

NOMINATION TO THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage

Name: GARAJONAY NATIONAL PARK

Identification No: 380

Date received by WH Secretariat: 30.12.85

Contracting State Party having submitted the nomination of the property in accordance with the Convention: SPAIN

Summary prepared by IUCN (April 1986) based on the original nomination submitted by Spain. This original and all documents presented in support of this nomination will be available for consultation at the meetings of the Bureau and the Committee.

1. LOCATION:

The Garajonay National Park is found on La Gomera (378 sq.km in size), one of seven islands in the western sector of the Canary Archipelago, lying off the northwest coast of Africa in the Atlantic Ocean. 28°09'N, 17°14'E.

2. JURIDICAL DATA:

The 1812 Constitution abolished the estates of the nobility and transferred the ownership and administration of the forests to the municipal governments. In the same century the forests were declared public property and appeared as such in the listing of the Register of Public Property dated 1879. The national park (Public Forests) belongs to the six municipal districts of La Gomera.

The National Park was established in March 1981 but the conservation of nature within the national park area is covered by a number of legal texts, namely, the Law and Regulations on Protected Nature Sites, the Law and Regulations on Forest, the Law and Regulations on Land, four Royal Decrees and three Orders.

3. IDENTIFICATION:

Garajonay National Park (3,984 ha) occupies the central part of La Gomera island and encompasses an altitudinal range from 600m to 1492m at its highest point. It consists of an eroded plateau (with a central crater) and gently sloping central terrain and steeply sloping escarpments. La Gomera is the only island in the Canaries that has not experienced an eruption in recent times and the soils are formed from horizontal basalts. There are many springs and streams on the island and the presence of the forest cover on the Gomera plateau causing mist vapour condensation helps maintain the island's main water sources.

The vegetation is lush and is maintained as a result of mist, condensed water vapour and the numerous streams and springs on the island. The most important feature is the laurel forest, most of which is located within the park boundaries. Some 70% of the national part is woodland with Laurisilvia canaria dominant. The Garajonay National Park has a recorded flora of 450 species of which 34 are endemic to the island and of these, eight species are restricted to the national park. This type of vegetation assemblage resembles that of the Tertiary period which has largely disappeared from southern Europe due to climatic changes. Its distribution is now limited to a few places in the Macaronesian Islands and even here largely in an altered state.

Two species of bird, the white-tailed laurel pigeon and the dark tailed laurel pigeon are endemic to the Canaries and on La Gomera are largely restricted to the national park. It is thought that between 40-60% of the invertebrate fauna are endemic.

4. STATE OF PRESERVATION/CONSERVATION:

Following European colonization in the 15th Century, major changes occurred to the forest cover. There has been a reduction of some 65% in forest cover in just over 100 years. In the south and west of the national park there are areas of deforestation, fires and grazing and in some parts the natural vegetation cover has been replaced by commercial species plantations of Canary pine and Monterey Pine. These activities are being eliminated slowly, although some problems are derived by the existence of private property on the boundary of the parks. The rat and feral cat and dog population is high.

