



ICFC conserves nature in the tropics where biodiversity abounds and is most under threat. With our small team and dedicated field partners, we are achieving lasting conservation gains and large co-benefits for climate and local communities.



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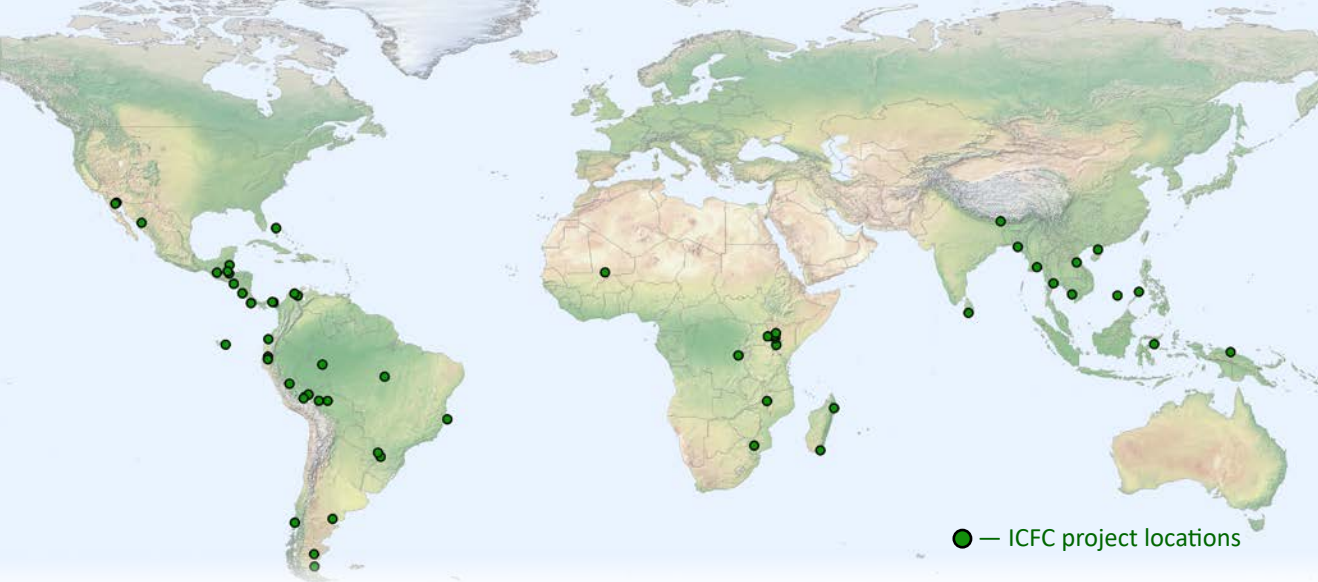
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IUCN Red List codes used in this report

CR – Critically Endangered
EN – Endangered
VU – Vulnerable
NT – Near Threatened

Photo: Blunt-headed Tree Snake by Bob Ferguson

Front cover: Cloud Forest Pygmy Owl painting by Tracy Taylor



ICFC impact

17.4 million hectares
(and additional marine areas)
covered by ICFC projects
in
37 countries

319,000 people
benefit from project related jobs,
improved livelihoods and education

\$65 million
invested since 2007

5.5 billion tonnes
CO₂ equivalent stored

> 500
Threatened and Near Threatened species protected
(that we know of)

Chairman's Message

On behalf of ICFC's Board and staff (pictured below from our 2023 AGM), I am pleased to report that ICFC has had another year of success in conserving biodiversity "where nature needs us most" – to the benefit of the local communities with whom we work and people around the world.

We look forward with excitement to the year ahead under the leadership of ICFC's new CEO, Barnabe Geis, who joins us in May 2024.

To our supporters, a big thank you from all of us and on behalf of the ten million-plus species we share the planet with!

Claude Gascon
ICFC Chair



Land conservation at scale



Jurua River, Brasil
Photo: Instituto Juruá

Brazil: Kayapo Project

In Brazil's highly threatened southeastern Amazon, Kayapo territory continues to hold strong thanks to the coordination and increased capacity of our three Kayapo NGO partners.

