

Global ICCA Database
Noj Kaax Meen Elijio Panti National Park, Belize

Basic data

Site Name (in local language and in English)	Noj Kaax Meen Elijio Panti National Park
Country (include State and Province)	Cayo District, Belize
Area encompassed by the CCA (specify unit of measurement).	5,263 Ha
GIS Coordinates (if available)	Not available
Whether it includes sea areas (Yes or no)	No
Whether it includes freshwater (Yes or no)	Yes
Marine (Y or N)	No
Concerned community (name and approx. number of persons)	Tanah or San Antonio village, El Progreso 7 miles and Cristo Rey Village. Approximately 3,000 people
Is the community considering itself an indigenous people? (Please note Yes or No; if yes note which people)	Yes, Mayan Yucatec people
Is the community considering itself a minority? (Please note Yes or No, if yes on the basis of what, e.g. religion, ethnicity)	Yes, economically marginalised
Is the community permanently settled? (Please note Yes or No; if the community is mobile, does it have a customary transhumance territory?)	Yes
Is the community local per capita income inferior, basically the same or superior to national value? (please note how confident you are about the information)	Not known
Is the CCA recognised as a protected area by governmental agencies? (Yes or no; if yes, how? If no, is it otherwise recognized?) If yes, legal document? Establishment date?	Yes, as a National Park
Conflicts with land tenure, natural resource use?	90% of the region's people are farmers. When they heard that the reserve area was going to be converted into a National Park, some questioned the protection of the area and demand to the government some land for agriculture in the heart of the reserve. The government refused the petition but looked for land for the farmers. Within the Mountain Pine Ridge, there was a 607 Ha area that the government de-reserved more than 20 years ago. At that time, a Peanuts and Grain Growers cooperative was formed of about 60 farmers. However, after every governmental election they would lose their land. This made farmers very disappointed and many started to leave the area. Then about 15 years ago they were also harassed by forestry officers and taken out of the area. Only seven farmers continue to live on the land and to this day, not a single one of them has legal papers for their land. If government changes, these farmers may lose their land again.
What is the main management objective (e.g. livelihood, cultural, spiritual...)	Cultural, nature protection
By definition, a CCA fulfils a management objective. To which IUCN management	National Park

category do you consider it would best fit (this does not imply that the management objective is consciously pursued by the concerned community, but that it is actually achieved)	
--	--

Additional qualitative information

Main ecosystem type	Evergreen tropical forest
Description of biodiversity & resources (ecosystems, species, functions) conserved by the CCA	Three waterfalls. Black howler monkey (<i>Alouatta pigra</i>), baird's tapir (<i>Tapirus bairdii</i>), jaguarundi (<i>Felis yagouaroundi</i>), Morelet's crocodile (<i>Crocodylus moreletii</i>), iguana (<i>Iguana</i> sp.), Central American river turtle (<i>Dermatemys</i> spp.), deer (<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>) and several species of birds. High diversity of plant species, including logwood (<i>Caesalpinia echinata</i>), cedar (<i>Cedrella odorata</i>) and mahogany (<i>Swietenia macrophylla</i>).
Description of local ethnic groups and languages spoken	Maya Yucatec people, speaking Maya Taan, also called Yucatec Maya.
Broad historical context of the CCA	<p>In 1842 new Mayan settlers came from Yucatan, Mexico to Belize, running away from war. There were only four families, including the Tzib, Mai and Pech, who built their homes in the north side of Belize and slowly started to move southward. Finally they settled in Tanah, where no rivers are found. It is then said that the first people to settle on the area, while farming the fertile soils of the valley, lived way up in the Pine Ridge Mountains where water was plentiful.</p> <p>In 1998, worried by land disappearing and being destroyed, the community of San Antonio asked the Minister of Agriculture to help them create an official park. The first action was to form a committee, headed by María García and other six local people; a board of governors was formed afterwards, and this gave birth to the Itzamna Society for the protection and Conservation of the Environment and Culture and Community Development (Itzamna is God who created all things on Earth). This community development took place in January 2000 and included representatives from the three villages: El Progreso 7 miles, Cristo Rey Village, San Antonio Village. It also included the former police officers, doctors, teachers and tour guides. The Society was legally registered as a NGO on the ninth of February, 2000.</p> <p>In 1999, a negotiation process took place between the Itzamna Society and the government of Belize so the late could officially grant lands to the Society for the proposed National Park. There was also a negotiation between those who wanted the park establishment and those who wanted land for cultivation, with a result of community union demanding the government of Belize lands for both uses.</p> <p>During the whole process the community received support from the NGO Help for Progress, Maya Center with the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife</p>

	<p>Sanctuary, Five Blue Lakes National Park with the community of Saint Margaret, El Pilar and the village of Bullet Tree, San Antonio cooperative, the Minister of Agriculture, the forestry department and protective areas conservation trust (PACT) from the government.</p> <p>The reserve area was officially turned into National Park on the 23rd of February, 2001 with the name of Ejilio Panti after the name of a spiritual healer and high community priest, who dedicated his life to the village and the people and passed away in 1996 at the age of 103. After the official inauguration, a management plan was developed as well as training courses for local people, and other projects have been in process such as the exploration of the 30,000 acres of land to be declared for the preservation of Mayan medicinal plants, endangered species and for scientific research.</p>
Governance structure for the CCA (who takes management decisions, how?)	The local board of governors
Length of time the governance model has been in place	Since 2000
Land and resource ownership in the CCA	Private/Communal
Type of land use in the CCA	Agriculture lands, forest protection zones
Existence of written or oral management plans and specific rules for the use of natural resources in the CCA	Written management plan
Map and zoning of the CCA (please attach if available and relevant,)	Not available
Relevant pictures with captions (please attach if available)	Not available
Major threats to biodiversity and/or the CCA governance system	Unregulated logging of endangered hard-woods, extraction of various ornamental plants, like orchids, hunting activities and deforestation for new human settlements

Local CCA-relevant features, stories, names, rules and practices

Local people believe that Itzamna created everything on earth and Yum Kaax-KU guides and protects the mountains and animals. Mother Ixchel protects and heals her children on earth. These guardians permit man to kill animals and use forest product only as is necessary for human subsistence. They are the principal Gods as they grant corn from which man was made and herbal plants to heal.

One day, after Maya people coming from Yucatán arrived to Belize and moved southward, while hunting a wari, the animal led them down to Tanah, to a spot where the soil was sodden. On reaching the water the wari miraculously disappeared. Local people believe that he was the Mayan god Yum Kax-Ku, leading the men to find what was needed to make Tanah settlement possible. They dug a well, the beginning of their new home and it has served our village for many generations.

Today, in Tanah there are two museums: Tanah Mayan Arts Museum, hosting Mayan utensils, musical instrument and Mayan artefacts from the area; and Dr. Elijio Panti Museum, where the display includes instruments used by this Mayan healer along with his belongings.