



NINO KONIS SANTANA NATIONAL PARK

The First National Park in Timor-Leste!

Why is Nino Konis Santana National Park so special?

Nino Konis Santana National Park is unique in Timor-Leste and recognized internationally for its many unique and beautiful values: nature, culture, history, geology and dramatic scenery.

Natural Values

Landscapes and Habitats

- The extensive and intact terrestrial landscapes include a continuum from mountains to the sea, which is rare in Southeast Asia and even world-wide;



- A wide diversity of wetland habitats includes rivers, lakes and coastal zones;
- Visitors will see dramatic visual panoramas of the Paichau Range and steep, forested escarpments, seascapes framed by limestone cliffs, coral reefs and white sand beaches;



- Geologically important features include extensive karst systems with caves, sinkholes and freshwater springs; the large flood-plain Lake Iralalero and associated Irase-qui-ro River and the sacred Mainina sinkhole form a unique hydrological system as well as holding species found nowhere else;

- Just offshore lies Jaco Island, covered in forest and surrounded by coral reefs and limestone cliffs—it holds special spiritual significance for local people.

Terrestrial Biodiversity

- Timor-Leste is recognized internationally as a high priority for biodiversity conservation, and the National Park has been considered to have the richest remaining primary forest and most extensive wetland habitats on Timor Island;



- The National Park holds many species unique to Timor or to the wider region known as Wallacea. Wallacea is a global centre of evolution and biodiversity 'hotspot' with a unique combination of Asian and Australasian flora and fauna and extraordinary concentrations of species found nowhere else on the planet;

- The National Park contains and links three Important Bird Areas, making it a key site in the Timor and Wetar Endemic Bird Area identified by BirdLife International;

- Many rare species are found in the Park, including 25 bird and 10 (probably many more) plant species of conservation signifi-

- cance, at least 16 bats, and rare freshwater species such as turtles and a fish new to science;

- The flora is very diverse and vegetation over large areas is intact: as many as 9 plant communities are of regional or global significance, the latter including Coastal Rainforest, Coastal Palm Savannah and Freshwater Wetlands.

Marine Biodiversity

- Timor-Leste is part of the Coral Triangle, the region of greatest diversity of coral and reef fish in the world;

- The marine ecosystems of the National Park are internationally significant, being extensive, intact and diverse, including coral reef, mangrove and deep water;



- In addition to the high reef fish diversity, important species include many fish and other megafauna such as turtles, dugongs, whales, dolphins and sharks.

Cultural and Historical values

Ancient History

- The area has been continuously occupied by people for over 40,000 years;



- The National Park contains more than 100 archaeological sites, including the earliest evidence of occupation by modern humans beyond the Sunda Shelf.

Recent History

- The National Park contains many important sites dating from the long period of Portuguese colonisation;



- It contains ruins of Japanese fortifications and supply caves from World War II occupation;

- The area that is now the Park was the stronghold for FALINTIL, the guerrilla force of the resistance movement against occupation, and holds a deep significance for the Timorese people.

Living History Culture & Tradition

- Continuing traditional culture and practices remain strong: livelihood activities, agricultural and fishing practices, spiritual beliefs, ceremonial practices, customary systems of land and sea tenure;



- The annual harvest of Meci, marine annelid worms which spawn along the coast, is associated with the start of the new agricultural calendar, accompanied by community celebrations.

Sustainable livelihoods

- The development of the human communities over many thousands of years in and around what is now the National Park has been dependent on the area's rich natural



- resources. This remains true today, as the inhabitants make use of their environment for their livelihoods:

- Agriculture;
- Livestock-rearing;
- Artisanal fisheries;
- Collection of forest resources;
- Small-scale tourism;
- The National Park will enhance these where they are sustainable, while encouraging and supporting the development of new economies such as ecological and ethical tourism.

The first National Park in Timor-Leste

Nino Konis Santana National Park, the first National Park in Timor-Leste, was established by the Government in August 2007. It is a terrestrial and marine National Park covering the entire eastern extremity of Timor Island and extends 3 nautical miles into the sea: a total area of 123,600 ha of forests, grasslands, wetlands, coastlines, reefs and deeper water marine environments, comprising 68,000 ha of land and 55,600 ha of sea.



The National Park is named after the national hero José (Zé) Conisso Antonino Santana (1955–1998), who was born in the village of Tutuala, in what is now the

The National Park protects unique environmental, cultural and historical heritage of national and global significance. It safeguards this heritage for Timor-Leste and the world, now and for the future, while also respecting and honouring the past. It will allow future generations to understand and appreciate Timorese history and culture, and to visit or live in a healthy environment with rich forests and fisheries, productive grazing lands, and clean soil, lakes, rivers and air.

The establishment and management of the Protected Area Network is one of the most important and effective ways for Timor-Leste to fulfil international obligations on the environment and to respect the rights of its people, under both the country's Constitution and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.



Nino Konis Santana, national hero of the struggle for independence

National Park. Better known as Nino Konis Santana, he was Chief of the Executive Committee of the Armed Resistance Front in the struggle for national independence from 1992 to 1998.