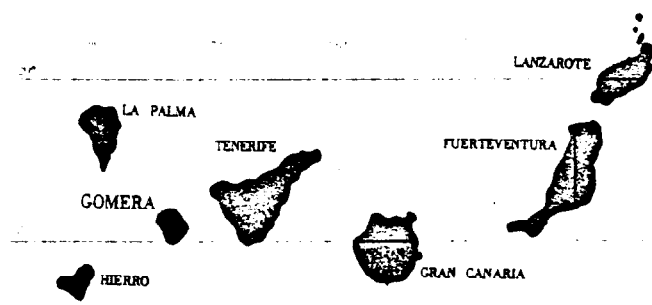
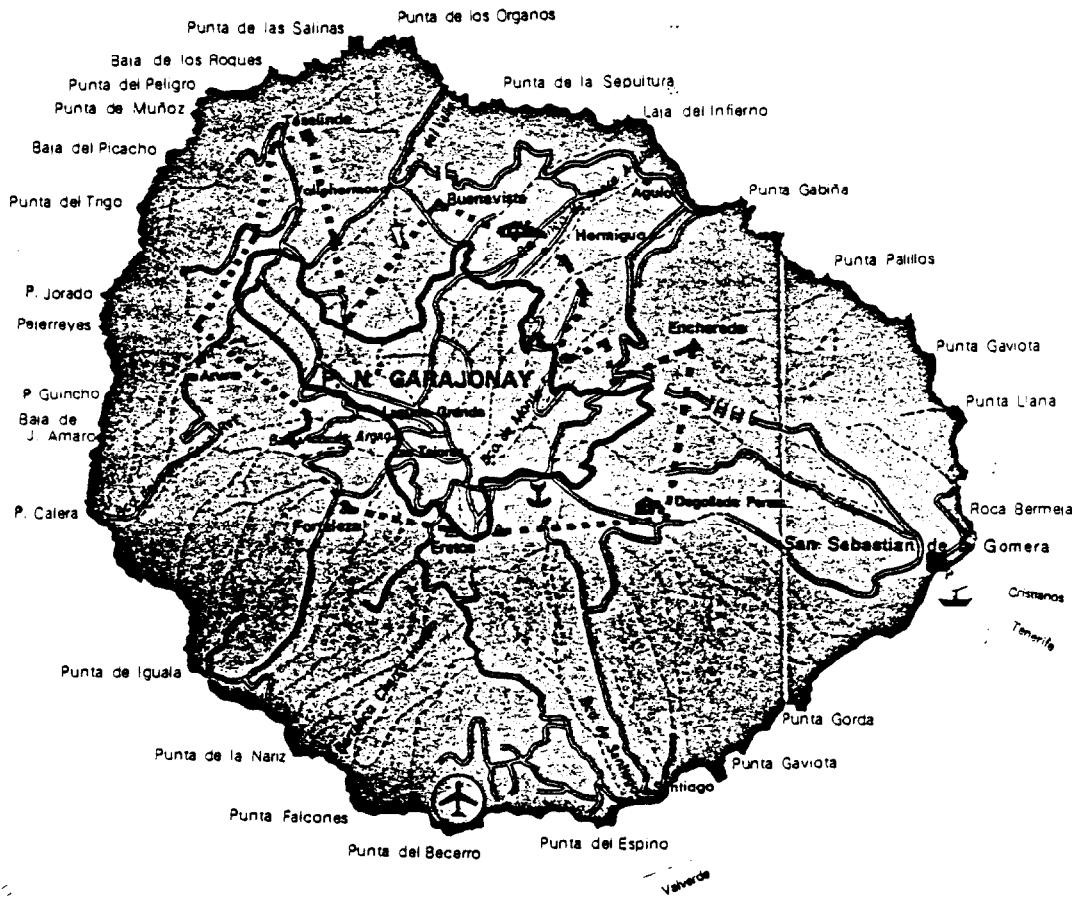
The national park is within the administrative jurisdiction of ICONA, an independent body within the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. A Director is in charge with administration carried out by a management board composed of representatives from local government and universities. A number of conservation measures have been taken: prohibition of grazing in 1942, decree giving protection to 26 species of plants in 1962, prohibition on tree felling 1964, campaign to restore forest balance in 1970, prohibition on the collection of leaves and the active removal of exotic species such as Tradescantia fluminensis, Pinus and Eucalyptus and their replacement by native species, bird protection Royal Decree 3181 in 1980 and finally the establishment of the national park in 1981. The management plan for the park consists of separate sections covering fire prevention, interpretation, and ecology, genetic resources, and research on the two endemic bird species, and a programme for the eradication of Tradescantia fluminensis. The national park is zoned into a biogenetic reserve zone, an intermediate zone, an extensive use zone, and a service zone.

In addition to the Director, the park has a staff of eight and a reported budget of US\$320,600.

5. JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST:

The Garajonay National Park nomination, as presented by the Government of Spain provides the following justification for designation as a World Heritage property:

- a) Cultural property. Criteria being examined by ICOMOS.
- b) Natural property
 - (iv) Habitat for Rare and Endangered Species. Garajonay's relic Tertiary laurel forest is one of the few remaining remnants in the region. In addition to the laurel forest, there are 450 plant species, of which 8 endemics are found in the park.



WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION -- IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

380 GARAJONAY NATIONAL PARK (SPAIN)

1. DOCUMENTATION:

- (i) IUCN Data Sheet
- (ii) Consultations: Spanish Government Officials, O. Hamann, H. Synge, E. Fernandez Galiano, D. Bramwell, C. Gomez-Campo, R. Milne
- (iii) Literature: Garajonay Management Plan (1985), Interpretation Plan (1982)
- (iv) Site visit 19-21 October 1986.

2. COMPARISON WITH OTHER AREAS

Laurel forest is a subtropical flora that covered the lands of the Mediterranean through most of the Tertiary period. The ocean-moderated climate of the Canaries favoured this plant association long after climatic changes on the continent brought its demise. Garajonay's forest is a relict of this previously widespread floral type.

Only five protected areas exist in the Macaronesian Islands Biogeographical Province. All are larger in size than Garajonay but no other contains the extent of laurel forest found in this park. Patches of laurel forest do occur in the Azores and Madeira Islands but forests there have been degraded and are less species-rich than Garajonay. The other three national parks in the Canaries group were established primarily for their volcanic features and do not contain laurel forest. The small Canal y Los Tiles Biosphere Reserve on La Palma does have a good stand of laurel forest but it is much smaller and of less significance than Garajonay. Other small patches of laurel forest on La Palma are unprotected.

