

The real extension of Venezuelan Protected Areas - recommendations to assess Aichi Target 11

Edgard Yerena, Universidad Simón Bolívar

Jorge Naveda, Inparques.

Venezuelan WCPA members

According to the Aichi Target N° 11
17 % of terrestrial and inland water
and 10 % of coastal and marine areas of
the World should be under effective
and well-managed protected areas (PA)

What is our message?

- † The real achievement of Aichi Target 11 may be masked by the wrong information supplied by official sources, country by country.
 - † Some sources of error:
 - † A wrong assessment of the IUCN/CBD concept of Protected Area
 - † Physical (spatial) overlaps among PAs
 - † Incoherence between official boundaries description and reported PA area (km²)

What do we propose ?

- † The official information should be double checked by local experts: i.e. NGOs , WCPA members, Universities, etc, through some efficient mechanism.

Venezuela: case study

- ┆ According to official sources:
 - ┆ Every “protected” area under Venezuelan law is reported as a “Protected Area” (mimicking IUCN/CBD definition)
 - ┆ called “areas under special management regime” (acronym “ABRAE”)
 - ┆ Therefore, “protected” cover is reported to be between 40% and 74% of country area
 - ┆ Country’s marine int’l boundaries are not 100% set: PA cover is always reported on emerged (land) area
 - ┆ 400 “protected” units
 - ┆ 21 categories of “protected” areas - ABRAE.

Venezuela: case study

- † We systematically analyzed the ABRAE concept and all of its categories.
- † Findings:
 - † Only 7 out of 21 categories (ABRAE) are true “Protected Areas” *sensu* IUCN/CBD:
 - † National Park (II)
 - † Wildlife Sanctuary (II)
 - † Natural Monument (III)
 - † Wildlife Refuge (IV)
 - † Wildlife Reserve (VI)
 - † Forest Reserve (VI)
 - † Biosphere Reserve (variable)