Aims of the National Park

- Ensure the protection and conservation under the law of nationally and globally important natural, cultural, social, historical and livelihood values;
- Guarantee, respect and recognize customary ownership, continued use, access and participation rights by local communities;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development for local communities – both the existing rural economy and sustainable new economies (for example ethical and ecological tourism) by protection and sustainable management of all values;
- Ensure the active participation of, and foster ownership by, the communities living within the National Park via a consultative, inclusive and collaborative joint management framework between Government and local communities, supported by civil society;
- Increase awareness of conservation and the sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources and the impacts of human interactions with nature.
- Demonstrate the highest standards world-wide, and be internationally recognized, as a Protected Area where the traditional interactions of people and nature are maintained in a way that protects and enhances the environment.



Management Principles A Living Landscape and Seascape

Nino Konis Santana National Park was established according to the internationally-recognised principles of an IUCN Category V Protected Area – Protected Landscape and Seascape, in which the interactions between people and nature are recognized and valued. This means that it will continue to be permanently inhabited, and the rights of local communities will be safeguarded and their sustainable development supported. In addition, communities will be assisted by the Government to protect their cultural heritage through a process guided and authorised by the communities themselves.



Nino Konis Santana National Park was established in consultation and collaboration with local communities. It will be managed collaboratively in a partnership between Government and civil society, especially local communities, who will be fully involved in decision-making and the planning and implementation of management.

The National Park will help local communities to protect their environment and to safeguard and improve their livelihoods. Existing rural livelihood activities, mainly agriculture, fisheries and livestock-rearing, will be supported, and new ones developed, such as ethical and ecological tourism.

Pressures on environmental and socio-economic values

The values of the National Park have at various times been affected by a range of threats and pressures. Management of the National Park will control these, and also safeguard against inappropriate future developments and infrastructure in and adjacent to the Park, while ensuring that the benefits of doing so are shared equitably and outweigh any costs. Some of the typical threats are:

- Conversion of forest for slash-and-burn agriculture, which produces poor yields, is unsustainable and is one of the biggest threats to biodiversity;
- Illegal logging;
- Hunting of mammals, birds and turtles;
- Grazing stock in native forest;
- Illegal and unsustainable industrial fishing by foreign fleets;
- Pollution by refuse and effluents, especially along beaches;
- Use of dynamite and other unsustainable methods for artisanal or commercial fishing;
- Uncontrolled and unmanaged access to sacred (lulik) sites and areas.



Laws and Protection

Nino Konis Santana National Park was created under Government Resolution 8/2007 and is further protected under the principles of:

- The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (RDTL);
- RDTL Regulation 19/2000 On Protected Areas;
- RDTL Regulation 17/2000 On Prohibition of Logging Operations and the Export of Wood from East Timor;
- Decree Law 6/2004 - General Bases of the Legal Regime for the Management and Regulation of Fisheries and Aquaculture;
- Ministerial Diploma 04/115/GM/VI/205 - List of Protected Aquatic Species;
- Government Decree 5/2004 - General Regulation on Fishing;
- Law 12/2004 - Fishing Related Offences.

Under Resolution 8/2007, the National Park is safeguarded from damaging activities such as pollution of soil and water (for example through dumping or discharge of waste water), activities having visual negative impacts, unauthorised collection or killing of plants and animals and geological specimens (terrestrial or marine), passage through the Park's waters by vessels that may disturb or damage the ecosystem, and fishing in the most sensitive areas around the strait of Jaco (apart from subsistence fishing with hook by residents of Tutuala sub-district, which is permitted).

Scientific research that contributes to the maintenance of the values of the National Park is in principle welcomed but is subject to normal prior authorisations issued by the Government of Timor-Leste. Specific permission is required from the Department of Protected Areas and National Parks (Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries) and the Secretary of State for Culture, Ministry of Education.



Inauguration of the National Park

Nino Konis Santana National Park was formally inaugurated in August 2008. A ceremony was held in the National Park to celebrate the declaration and to raise national and international awareness and support for its objectives.



Timorese society was represented at all levels from the Prime Minister, Xanana Gusmão, to local communities. To commemorate this historic event, a plaque was signed by both the Prime Minister and the President, José Ramos Horta.

The future

The Government of Timor-Leste declared this first National Park in 2007, only five years after the country's formal independence. Other important Protected Areas of national and cultural significance on both land and sea are now being developed in collaboration with local communities, to create a national Protected Areas network that will be representative of the natural and cultural heritage of Timor-Leste. This has been supported by all political parties, and shows the very strong commitment nationally to conserve this heritage. International support has been gratefully received but more is needed to establish the long-term management system and infrastructure that will set the Park on a sustainable footing, and ensure benefits reach all affected stakeholders in an equitable fashion. Immediate needs include:

- Development of a national policy and legislation for Protected Areas;
- Support to and improvement of existing sustainable livelihoods and development of new revenue sources, based on the protection and rehabilitation of the natural environment;
- Appropriate infrastructure to assist in management of the National Park and to support ecological and ethical tourism;
- Education and awareness-raising programmes, both nationally and locally and to all audiences, Timorese and international;
- Long-term management planning;
- Capacity development for government, local community and national civil society in all aspects of participatory protected area management.



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