Garajonay National Park thus contains the last major "fossil forest" remnant of the laurel forest ecosystem. Its flora, once common in the Tertiary era, relates to the ancestral forms of many modern plants found in the Mediterranean today. It also displays links to the Indian Ocean flora reflecting the importance of the Tethys Sea as a migration route in the evolution of plants. There is, therefore, no easy comparison as Garajonay is a truly unique park.

3. INTEGRITY

The major management problems in Garajonay are wildfires and invasion of exotic plants which compete with the native vegetation. A number of restorative measures and a "genetic rescue programme" have been implemented and the area is now in a much improved condition and makes an important contribution as a watershed for the lowland villages on the island. Size of the park is small but in scale with the island and sufficient to support the remaining endemic plant communities.

A four year management plan for the park was approved by Presidential Decree in July 1986. A separate plan for education and interpretation has also been prepared. A US\$2 million park visitor centre is in the final stages of completion and some excellent publications on the park are available to the public. There are some 30 staff including a full-time park botanist which reflects the importance given to the floristic values of the park.

A noteworthy feature is the considerable support for the protection of the park's forests given by the local people of Gomera who view the area as a necessary element of both their cultural and natural heritage. The conservation ethic on Gomera indeed goes back at least 500 years and the island has been fortunate to avoid the intensity of development found on other islands in the group.

4. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

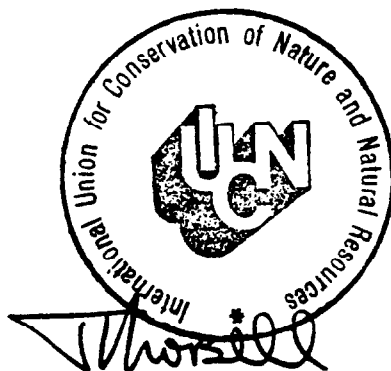
Consideration is currently being given to increasing the size of the park and an important new area of forest may be purchased by the Government. This would add even more justification for the property. The importance of the park to the broader world science community is both the endemic plant species found there and also its critical role in understanding the functioning of the laurel forest ecosystem. A greater effort in designing a research and monitoring programme to address this latter issue should be encouraged.

5. EVALUATION

The Garajonay National Park is seen as the singularly most unique protected area in all of Spain for the international significance of its endemic flora (34 species) and as the only major remnant of a once common ecosystem. It thus merits inscription on the World Heritage list on the basis of Criteria (ii) outstanding example of biological evolution of the laurel forest ecosystem and Criteria (iii) where habitats of rare and endemic plant species are provided. In addition to the importance of the endemic relict flora there exist also a rich and endemic invertebrate life and two rare bird species.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Garajonay National Park should be added to the World Heritage List. The Committee should commend the Government of Spain and the local efforts of the Gomera Island people in maintaining and restoring the conservation values of the site. Possibilities for extension of the boundaries of the park and for ecosystem research projects should also be encouraged.



SPAIN - Canary Islands

NAME Garajonay National Park

MANAGEMENT CATEGORY II (National Park)
X (World Heritage)

BIOGEOGRAPHICAL PROVINCE 2.40.13 (Macaronesian Islands)

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION In the central portion of la Gomera, Canary Islands (37,800ha in size), north of and between Tajague to the east and Chipude to the west, and hence just over 10% of the island surface. Province of Santa Cruz de Tenerife. La Gomera, lying to the west of Tenerife, is one of seven islands in the western sector of the Canary Archipelago, lying off the north-west coast of Africa in the Atlantic Ocean. 28°05'-28°12'N, 17°10'-17°18'W

DATE AND HISTORY OF ESTABLISHMENT 25 March 1981. Inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1986.

AREA 3,984ha

LAND TENURE The 1812 Constitution abolished the estates of the nobility and transferred the ownership and administration of the forests to the municipal governments. In the same century the forests were declared public property and appeared as such in the last listing of the Register of Public Property dated 1879. However, small parts adjacent to the park remain in private ownership. The national park comprises the six Montes de Utilidad Publica (Public Forests) belonging to the six municipal districts of La Gomera being: Agulo (770ha), Alajero (250ha), Hermigua (1,024ha), San Sebastian (290ha), Valle Gran Rey (350ha), and Vallehermoso (1,300ha).