How has the project managed to succeed in the face of increasing threats of land invasion for illegal resource extraction? Kayapo Project success rests on five pillars:

1. Institutional strengthening and capacity building of Kayapo NGOs
2. Strong territorial monitoring and surveillance
3. Equitable and sustainable economic enterprises
4. Political action and legal support
5. Cultural affirmation and valorization

In 2023, Kayapo Project operations included trade in Brazil nut and cumaru nut, the international field course, sportfishing on the Xingu and Iriri rivers, territorial management planning, REDD+ carbon project planning, and the crucial territorial surveillance work.



Guard posts continue to play a key role in territorial defence by the Kayapo. One new guard post was added to western border defence bringing the total to sixteen. If funds allowed, adding more guard posts would augment security and other benefits.

Guard posts signal to voracious frontier society that the Kayapo of a region are organized for territorial defence—an effective deterrence.

In 2024, we are adding a media and education curriculum to the guard post program, providing up to 2,500 Kayapo guardians, mostly youth, with knowledge and skills to protect their territory, affirm their culture, and resist the negative influences of predatory frontier society.

To learn more and stay in touch, sign up for the Kayapo Project newsletter at Kayapo.org.

Size of area: 90,000 km² – bigger than 91 countries
Field partners: Associação Floresta Protegida, Instituto Kabu, and Instituto Raoni
Since 2007: \$ 17,781,264

Above: Spectacled caiman. Photo: John Meisner

Left: A Kayapo woman opens a Brazil nut pod.

Right: Hyacinth macaws (VU). Photos: Pedro Peloso





Peru: MAAP deforestation alerts continue to curb forest loss in the Andes-Amazon

First, some good news: The deforestation rate in the Amazon decreased by 50% from 2022 to 2023 according to Brazil's space research agency INPE. Now in its tenth year, the Monitoring of the Andean Amazon Project (MAAP) continues to play a role by pinpointing deforestation, identifying the cause and spurring early action.

MAAP expanded the geographic scope of its real-time monitoring system to cover the wider Amazon biome. This yielded reports about carbon reserves across the Amazon and a big picture look at illegal mining across the region. In addition to covering a broader geographic area, steps were taken to strengthen the capacity of local actors and pilot innovative strategies that deter illegal deforestation.

In this effort, ICFC's partner, Amazon Conservation, garnered international and national press coverage of important illegal deforestation events and deepened collaboration and information-sharing with civil society and governments in Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, Colombia, and Bolivia. This led to tangible, on-the-ground action and interventions.

Results included three successful operations against illegal gold mining in Brazil that led to fines for environmental crimes in Mato Grosso. In Colombia, the Attorney General's office has expressed how valuable MAAP's real-time monitoring data has been for their ongoing investigations. In Bolivia, Amazon Conservation's sister organization ACEAA established a partnership with Madidi National Park officials, sharing with them confidential policy briefs on narco-trafficking and illegal gold mining in this very important park. With an ongoing political crisis in Peru, MAAP focused on regional capacity building and providing technical assistance to forest users, leading to better cooperation and accountability in tackling illegal deforestation.

<i>Size of area:</i>	Andes Amazon region of five countries
<i>Field partner:</i>	Amazon Conservation and Conservación Amazónica - ACCA
<i>Since 2013:</i>	\$ 1,675,208

Above: While MAAP's use of remote sensing data is highly effective, drone overflights in Los Amigos Conservation Concession detected illegal logging of individual high-value trees that would be missed by remote sensing.
Photo: ACCA

Peru: Los Amigos Conservation Concession

ABOUT LACC: Established in 2001 as Peru's—and the world's—first conservation concession, Los Amigos Conservation Concession (LACC) has immeasurable conservation value. It lies at the mouth of the Los Amigos River, protecting its watershed and more than 146,000 hectares of diverse Amazonian forest. It borders the world-renowned Manú National Park and Tambopata National Reserve and serves as a buffer zone for the remote Madre de Dios Territorial Reserve—a region used by Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation or Initial Contact (PIACI, for its acronym in Spanish), safeguarding this vulnerable group. In 2011, ICFC created a trust fund to endow positions for LACC guards (*Promotores de Conservación*).

