



MINISTERIO DE
AMBIENTE Y ENERGÍA

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Organización para Estudios Tropicales



Transición hacia una
**economía
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A new Protected Area category in Costa Rica

Nature Urban Park

and the benefits for biodiversity and human health

¿What is an Nature Urban Park (PANU)?

A PANU is the newest category of protected wildlife area in Costa Rica, conceptualized for the protection, management, rehabilitation and use of green spaces in urban areas. It includes terrestrial or coastal ecosystems of scenic, biological, recreational and ecotourism value, which are important for ecosystem conservation and human well-being (Executive Decree No. 42742-MINAE).

In accordance with the IUCN Guidelines for Applying Protected Areas Management Categories, PANUs correspond to Category IV, which is characterized by areas that have undergone substantial modifications and require the protection of remaining fragments with or without intervention.



PANU: A NEW CATEGORY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL URBAN PROTECTION

- The legal framework of a PANU was established through **Decree No. 42742-MINAE**, in February 2021
- **Two PANUs have being created:**
 - **Simón Bolívar Nature Urban Park Executive**
Decree No. 44896-MINAE, 18th February 2025
 - **Lorne Ross Nature Urban Park Executive**
Decree: No. 45316-MINAE, 2nd December 2025



Photo: Giancarlo Pucci

SIMÓN BOLÍVAR



Photo: Ana Lobo - PNUD



Photo: Mika Fletcher

URBAN CLIMATE REFUGEE

NATURE URBAN PARK SIMÓN BOLÍVAR



It was a State Zoo until May 2024 and will be transformed into an urban protected wildlife area, for the conservation and regeneration of fragile and scarce ecosystems in the city.

*Source: Technical Proposal for a Protected Wild Area and allocation of management category of the Simón Bolívar Park (SINAC, 2023), with support and financing from the Transition to an Urban Green Economy (TEVU) Project (TEVU-OET-GEF-PNUD).

GEOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS*

Location: El Carmen district, San José
Area: 2.63 ha
Forest cover: 2.13 ha
Altitude: 1,150 m.a.s.l.
Topography: bordered by the Torres river, steep slopes that range between 25% and 90%

FAUNA RICHNESS

At least 164 species registered
6 with reduced populations and
2 endangered (Golden-eyed Leaf
Frog and Yellow-naped Parrot)

FLORA RICHNESS

93 species (35 families) registered
5 endangered and 3 threatened
Species banned as Cristobal
(*Platymiscium parviflorum*) and
Caoba (*Swietenia macrophylla*)

Accessible
Biodiverse
Historical
Environmental education



Attractive and
potential focal
management
elements

Botanical garden,
riparian forest and
representative species
of the premontane
humid forest of the
Central Valley such as the
Mauria heterophylla
(Cirrí Colorado)

Historical architectural
heritage and natural
history museum

Urban Wetland

Home of the endangered
Golden eyed Leaf Frog
(*Agalychnis annae*)

Urban climate refugee
in the center of the
capital city

The Management Plan was developed
through the TEVU Project.

Photo: lateja.cr



L O R N E R O S S

Photo: Michal Slany



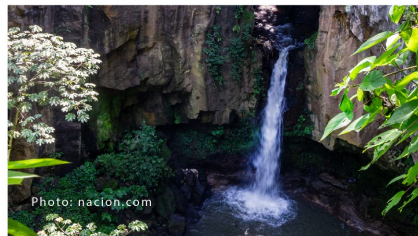
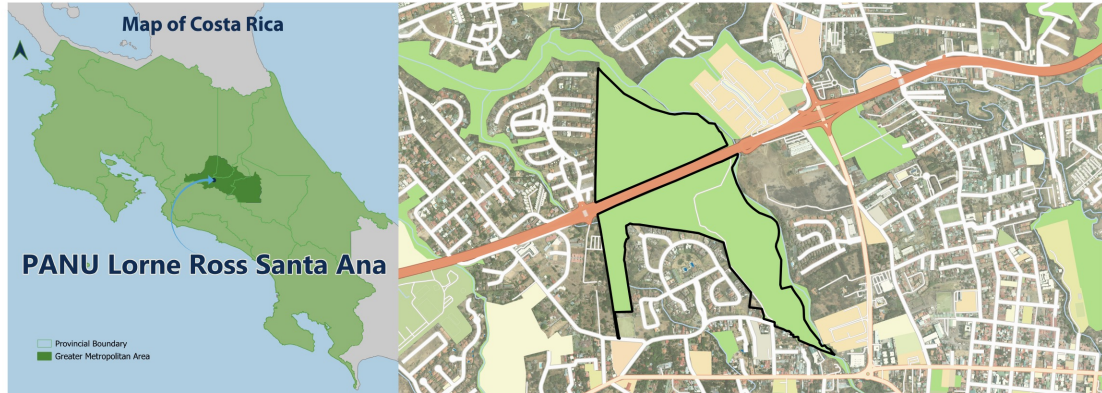
Photo: Juama Cortotrix