ALTITUDE 600m-1,487m

PHYSICAL FEATURES The park encompasses San Sebastian, Hemigua, Agulo, Vallehermosa, Valle Gran rey and Alajero mountains. It consists of an eroded plateau and gently sloping central terrain but with steeply sloping escarpments formed of uneven steps, gradations hundreds of metres in extent reaching as far as the park boundaries. La Gomera is the only island in the Canaries that has not experienced an eruption in recent times and the ash and lava fields have eroded away, leaving mature soils formed from horizontal basalts cut by a series of great ravines, or barrancos. The landscape is further characterised by volcanic dikes and other outcrops. There are many springs and streams on the island and the presence of the forest cover on the Gomera plateau causing mist vapour condensation helps maintain the island's main water sources.

CLIMATE The subtropical high pressures of the North Atlantic are the predominant climatic feature. Trade winds from the north and north-east give rise to extensive cloud cover, typically at 600m to 1,500m altitude. Mean annual rainfall is 600mm-800mm, temperatures vary between 16°C and 28°C and relative humidity between 75% and 90%.

Infobase produced by WCMC, January 1992

VEGETATION The vegetation changes with altitude and geographical orientation and its lushness is maintained as a result of mist, condensed water vapour and the numerous streams and springs on the island. The most important feature is the laurel forest, most of which is located within the park boundaries, in fact some 70% of the park is woodland with Laurisilva canaria dominant. Other prominent woodland species include laurel Laurus azorica, palo blanco Picconia excelsa, vinatigo Persea indica, til Ocotea foetens with a shrub layer of tree heath Erica arborea and bog myrtle Myrica faya, as well as Arbutus canariensis, Erica scoparia, Ilex canariensis, Ilex perado, Heberdenia excelsa, Viburnum tinus, Sambucus palmensis, Gesnouinia arborea, Maytenus canariensis, Rhamnus glandulosa, Visnea mocanera, Salix canariensis, and Juniperus cedrus, all native to the laurisilva forest. The western boundary of the park consists of an extensive heathland with bog myrtle, heather, mosses and lichens. Here also occur narrow-leaved rockrose Cistus monspeliensis and Tabaiba spurge Euphorbia obtusifolia. 450 flora species, of which 34 are endemic to the island and of these 8 species restricted to the national park, have been recorded. This type of subtropical vegetation assemblage resembles that of those present in the Tertiary period (Pliocene and Miocene) and has largely disappeared from southern Europe due to climatic changes, being replaced by sclerophytic and xerophytic species. Its distribution is now limited to a few sites in Macaronesia and even here largely in an altered and highly reduced state.

FAUNA Two species of bird, white-tailed laurel pigeon Columba junoniae and dark-tailed laurel pigeon Columba bolli, are endemic to the Canaries and on La Gomera are largely restricted to the national park. In all, 27 bird species have been recorded. It is thought that between 40-60% of the invertebrate fauna are endemic, although mammals and herpetofauna are poorly represented.

CULTURAL HERITAGE The island was colonised by Spain in the 15th century, and became an important port during the 16th century.

LOCAL HUMAN POPULATION Before the 15th century the impact of local activities on the forest was negligible. However, with Spanish colonisation of the islands and the incorporation of the native Guanche population, major changes occurred. The settlements thus established at El Cedro, Meriga, Epina, Las Hayas, El Cercado, Igualero are fortunately located outside the park boundary, although the locals still use parts of the park that are traditional sites associated with annual fiestas or pilgrimages. Approximately 20,000 people inhabit the island, supported by fishing and tourism. There are no settlements within the park.

VISITORS AND VISITOR FACILITIES Approximately 50,000 visitors enter the park annually and a major visitor and education centre, including housing for ICONA's administrative offices, has been constructed at Juego de Bolos, just outside the park boundary. ICONA has lead responsibility for providing the basic information, and the centre consists of a reception area, exhibition area, auditorium, open-air patio, restrooms and refreshment bar. A visitor centre is planned at Tajaque, again on the

park's boundary, as the primary visitor contact point for the park, featuring a major exhibit on the laurel forest. Less than ten main park trails are proposed, associated with small capacity parking areas. At Alto de Garajonay, the high spot in the park, an interpretive display is envisaged. There is easy access to the park by road.

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND FACILITIES A faunal (entomological) and floral inventory exists. At present, as part of the management plans, a genetic rescue operation is taking place in the woodlands and monitoring of the parks avifauna. Project work and visits by outside teams require the approval of the Park's trustees.