2023 HIGHLIGHTS: Conservación Amazónica's strategy of combining state-of-the-art technology with frequent ground patrols has continued to yield positive results, with zero illegal logging incidents reported in 2023. Our eleven Promotores carried out 205 patrols (by river, land, or both), supported by drone overflights and high-resolution satellite monitoring to detect illegal activities within LACC. Promotores also conduct biological monitoring and provide support for researchers and visitors. The recent installation at LACC of Starlink—the satellite network developed by the spaceflight company SpaceX—has led to a significant improvement in communications in the field, resulting in better coordination of patrol and surveillance activities. Promotores are now using the EarthRanger application to collect and organize geospatial data for patrol and monitoring purposes. In April 2023 ACCA hired its first ever female *Promotora*, Ibis Castro.



As deforestation worsens in Peru's Madre de Dios region, LACC continues as a striking conservation success, playing a strategic and critical role as part of an 8-million-hectare block of protected wilderness that preserves high ecological integrity and functional connectivity across a vast area.

<i>Size of area:</i>	146,000 hectares (1,460 km ²)
<i>Field partner:</i>	Conservación Amazónica – ACCA
<i>Since 2011:</i>	\$ 1,026,428
<i>Trust fund capital at year-end:</i>	\$ 1,657,532

Top: Drone operation

Bottom left: Capybaras

Bottom, right: Boa esmeralda.
Photos: ACCA



Private Reserves

One of 128 nest boxes in the Laney Rickman Blue-throated Macaw reserve in Bolivia.
Photo: Asociación Armonía

Guatemala: Laguna Grande reserve

In 2023, boundary delineation and patrols were improved in collaboration with government agencies. The community engagement strategy was advanced, highlighted by the signing of three Conservation Agreements with local communities. This led to the establishment of a Fish Replenishment Zone along 1,500 metres of the Sarstún River, the conservation of 200 hectares of mangrove forest, and the prevention of illegal logging in Laguna Grande. Communities received assistance for community water infrastructure. And an ecotourism plan was successfully implemented and provides substantial income for the reserve while boosting the local economy.

In March, ICFC donors visited the reserve along with ICFC's Scott Hecker, who was delighted to see so many community members engaged and the wide variety of conservation-related jobs.

In 2012, ICFC helped purchase land to create Laguna Grande reserve as part of the Rio Sarstún protected area. The reserve protects Caribbean rainforest, karst cliffs, freshwater springs, brackish coastal lagoons, mangroves, and nearshore marine habitats.

Size of area: 2,025 hectares

Field partner: Fundación para el Ecodesarrollo y la Conservación (FUNDAECO)

Since 2021 (reserve management): \$ 196,964

Top, right: The ridgetop campsite at Cerro Chucantí. Photo: ADOPTA

Below: White hawks are a common sight at Laguna Grande. Photo: Scott Hecker



Panama: Cerro Chucantí Reserve

In 2023, ADOPTA made repairs to the reserve's main field station and significantly improved its ridgetop campsite located at 1,300 masl. It deployed more than 20 camera traps throughout the reserve and continued to maintain a permanent park ranger presence that protects the reserve from poachers, loggers, and the risk of squatters.

Located in the Province of Darién and within the Tumbes-Chocó-Magdalena Biodiversity Hotspot, Cerro Chucantí is an isolated massif that rises from sea level to 1,444 meters and sustains a diverse montane and cloud forest tropical ecosystem. Hosting many endemic and threatened species, to date, over 60 new species of flora and fauna have been discovered at Cerro Chucantí. The main threats to the reserve and its rich biodiversity are slash-and-burn farming, logging and cattle ranching.

Size of area: 900 hectares

Field partner: Asociación ADOPTA el Bosque Panamá

Since 2016: \$ 379,453

Do small reserves matter?

The Chucantí Salamander (*Bolitoglossa chucantiensis*) is only known from Cerro Chucantí reserve in Panama. The species' estimated total range is just 400 hectares. Yes, they matter.



Photo: Nestor Fariña

Argentina: Rincón de Santa María reserve

A grassroots group of volunteers, friends, biologists, and reserve rangers is caring for Rincón de Santa María Natural Reserve in the Province of Corrientes. The reserve protects 3,568 hectares of natural flooded grasslands and savannas and forest remnants undergoing restoration. It is an important protected area for the Southern Cone Mesopotamian savanna ecoregion due to its rich biodiversity. To date, 330 species of birds, 39 species of amphibians, 61 species of reptiles, 25 species of large and medium-sized mammals, and 800 species of plants have been recorded in the reserve.