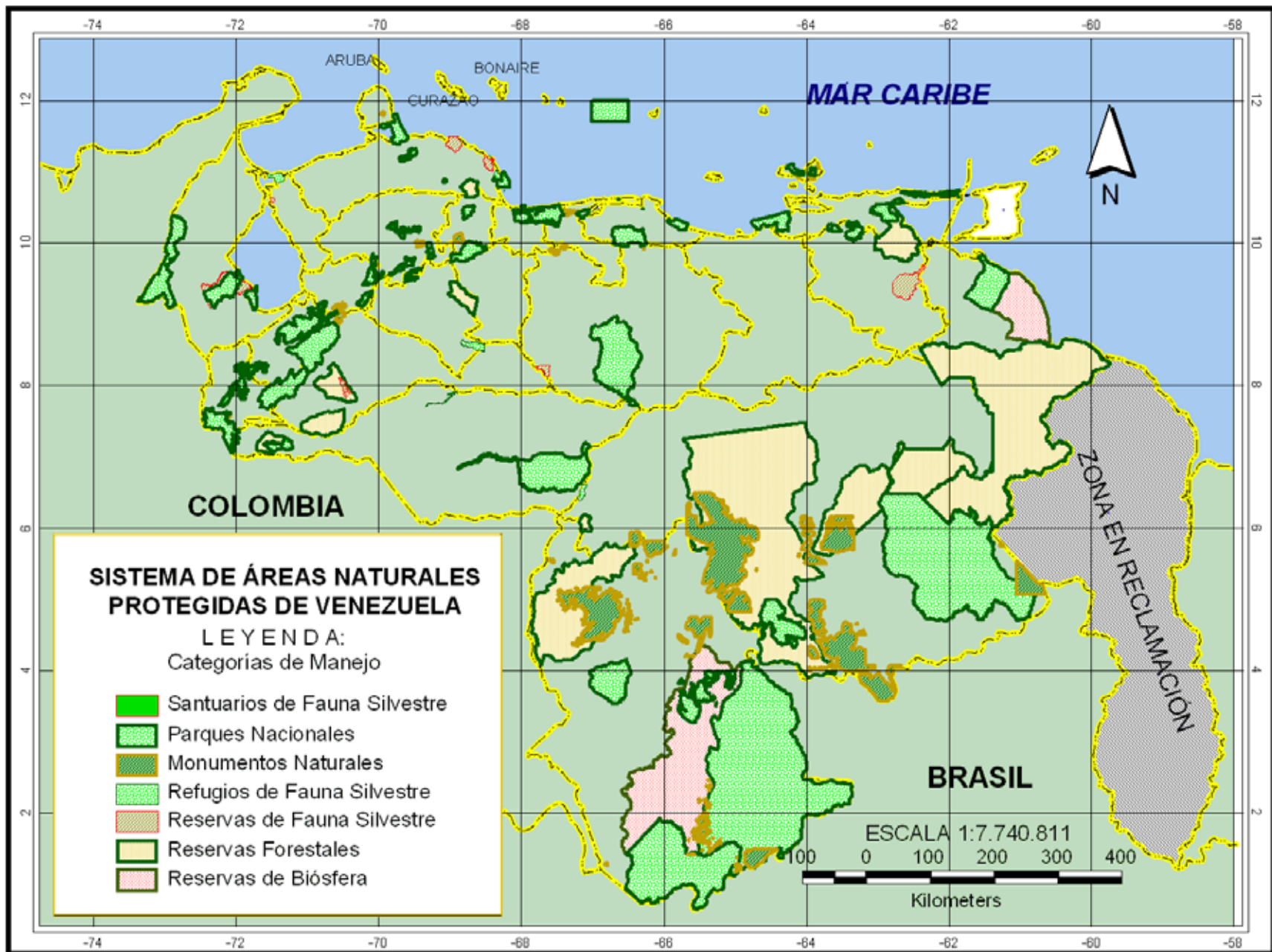
Venezuela: case study

Findings...

- Correspondingly only 111 designated units are true PAs
- There is substantial cover overlapping among some of the PA units
- The national PA cover % is calculated over emerged land (continental + islands) not considering the marine area.
- Some “decrees” are arbitrarily interpreted in relation to their boundaries leading to wrong area calculations.

Venezuela: case study

- † Correcting above findings (mistakes), the final result is:
 - † The real PA extent, no overlapping, is 309,930 km²
 - † Within them 4,220 km² is strictly marine area
 - † Emerged land: 305,710 km²
 - † Therefore the % PA cover of Venezuela in relation to emerged land is 33.36 %
 - † A whole country (marine+emerged) figure can't be provided until marine int'l boundaries are set.



Venezuela: case study

- † ...not considering “management effectiveness”...that’s another matter ...
- † Most of Category VI is “Paper PAs” and/or subject to conventional natural resources exploitation (some of them completely wiped out)
- † Not considering them: **PA is 18.85% of Venezuela’s emerged land**

Conclusion

- † If a real estimation of how far/close the World is with respect to Aichi Target 11 is needed, then it should be wise to conduct an independent double checking of the official statistics and numbers supplied by Governments, country by country, and with a strict compliance with the conceptual definition of Protected Area according to IUCN/CBD.



Thank you ...

Tema originalmente planteado

The real extension of Venezuelan protected areas: lessons to assess Aichi Target 11.

Edgard Yerena
Jorge Naveda

According to the Aichi Target N° 11 seventeen percent of terrestrial and inland water, and ten percent of coastal and marine areas of the world should be under effective and well-managed protected areas (PA). Although that is not a country-by-country target, it is obvious that such limit may provide a criterion to assess the compliance of any country with such a global goal. On the other hand, politically it is a good thing for a country to show itself as if it has reached or is about to reach such goal. The attention of the global community obviously focuses on those countries that are either low below or high above the 17-10% threshold. For more than twenty years Venezuela has stated that somewhere between 40 and 50 % of its terrestrial ecosystems are under PA. This is also reflected in the World Data Base on Protected Areas. (WDPA) At the beginning that was a reason for awe and congratulations. But as time passes that belief has solidified and attention is no more focused on Venezuela: it is considered it has already reached a very challenging limit, and it is logical that no special attention should be put on it at least regarding PA coverage. But the reality is very different. A thorough exam on the self-called “Venezuelan PA system” or ABRAE (Spanish acronym for “areas under special administration”) reveals that only 5 among 15 categories of ABRAE are real PA sensu IUCN. According to this we calculate that no more than 17% of Venezuela’s terrestrial ecosystems are under real PA. This case highlights the importance of the IUCN PA categories system. It is a powerful tool to assess to what extent any country is really taking actions to conserve Nature, and therefore matching the Aichi target or any other international criteria. It also highlights the importance of updating WDPA, since many wrong conclusions can be reached using wrong data contained in it. It is not simply a matter of accepting “official” data supplied by Government agencies. Such data should be double-checked with the help and participation of national WCPA members. No official data should be taken for granted. This may lead to over estimations and sub estimations, making the focus of international agencies, or NGOs be placed in the wrong direction.