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT The national park was established under Law 3/1981 on 25 March 1981, but the conservation of nature within the national park area is covered by a number of legal texts, namely: the Law and Regulations on Protected Nature Sites; the Law and Regulations on Forest; the Law and Regulations on Land; the Royal Decrees 485/1962, 3181/1980, 1105/1982, 3091/1982 and Orders of 25 June 1975 and 18 July 1976. The park is within the administrative jurisdiction of ICONA, an independent body within the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. A Director is in charge, with the administration carried out by a management board composed of representatives from local government, universities and ecologists, their duties being circumscribed in law. Historically, a number of measures were taken for conservation; prohibition of grazing in 1942; decree giving protection to 26 species of plants in 1962; prohibition of tree felling 1964, campaign to restore forest balance in 1970, prohibition of the collection of leaves and the active removal of exotic species such as Tradescantia fluminensis, Pinus and Eucalyptus and their replacement by native species, bird protection by the Royal Decree 3181 in 1980 and finally the establishment of the national park in 1981. The park management plan, enacted by Decree 1531/1986 on 30 May 1986 by the Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentacion, and valid for a period of four years, comprises separate sections covering management topics, amongst which are: ecology (ECOPLAN); genetic resources conservation; a plan outline for research on the two endemic bird species, a programme for the eradication of the non-native species and specifically Tradescantia fluminensis; fire prevention; interpretation and education; and recreation provision. The park is zoned into a (biogenetic) reserve zone (Zone I), into which access is very restricted, a restricted use zone (Zone II), allowing only limited traditional access and use, a (service) moderate use zone (Zone III), where the environment has been degraded to some extent, and is used for recreation and education, and a special use zone (Zone IV), which consists of a small acreage of scattered parcels mainly on the periphery of the park, used for administrative buildings and visitor reception facilities. The reserve zone (Zone I) covers 2,035ha. and is split into three sectors; Zone II covers 858ha split into three zones; Zone III covers 891ha and Zone IV covers 110ha including the following sites:- Cumbre de Tajaque; Monte de Alajero; Laguna Grande; Apartacamino; Chorros de Epina; Meriga; Azud, and Montana de Igualero. In addition there are seven main sites designated for recreation activities. An interpretation plan, covering both the park and the island in general, has been compiled (Anon., 1982).

Infobase produced by WCMC, January 1992

MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS Following European colonisation, changes occurred to the forest cover. According to the entry in the Register of Public Property (1879) they covered 11,385ha, whilst exact measurements now indicate a coverage of only 3,984 (70% of national park area gives another figure of 2,788ha). If the 1879 figure is at all accurate there has been a reduction of some 65% in forest cover in just over 100 years. In the south and west of the national park there are areas of deforestation, fires and grazing and in some parts the natural vegetation cover has been replaced by commercial species plantations of Canary pine Pinus canariensis and Monterey Pine Pinus radiata. These activities are being eliminated slowly, although some problems are derived by the existence of private property on the boundary of the parks. There is a rat and feral cat and dog population, which is, however, considered to be low.

STAFF In addition to the director, there is a park botanist, four interpreters and sixteen forest wardens.

BUDGET Most of the Gomera budget of 48,000,000 pesetas (December 1983) is spent on projects outside the park boundary in the buffer zone. Additional funding is being sought to purchase adjacent laurel forest blocks.

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION ICONA (National Institute for the Conservation of Nature), Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, National Park Service, Centre for National Parks Programme in the Canaries, a Laguna, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Canaries.

REFERENCES

- Anon. (1982). A plan for interpretation of the resources of Garajonay National Park and Gomera Island. Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca, y Alimentacion, Instituto para la Conservacion de la Naturaleza and the US Departments of Agriculture and Interior. 59 pp.
- Banares, A. (n.d.). Vegetacion y flora del parque nacional de Garajonay. (La Gomera). Centro de Coordinacion de Parques Nacionales. Tenerife.
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- ICONA and US Depts. of Agriculture and Interior (1982). A Plan for interpretation of the resources of Garajonay National Park and Gomera Island.
- Ministerio de Agricultura Pesca y Alimentacion and Instituto Nacional Para la Conservacion de la Naturaleza (1985). Parque nacional de Garajonay. Plan rector de Uso y Gestion (Periodo 1985-1988). Gomera. Islas Canarias.
- Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores de Espana (1985). Nomination of Garajonay National Park for inclusion in the World Heritage List.

DATE November 1986, updated May 1990
0841V

DESIGNATION POUR LA LISTE DU PATRIMOINE MONDIAL

Convention concernant la protection du patrimoine mondial, naturel et culturel

Nom: PARC NATIONAL DE GARAJONAY

No d'identification: 380

Date de réception par le secrétariat: 30.12.85

Etat Partie contractante ayant présenté la désignation du bien, conformément à la Convention: ESPAGNE

Résumé préparé par l'UICN (avril 1986) d'après la désignation d'origine soumise par le pays. L'original et tous les documents présentés à l'appui de cette désignation seront disponibles pour consultation aux réunions du bureau et du comité.

1. SITUATION:

Le Parc national de Garajonay se trouve sur La Gomera (378 km²), l'une des sept îles situées à l'ouest de l'archipel des Canaries, au large de la côte Nord-Ouest de l'Afrique, dans l'océan Atlantique. 28°09'N, 17°14'E.

