



Panama Bay developers threaten to break the chain of shorebird stopover sites

Title

One of the most important coastal wetlands in the Americas is under threat. The Upper Bay of Panama, an Important Bird Area, is a vital stopover site for migrating shorebirds. Up to two million individuals of 30 species use it on their way south after breeding.

The bay was declared a Ramsar site (Wetland of International Importance) in 2003, and included in the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network in 2005. In 2009, over 80,000 ha of the Panama Bay Wetland became a National Protected Area. However, in May this year, legal protected status was withdrawn because of pressure for urban and resort development, including hotels and golf courses. At the same time, regulations on mangrove cutting have been relaxed. Developers are reported to be at work within the Ramsar site boundary.

The bay provides essential ecosystem services to the people of Panama. It acts as a “nursery” for fish and shellfish, contributing \$86 million a year to the country’s economy in commercial fishing revenues. The wetlands and mangroves also filter and purify sewage and industrial effluent, preventing them entering the marine food chain, and act as a buffer protecting the city from flooding and extreme weather.

Act today and write your concerns to the Panamanian government.

BirdLife Partner the Panama Audubon Society and a coalition of local and international environmental groups including National Audubon (BirdLife Partner in the USA) are taking

legal action for protected status to be restored, and working with local communities to make sure their voices are heard.

“If these wetlands are lost, you break the chain of wetlands shorebirds need for successful migrations”, says Rosabel Miro, Panama Audubon’s executive director.

“This sets a dangerous precedent, not just for Panama but for the entire region”, warned Matt Jeffery, senior manager of National Audubon’s International Alliance’s Program.

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