

Presenting a paper at the Starlight Conference

Please email John Hearnshaw (john.hearnshaw@canterbury.ac.nz) and Nalayini Brito (nbrito@vinstar.co.nz) with the following information by July 31:

Title: "Towards the creation of the first dark sky reserve in Uruguay"

Abstract: (max 300 words)

The province of Rocha, in Uruguay, has 200.000 hectares of lagoons, morass, streams and rivers, declared as "Reserva de Biósfera" by Unesco in 1976. Uruguay has 16 areas integrated into the National Protected Areas System (SNAP), of which 5 are located in Rocha. Protected areas contribute to the preservation of the country's natural and cultural heritage, while promoting sustainable development that creates opportunities for local communities. On April 23, 2019, an agreement was signed between the Institute of Colonization (INC) and the Eastern Regional University Center (CURE) of the Universidad de la República, for the management of a site in the "India Muerta" region, characterized by its rich biodiversity, beautiful natural landscapes bordered by mountains, and located in one of the darkest sky regions of the country. Preliminary measurements of the brightness of the sky with the SQM have yielded values between 21.7 and 21.9 on the periphery of the region.

This site contains numerous "Indian Cerritos"; buildings made by the original inhabitants thousands of years ago, which are seen as elevations covered by native forests. It is the first time that a group of Indian cerritos has passed to state lands, and also to be managed by scientists of the University. The archeologists Gianotti and del Puerto have determined that some of the indian cerritos of this region are among the oldest in all South America. Because of their great fertility and elevation, over them native forests are developed with plant and animal species, many of them priority for conservation. In addition, it seems that the original inhabitants of the cerritos used the Southern Cross constellation as a temporary and seasonal marker, so the site has potential for Archaeology and Ethnoastronomy. We conclude that the place has excellent conditions for the development of cultural and astronomical tourism.

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