In 2023, control of exotic pines was carried out on 267 hectares of invaded grasslands. The project team conducted 10 field campaigns and planted 1,000 native seedlings raised in the project's nursery. They held seven Environmental Education and Awareness days at the main square of the town of Ituzaingó and in a school called *Escuela de la Familia Agrícola* that is adjacent to the reserve. Biological surveys of the reserve's flora were carried out to produce a catalog of native plants of the region. So far, 207 species have been documented with photographs, detailed descriptions, and distribution info.

Size of area:	3,568 hectares
Field partner:	Nestor Fariña leads a team of naturalists and volunteers
Since 2015:	\$ 116,868



Bolivia: Barba Azul reserve

In 2023, despite a formidable dry season influenced by El Niño, no wildfires spread into the Reserve thanks to the effectiveness of the firebreak network and rapid response team when lightning ignited fires inside the reserve. Some highlights of the year included observing 139 blue-throated macaws in a single night roost, increased diversity of shorebirds with 11 species taking advantage of wet and dry grasslands maintained by cattle, a new record of 54 visiting tourists, and near completion of a large boardwalk with bird blinds on the River Omi. **Thanks go to ICFC's Poon Fund for Tropical Nature Reserves for support for the Rio Omi boardwalk.**

Size of area:	11,000 hectares
Field partner:	Asociación Armonía
Since 2010:	\$ 544,728

Above: Blue-throated macaws flying to their night roosts. **Photo:** Miguel Martinez

Below: Barba Azul supports over 2,000 migratory buff-breasted sandpipers. **Photo:** Teodoro Camacho—Asociación Armonía



Kenya: Challenges and progress at Mukutan Conservancy

2023 was a year of recovery and progress for Mukutan following two tumultuous years in which drought led to widespread invasions by pastoralists desperate to find forage for their cattle. The rains returned early in the year and stability returned to the area, giving a chance to rebuild and continue to lay the foundations to implement the larger vision for this important reserve rebuild.

Community: Central to Mukutan's approach is engaging with the six different neighbouring tribal communities. Many meetings were held by the Mshipi (community committees) to organize a cattle fattening program and community grazing schemes and much else. Also appreciated were a youth education program and scholarships, uniforms and learning materials supplied to local schools.

Livestock: A big problem was how to provide pastoralist communities with sustainable use of forage and water resources for their livestock during droughts. The solution is the Conservancy's community livestock grazing program, which has put in place systems to monitor and control community use of land set aside for this purpose.

Anti-poaching: The main task was the integration of the National Police Reservists who were recruited in 2022. The anti-poaching team improved coordination with Government security

forces and community elders, leading to much better deterrence and coordination around criminal activity. It also improved the rapid response to human-wildlife conflict.

Infrastructure: Over 45 km of fence damaged during the invasions was rebuilt, bringing a sharp decline in elephant and buffalo damage to local crops. Also rebuilt were several security bases. Conservancy volunteers raised funds to build a new primary school for a neighbouring community.

Agriculture: Mukutan is pursuing a commercial farming partnership that will generate revenue. The community avocado scheme is supporting 200 farmers and achieved sales of 8 tonnes of avocados in 2023.

The Mukutan Wilderness Education Center embarked on the ambitious goal of peacebuilding through outdoor education. A roster of day and overnight programs for Kenyan schools will be implemented by the local community. Progress this year included a 14-day adventure guide training program, during which eight local young men from different tribal groups were trained in first aid, wilderness survival, and teaching skills. **Thank you to the Paul W. O'Leary Foundation** for making possible this youth nature program!