2. DONNEES JURIDIQUES:

La Constitution de 1812 a aboli les états de noblesse et transféré la propriété et l'administration des forêts aux gouvernements municipaux. Toujours au 19e siècle, les forêts ont été déclarées propriété publique et figurent comme telles sur la liste du Registre de la propriété publique datant de 1879. Le parc national (forêts publiques) appartient aux six districts municipaux de La Gomera.

Le Parc national a été établi en mars 1981, mais la conservation de la nature à l'intérieur du parc est couverte par différents textes juridiques, notamment: les lois et réglementations sur les sites naturels protégés, les lois et réglementations sur les forêts, les lois et réglementations sur les terres, quatre décrets royaux et trois ordonnances.

3. IDENTIFICATION:

Le Parc national de Garajonay (3984 ha) occupe la partie centrale de l'île de La Gomera, et atteint des altitudes oscillant entre 600m et 1492m. Il comprend un plateau érodé (avec un cratère central) et un terrain central en pente douce, ainsi que des escarpements aux pentes abruptes. La Gomera est la seule île des Canaries à n'avoir eu aucune éruption volcanique récente, son sol est formé de couches de basaltes horizontales. On y trouve des sources et cours d'eau en abondance et la couverture forestière sur le plateau de la Gomera provoque une condensation de vapeur d'eau qui entretient les principales sources de l'île.

La végétation est luxuriante et se maintient grâce à l'humidité, à la vapeur d'eau condensée et aux sources et cours d'eau nombreux. La caractéristique la plus marquante est la forêt de lauriers, en majeure partie située à l'intérieur des frontières du parc. Près de 70% du parc national est boisé, avec une prédominance de Laurisilvia canaria. La flore relevée dans le Parc national de Garajonay compte 450 espèces, dont 34 sont endémiques à l'île

et, sur ces 34, huit espèces limitées au parc national. Ce type de végétation ressemble à celui de l'ère glaciaire, qui a largement disparu d'Europe méridionale en raison des changements climatiques. Sa répartition se limite à quelques rares endroits, sur les îles médio-atlantiques et même là, elle est dégradée.

Deux espèces d'oiseaux, le pigeon des lauriers à queue blanche et le pigeon des lauriers à queue sombre, endémiques aux Canaries et à La Gomera, se limitent presque exclusivement au parc national. On pense que 40 à 60% de la faune invertébrée est endémique.

4. ETAT DE PRESERVATION/CONSERVATION:

Après la colonisation européenne au 15^e siècle, des changements majeurs sont intervenus dans la couverture forestière. Celle-ci diminua de près de 65% en à peine plus de 100 ans. Au sud et à l'ouest du parc national, on trouve des zones déboisées, brûlées et transformées en pâturages, et à certains endroits la végétation naturelle a été remplacée par des plantations d'espèces commerciales: pins des Canaries et pins de Monterey. Ces activités sont progressivement éliminées mais il la présence de propriétés privées aux limites des parcs pose des problèmes. Rats, chats haretts et chiens redevenus sauvages sont nombreux.

