

# Environment Ministry to coordinate probe of declining bird species

The Ministry of the Environment (MiAmbiente) will promote rapprochement and coordination with scientific research institutions in Panama to investigate the possible causes of the decline in bird populations in the Soberanía National Park.

Contacts will be made with the University of Panama, the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, and organizations such as the Panama Audubon Society and Asociación Adopta Bosque Panamá.

The announcement follows a study carried out by the University of Illinois (United States) in the park – located along the east bank of the Panama Canal—which determined that there are species of birds that have lost up to 50% of their population. MiAmbiente said that new research is currently being carried out to verify if what is causing the decline in bird populations is due to changes in the food resources of the species. "On the other hand, it is known that changes in rainfall affect these populations.

Erick Núñez, head of the MiAmbiente Biodiversity Department, explained that there is scientific evidence that the planet's biological wealth is being lost due to threats such as habitat destruction or degradation, climate change, invasive alien species, emerging diseases, and illegal trade, among others. According to the study, the declines were "severe," with 35 of the 40 declining bird species exhibiting large proportional losses, amounting to as much as 50%.

For scientists, the severe decline of these species is particularly "alarming", given that it occurs in a relatively large forested area (22 hectares) and in the absence of local fragmentation or recent land use. The findings provide strong evidence for tropical bird declines in intact forests and reinforce a large body of literature [indicating] that bird populations may be declining on a global scale.