Size of area:	36,500 hectares
Field partner:	Gallmann Memorial Foundation
Since 2017:	\$ 1,974,042



Photo: Mukutan Conservancy

Learning, communities, and building human capacity in Latin America



Photo: Osa Conservation



Ecuador: FCAT "Next Generation Club"

In the Ecuadorian Chocó, a biogeographical region of outsized importance for conservation, a grassroots organization is recruiting and creating future conservationists. "The Next Generation Club" was launched by FCAT in 2022 to equip local youth with skills in environmental conservation and research through structured training and mentoring. In a region where 96% of the primary forest has been destroyed, the neighbouring 120,000-ha Mache-Chindul Ecological Reserve has high significance. Yet, despite its designation as a federal reserve, landowners continue to clearcut the forest to grow crops, graze cattle, and hunt for sustenance in a region where over 90% of local residents live in poverty. FCAT land within the reserve serves as the base for the Next Generation Club.

In 2023, Club activities included workshops with experts in ecology, biology, botany, herpetology, ornithology, and wildlife photography. Club members also benefit from cultural exchanges with visiting foreign students and mentorship from local scientists.

November 11, 2023 was a day to remember for nine students who were awarded certificates from FCAT and ICFC in a graduation ceremony held at the FCAT Reserve Biological Station for the first cohort of the Next Generation Club. It was an emotional ceremony attended by their families and all FCAT personnel. Congratulations to these nine young leaders who are actively promoting the conservation of the Chocó!

Size of area: 1,200 km²

Field partner: Fundación para la Conservación de los Andes Tropicales (FCAT)

Since 2022: \$ 37,689

Colombia: Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta

The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is the highest coastal mountain (5,775 m) in the world and is designated a Key Biodiversity Area. It is home to 17 endemic amphibians, including 5 species of harlequin toads (*Atelopus*), the world's most threatened genus of amphibians due to disease transmission by the Bd fungus and habitat loss.

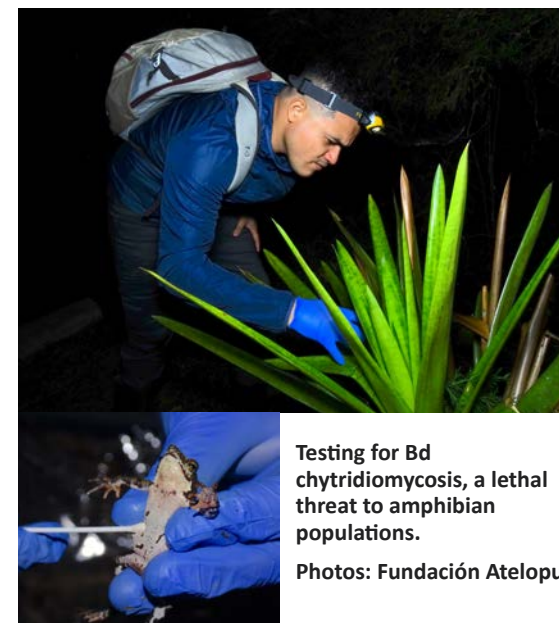
In 2023, 20 expeditions were carried out to collect demographic data on the Endangered Santa Marta harlequin toad (*Atelopus laetissimus*; 290 individuals found) and the Endangered San Lorenzo harlequin toad (*Atelopus nahumae*; 54 found). The presence of tadpoles was recorded in the streams visited for both species.

Expeditions are used as opportunities to plan and develop conservation strategies together with local communities. Examples are the ecological restoration of streams, the installation of troughs and fences in critical areas, and the care and maintenance of the community-managed plant nursery. Camera trap data is collected on fauna found on the streams used by *Atelopus* species and the images are useful in educational and recreational activities with children in remote communities.

Size of area: 2,520 km²

Field partner: Fundación Atelopus

Since 2021: \$ 104,499



Testing for Bd chytridiomycosis, a lethal threat to amphibian populations.

Photos: Fundación Atelopus

Peru: ICFC Field Training Fellowship

The fellowship program provided field training for 16 fellows in two cohorts in 2023. Gaining technical skills and overcoming the challenges and the rigours of field work fostered a sense of pride and accomplishment among the fellows. Workshops and training sessions were plentiful and focused on a wide range of topics and skills involved in fieldwork and conservation. Sampling techniques, First Aid and survival, data processing, mercury testing, bat taxonomy, and science communication were some of the topics covered. The training centered around the importance of insects in maintaining ecosystem health—a message the fellows will disseminate within their communities.

The Fellowship program has consistently surpassed expectations, growing stronger with each successive cohort. The 2023 participants completed their training with a sense of hope and the expectation that they will emerge as influential conservation leaders, armed with the knowledge, skills, and passion to effect tangible change in the world.