CONSERVATION OF 4 URBAN WETLANDS: LAKES AND MARSHES

NATURE URBAN PARK

LORNE ROSS (SANTA ANA)



It was under the administration of a private foundation until May 2024 and will be transformed into an urban protected wilderness area, for the conservation of patches of premontane wet forest, transitional dry forest and lacustrine and marsh urban wetlands, and cultural-historical heritage.

*Source: Technical Proposal for a Protected Wild Area and allocation of management category Santa Ana Conservation Center (SINAC, 2024 -draft-), with support and funding from the Transition to an Urban Green Economy (TEVU) Project (TEVU-OET-GEF-PNUD).

GEOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS*

Location: Santa Ana Canton, San José

Area: 52 ha

Forest cover: 20.71 ha

Altitude: 865 m.a.s.l.

Topography: bordered by the river Uruca and the Azul Creek, flat topography less than 5%

FAUNA RICHNESS

At least 228 species registered
8 with reduced populations
and 3 endangered species

FLORA RICHNESS

193 species (54 families) registered
7 endangered and 4 threatened

**Historic
Ecosystem diversity
Biodiverse**



Attractive and potential focal management elements

Riparian forest and representative species of the pre montane wet forest and transition to dry forest

Representative species
Cedrela salvadorensis
(Cedro real)

Historical-cultural heritage

4 wetlands including lakes and marshes

Urban Climate Refugee

Altitudinal biological connectivity with other protected wildlife areas such as the Cerro de Escazú and El Rodeo Protection Zones

The Management Plan was developed through the TEVU Project.



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BENEFITS FOR BIODIVERSITY

- Protects the remaining fragments of the montane and premontane tropical forests of Costa Rica and its native flora and fauna
- Strengthens the connectivity of ecosystems through urban biological corridors.
- Contribute to carbon capture, helping mitigate climate change



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HUMAN HEALTH BENEFITS

- Improve physical and mental health by providing safe spaces for recreation in contact with nature
- Support ecotourism and a green economy
- Provides essential ecosystem services in urban areas:
 - ✓ air quality
 - ✓ rain infiltration
 - ✓ shade
- Reduces climate change related risks - flooding and urban heat



to hear

Nature sounds reduce blood pressure and decrease the production of cortisol (the stress hormone).



to smell

Natural scents can have calming effects and help reduce anxiety.



to feel

Contact strengthens our bond with the environment, which contributes to greater peace and relaxation.



to see

Observing the natural environment fosters creativity, calms the mind, and gives a sense of spaciousness.

River Interceptors to reduce plastic pollution in the city and the ocean

- TEVU has installed three river interceptors: Virilla River, Pirro River and Toyogres River
- Together these barriers have collected **more than 3 tons of plastics**, all leaked from the Central Valley Great Metropolitan Area.
- Most plastics have been reinserted in a **circular economy system**, by fixing it in concrete structures (1-3 % Resin8 technology by CRCD and Pedregal)
- Benefits: **decreased plastic pollution in rivers, coastal and marine ecosystems**. Improved scenic beauty in urban rivers.





Virilla River





Toyogres River



Pirro River



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Thank you for your attention