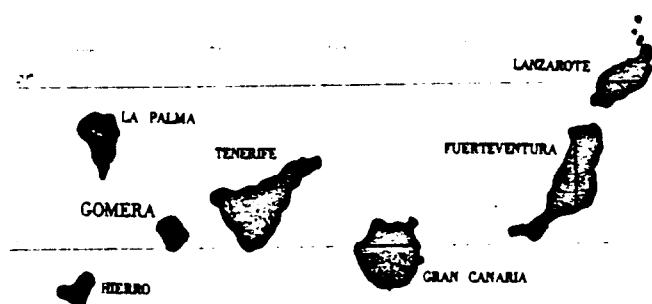
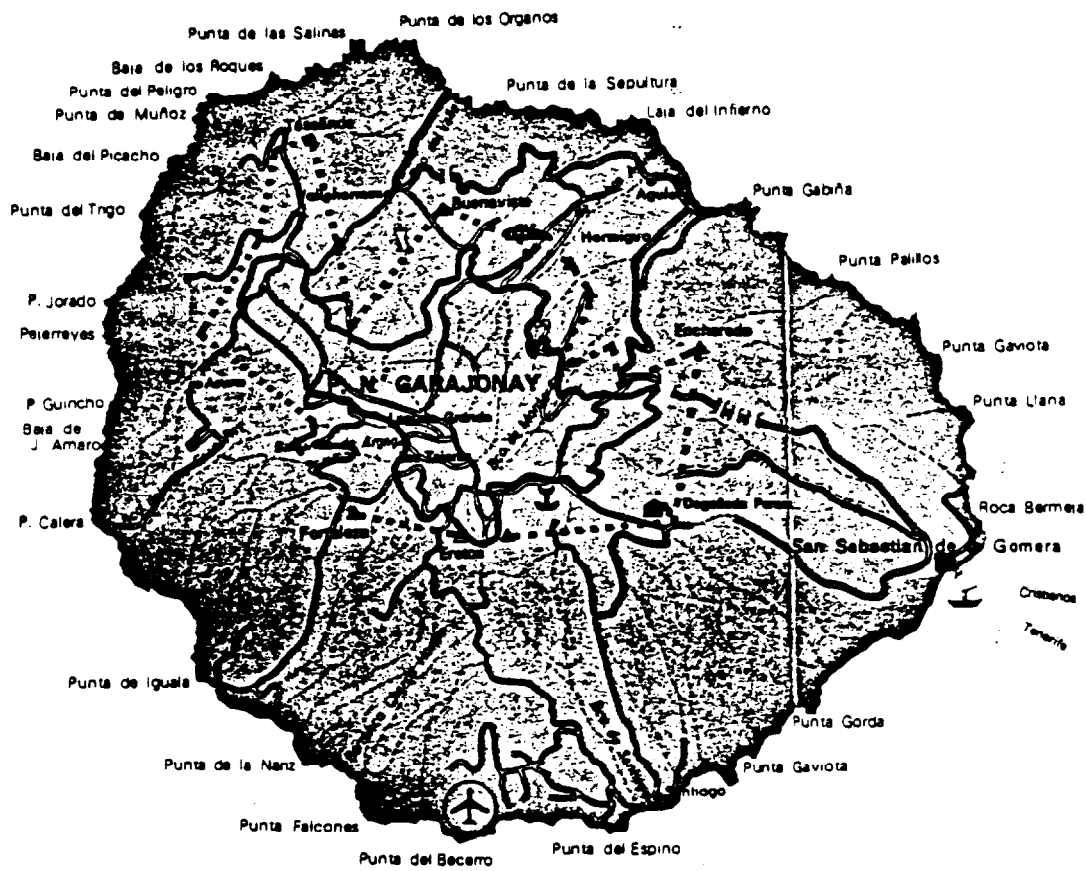
Le parc national se trouve sous la juridiction administrative de l'ICONA, organe indépendant rattaché au ministère de l'Agriculture, de la Pêche et de l'Alimentation. Un directeur est chargé de l'administration, menée à bien par un conseil de gestion composé de représentants du gouvernement local et des universités. Différentes mesures de conservation ont été prises: interdiction de pâturage, en 1942; décret protégeant 26 espèces de plantes, en 1962; interdiction d'abattre des arbres, en 1964; campagne pour restaurer l'équilibre de la forêt, en 1970; interdiction de prélever des feuilles et éradication active d'espèces exotiques telles que Tradescantia flumensis, Pinus et Eucalyptus et remplacement par des espèces indigènes; décret royal 3181 pour la protection des oiseaux, en 1980, et enfin, établissement du parc national en 1981. Le plan de gestion pour le parc comprend des articles séparés sur la prévention des incendies, l'interprétation et l'écologie, les ressources génétiques, la recherche sur deux espèces d'oiseaux endémiques, et enfin sur un programme d'éradication de Tradescantia flumensis. Le parc national est découpé en réserve biogénétique, zone intermédiaire, zone d'utilisation extensive et zone de services.

Outre le directeur, le parc dispose de huit employés; son budget équivaut à 320 600 dollars américains.

RAISONS JUSTIFIANT LA DESIGNATION POUR LA LISTE DU PATRIMOINE MONDIAL:

Pour justifier la désignation du parc national de Garajonay en tant que bien du patrimoine mondial, le gouvernement de l'Espagne donné les raisons suivantes:

- a) Bien culturel. Critère examinés par ICOMOS.
- b) Bien naturel
- (iv) Biotope d'espèces rares et en danger. Garajonay constitue l'un des rares vestiges de forêt tertiaire de lauriers existant encore dans la région. Outre la forêt de lauriers, on trouve 450 espèces de plantes, dont 8 endémiques au parc.



DESIGNATION POUR LE PATRIMOINE MONDIAL -- EVALUATION TECHNIQUE DE L'UICN

380 PARC NATIONAL DE GARAJONAY (ESPAGNE)

1. DOCUMENTATION:

- (i) Fiche de données de l'UICN
- (ii) Consultations: représentants du gouvernement espagnol, O. Hamann, H. Synge, E. Fernandez Galiano, D. Bramwell, C. Gomez-Campo, R. Milne
- (iii) Littérature: plan de gestion de Garajonay (1985), plan d'interprétation (1982)
- (iv) Visite du site du 19 au 21 octobre 1986

2. COMPARAISON AVEC D'AUTRES AIRES:

La forêt de lauriers est une flore subtropicale qui recouvrait la région méditerranéenne pendant la plus grande partie de l'ère tertiaire. Le climat, tempéré par l'océan, a favorisé la survie de cette association de plantes aux Canaries, longtemps après que les changements climatiques aient provoqué sa disparition sur le continent.