Field partner: Alejandro Lopera Toro & Adrian Forsyth
Since 2022: \$ 181,672

Peru: Spectacled Bear

Habitat restoration at high elevations in Peru is a priority because these cloud forests are rich in endemic species and important for the hydrology of Amazon basin. The spectacled bear (“Ukuku” in Quechua) holds significant cultural value for the Quechuan indigenous people of the Andean region. Unfortunately, the species is under threat from habitat loss, illegal hunting, and human-wildlife conflict. These highly arboreal bears are the only mammal species to move freely from cloud forest into the upper elevation grasslands; hence they likely play an important role in seed dispersal, which is especially important in view of climate change impacts on ecosystems.

The Andean Bear Conservation Program aims to ensure the survival of this iconic species through scientific research, innovative technologies, habitat restoration, and community awareness. In 2023, project staff provided training to 11 local schools, engaged a total of 170 children and 50 adults, and held a two-day environmental awareness immersive experience in the cloud forest for local



Above: An ICFC Field Trainee fellow learns tree climbing.
Photo: Elena Chaboteaux



Right: Spectacled bear with tracking collar.
Photo: ACCA

communities. Six local ambassadors were trained to serve as leaders to advance conservation efforts in their own communities. The annual ‘Ukuku Raymi’ (or Andean Bear) Festival was attended by about 500 people, including 16 schools and 5 local communities. To monitor the movements and habitat utilization of spectacled bears and other mammals, 200 bear feces were collected, 95 camera traps were deployed, and 11,900 GPS data points were collected from two spectacled bears. ACCA, in part through its Wayqecha Cloud Forest Research Station, is training the next generation of conservationists to help secure the future of spectacled bears and cloud forests.

Size of area: 9,119 hectares
Field partner: Conservación Amazónica—ACCA
Since 2021: \$ 73,669

Costa Rica: Ridge to Reef Initiative and Nature Club

In 2023, a lot happened in the Ridge to Reef initiative run by Osa Conservation (OC):

- 1. Rainforest Protectors and Rangers patrolled 51,743 km in forests using the Earth Ranger app.
- 2. 107,565 trees of native rare and/or threatened species were planted on farmland in the AmistOsa Biological Corridor.
- 3. In community-led mangrove restoration, 64,000 mangroves were planted.
- 4. The Restoration Network—a collaboration with farmers to restore degraded land and implement wildlife-friendly farming practices—grew from 210 to 346 local farmers in just one year.
- 5. OC deployed 27 arboreal bridges throughout the AmistOsa Biological Corridor landscape to help wildlife safely cross roads.
- 6. OC deployed or monitored 86 transmitters to track key wildlife species including 83 vultures, 2 Baird’s tapirs, and one rehabilitated ocelot released on the Osa Conservation campus.
- 7. OC welcomed over 1,000 visitors, including 24 early-career fellows and interns—the next generation of ecologists and conservation leaders.
- 8. OC opened the region’s first canopy tower, 100 feet in height.

Osa Ridge to Reef

Osa Conservation's Ridge to Reef initiative is aimed at a climate adaptive future for people and nature in southern Costa Rica. This involves empowering civil society, building capacity at the local level, and increasing climate resilience through wildlife corridors and by stitching together conservation landscapes of high ecological integrity along the elevational gradient between the lowland forests of the Osa Peninsula and the highland forests of the Talamanca Mountains.

The Ridge to Reef Nature Club provides free outdoor immersion opportunities for Costa Rica’s most impoverished children. During the year, OC engaged over 400 local children in hands-on expeditions and educational activities in the wild, and organized 61 nature field experiences focused on different aspects of nature, such as: snorkeling excursions in the Golfo Dulce to see underwater marine life first-hand; rainforest canopy excursions to learn about treetop biodiversity; sea turtle patrol and hatchling release; rare and native tree planting activities; and bird monitoring (including participations in official bird counts). Thank you to the Paul W. O’Leary Foundation for supporting this youth nature program!

