budget crisis the park's management is threatened and as a result, the existence of the protected area is uncertain. We therefore classify Cerro El Copey National Park as vulnerable.

Links

[Ministerio de Ciencia y Tecnología](#)

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