Il n'existe que cinq aires protégées dans la province biogéographique des Iles médio-atlantiques. Elles sont toutes plus vastes que Garajonay mais aucune ne contient une forêt de lauriers aussi étendue que celle du parc. On trouve aussi des parcelles de forêts de lauriers aux Açores et à Madère, mais dégradées et moins riches en espèces que celles de Garajonay. Les trois autres parcs nationaux du groupe des Canaries ont été établis principalement pour leurs caractéristiques volcaniques et ne possèdent pas de forêts de lauriers. La petite Réserve de la biosphère de Canal y Los Tiles, sur l'île de La Palma, possède, certes, une forêt de lauriers mais celle-ci est beaucoup plus petite et moins importante que celle de Garajonay. Sur l'île de La Palma, d'autres petites parcelles de forêts de lauriers ne sont pas protégées.

Ainsi, le Parc national de Garajonay contient le dernier vestige important de "forêt fossile" de l'écosystème de forêt de lauriers. Sa flore, commune durant l'ère tertiaire, est apparentée à des formes ancestrales de nombreuses plantes modernes présentes aujourd'hui en Méditerranée. Elle présente aussi des points communs avec la flore de l'océan Indien, reflétant l'importance de la mer de Thétis en tant que voie de migration, pour l'évolution des plantes. Il n'est donc pas facile d'établir de comparaison car Garajonay est véritablement unique.

3. INTEGRITE

Les principaux problèmes de gestion sont les incendies et l'invasion de plantes exotiques qui font concurrence à la végétation indigène. Différentes mesures de restauration ont été mises en oeuvre, de même qu'un "programme de sauvetage génétique" et la situation de la région s'est nettement améliorée, elle joue un rôle important en tant que bassin versant pour les villages de la plaine. La superficie du parc est restreinte, mais en rapport avec les dimensions de l'île, et suffisante pour assurer la survie des communautés endémiques de plantes qui y subsistent.

Un plan de gestion du parc, d'une durée de quatre ans, a été approuvé par décret présidentiel en juillet 1986. Un autre plan concernant l'éducation et l'interprétation a également été préparé. Un centre pour les visiteurs du

parc, dont la réalisation aura coûté 2 millions de dollars, sera bientôt terminé et d'excellentes brochures d'information sur le parc sont à la disposition du public. Le personnel comprend trente membres dont un botaniste travaillant à plein temps, ce qui reflète l'importance attachée à la flore du parc.

Il convient aussi de noter le soutien considérable accordé par la population locale de La Gomera à la protection des forêts du parc qu'elle considère comme un élément indissociable de son patrimoine naturel et culturel. En fait, à La Gomera, la tradition de la conservation remonte à cinq cents ans au moins et l'île a eu la chance de rester à l'abri du développement intense que d'autres îles du groupe ont connu.

4. COMMENTAIRES ADDITIONNELS

On envisage actuellement d'augmenter les dimensions du parc et le gouvernement pourrait acheter une nouvelle région forestière importante. L'intérêt du bien en serait accru. Pour la communauté scientifique mondiale, l'importance du parc tient à la fois aux espèces végétales endémiques qui s'y trouvent et au rôle essentiel qu'il pourrait jouer pour la compréhension du fonctionnement de l'écosystème de forêt de lauriers. A cet égard, il conviendrait d'encourager des efforts accrus en vue d'élaborer un programme de recherche et de surveillance continue.

5. EVALUATION

Le Parc national de Garajonay est considéré comme une aire protégée unique en Espagne du fait de l'importance de sa flore endémique (34 espèces) au niveau international et en tant que dernier grand vestige d'un écosystème autrefois commun. Il mérite donc d'être inscrit à la Liste du patrimoine mondial conformément aux critères (ii) exemple exceptionnel de l'évolution biologique de l'écosystème de forêt de lauriers et (iii) contenant des biotopes d'espèces de plantes rares et endémiques. Outre la flore relique endémique, le parc abrite une faune d'Invertébrés riche et endémique, ainsi que deux espèces d'Oiseaux rares.

6. RECOMMANDATIONS

Le Parc national de Garajonay devrait être inscrit à la Liste du patrimoine mondial. Le comité est invité à féliciter le gouvernement de l'Espagne et la population locale de L'île de La Gomera qui contribue par ses efforts au maintien et à la restauration des valeurs du parc, du point de vue de la conservation de la nature. Il serait également bon d'encourager les possibilités d'extension des dimensions du parc et les projets de recherche sur l'écosystème.

