RIO PLATANO

Biopshere at Risk:
How Bad Can it Be?

Located on the watershed
of the Río Plátano,
this biosphere reserve
is one of the few remains
of a tropical rainforest
in Central America...

...with an abundant and
varied plant and wildlife.

The 5 Largest Remaining Wild Areas of Central America

Roatan
Rio Platano Biosphere
La Ceiba
Tegucigalpa

Belize
Coxen Hole
Trujillo
La Ceiba
Tocoa
San Pedro Sula
Reserva
Biológica
Río Plátano
Honduras
Catacamas
Juticalpa
Comayagua
Reserva
Biológica
Cayos Miskitos
Tegucigalpa
Santa Ana
Danli
Reserva
Natural
Bosawás
El Salvador
San Miguel
Esteli
Nicaragua
Chinandega
León

Rio Platano

This is why is is nicknamed
the “Lungs”
of Central America.

The Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve is one of Central America's largest protected areas,

…comprising 7% of Honduras and additional coastal waters.

Mangrove and freshwater swamps and marshes, sedge prairie, pine savanna, and subtropical wet forests dwell side by side in the reserve.

Emergent Layer
Canopy Layer
Understory Layer
Immature Layer
Herb Layer
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Fauna is of high diversity – many of which are threatened species.

In its landscape, over 2,000 indigenous people have preserved their traditional way of life.

The biosphere reserve is also an Amerindian archaeological preserve.

This region was omce mainly occupied by the indigenous Miskito people.

Other inhabitants belong to three basic cultural groups:

the Garífunas (Afro-Caribbeans)

...the Pesch (Paya) Amerindian

...and "ladinos" (mestizos).

The west side of the reserve’s frontier, pressured by small farmers and cattle ranchers, is already seeing a reduction of the reserve's forest area and natural habitat for wildlife.

There is still a strong immigration from overpopulated, impoverished areas of the rest of Honduras.

Ladinos often use damaging farming practices such as “slash and burn.”

There is also significant pressure to use the reserve's natural lumber resources, with particular interest in logging the lowland’s hardwoods.

The southern zone of the reserve is also subject to massive extraction of precious wood such as mahogany.

Uncontrolled commercial hunting of wild animals is also practiced in an around this biosphere.

Hunting and trafficking for the exotic pet market are significantly reducing the populations of many species of game animals.

Many species that are classified as “globally rare” or “threatened”
live in habitats here, including the tapir, manatee, jaguar, ocelot, cougar, spider monkey, and giant anteater.

The most serious present problem for the reserve’s integrity is the cattle frontier advancing from the southwest.

In order to save the preserve’s future, special interest groups will be forced to work cooperatively
to carefully plan for the sustainable use of the resources.

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Sources:
UNESCO World Heritage Center
World Heritage Outlook & Database
World Atlas.com
Oregon State University
(Landsat imagery)

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