

Protected status for Panama Bay reinstated by court ruling

Title

[The Bay of Panama](#), one of the most important sites for migratory waterbirds in the Americas, has received a reprieve from destructive development. The Panamanian Supreme Court has reinstated the protected status for the Bay of Panama wetlands, removing the temporary suspension it had placed on the protected area a year ago.

“The announcement of the Supreme Court is a good first step, but their final decision is still pending”, said Rosabel Miró, Executive Director of Panama Audubon Society. “Continuing threats to the site remain, and we will continue our work with international agreements such as the Ramsar Convention to make sure this reprieve becomes permanent.”

The BirdLife Partnership is cautiously celebrating this new development after months of lobbying the Panamanian Government.

The Bay of Panama is one of the five most important stopover and wintering areas for migratory shorebirds in the entire Americas, with more than 30% of the global population of [Western Sandpiper](#) and 22% of the global population of [Whimbrel](#).

Its extensive mangrove forests play a vital role in supporting fisheries, filtering pollutants in urban and agricultural runoff, and protecting Panama City from floods. The Mangroves and wetlands of Panama Bay are also vital to other globally threatened wildlife including Jaguar, Tapir, Spider Monkey, American Crocodile, and Loggerhead Sea Turtle and support the fishing industry for the country. Essential wildlife habitats are being filled at an alarming rate to make way for cheap housing, high-end recreational developments and industrial zones.

While Panama Bay was recognised as a Globally Important Bird Area and a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar convention, the Bay’s protected status was reversed by Federal officials in Panama in April 2012.

The Bay of Panama Ramsar Site, which has the same boundaries as the Bay of Panama protected area, will be under discussion later this week by the Ramsar Standing Committee.