Size of area: 1,093 km²
Field partner: Osa Conservation (OC)
Since 2017: \$ 1,514,716

Park rangers sit on a giant Ajo tree. Juan and Jorge patrol the forests of the Osa Peninsula on the lookout for illegal activities. Local knowledge is key to the protection of forests.
Photo: Keylin Castro



Argentina: Selva de Pino Paraná

The Atlantic Forest region—considered Latin America’s most important biome for biodiversity after the Amazon Forest—is almost gone, due to habitat conversion and degradation. In Argentina, an effort spear-headed by a Canadian biologist (Kristina Cockle) more than a decade ago is demonstrating that it is possible to slow down and even reverse forest degradation and protect endangered bird habitat through youth education, and opportunities for small-holder farmers to participate in conservation.

In 2023, project staff conducted 43 workshops in 20 schools in the Department of San Pedro (Misiones), reaching 782 students. New activities developed for school workshops focused on listening and observing relationships among species in the Atlantic Forest ecosystem. A field trip to Araucaria Provincial Park was organized for one school. The project expanded its tree-planting program geographically and distributed 333 native tree seedlings to 50 rural families. Project staff also worked with teachers and students to plant 40 native saplings in a rural schoolyard.

Size of area:	100,000 hectares
Field partner:	Proyecto Selva de Pino Paraná
Since 2013:	\$ 122,270

Above, right: Parataxonomists at work at Área de Conservación Guanacaste. Photo: GDFCF

Below: The Vinaceous-breasted parrot (*Amazona vinacea*) is an Endangered species that is one of the cavity-nesting birds benefiting from the Pino Paraná project. Photo: Marcelo Hubel



Photo: GDFCF

Costa Rica: ACG Parataxonomists

Let’s start with a reminder of what Parataxonomists are. Pioneered at Área de Conservación Guanacaste (ACG), they are described by Dan Janzen as “a person derived from a rural work force who has been on-the-job trained, facilitated, and stimulated to be able to carry out quality field inventory as a graduate student in taxonomy or ecology could”. They are also the “de facto park guards” for huge swaths of ACG, preventing the conserved lands from suffering what Dan calls a “death by a thousand cuts”.

The ACG Parataxonomist program is the backbone of scientific research and conservation at ACG where, for over 30 years, Parataxonomists have focused on the bioinventory of Lepidoptera and their parasites. This work is now largely completed, and GDFCF (which works with ACG and employs 35 Parataxonomists) is assessing what is next for Parataxonomists in research and in assisting ACG in other ways.

And now a reminder about ACG: Thanks in part to the efforts of biologists Daniel H. Janzen and Winnie Hallwachs, ACG followed a distinct path as it grew from the small 10,000-ha Parque Nacional Santa Rosa (created in 1971) to span 163,000 hectares—stretching from 6 km out into the Pacific Ocean, across the dry forest coastal plain, over cloud forests on three volcanoes (Cordillera Guanacaste), and down into the Caribbean rainforest. ICFC is proud to play a supporting role.

Size of area:	163,000 hectares
Field partner:	Guanacaste Dry Forest Conservation Fund
Since 2012:	\$ 621,732
Trust fund capital at year-end 2023:	\$ 2,622,152

Panama: Indigenous-led conservation in the Maje Mountains

This project helps Wounaan communities to (1) monitor and stop illegal invasions and deforestation of their territories, and (2) see Panama’s environmental authorities enforce the law. Since ICFC began its support in 2021, 230 hectares of deforestation have been reported to authorities by four communities, of which almost half was reported in 2023. Enforcement has stepped up: 36 individuals have been cited for their environmental damages to Wounaan territories; 13 have been fined; 23 are under criminal investigation by Panama’s Attorney General office; and three were sentenced to multiple years in prison.

Other 2023 progress: the community of Maje progressed to the final stages of collective titling; Native Future trained a Wounaan technician to create the maps of deforestation and fire alerts; and we now have two Wounaan licensed drone operators and drones.

Size of area:	22,326 hectares
Field partner:	Native Future
Since 2021:	\$ 145,607



When Scott Hecker (*above*), ICFC Director of Bird Conservation, joined the Wounaan for their Christmas Bird Count, he saw the many new nature trails and their progress in establishing boat tours and accommodations for birders. (See details in ICFC’s March 2024 Newsletter). Scott says, “Who has QR codes for nature trails in the middle of the jungle? The Wounaan do.”



Community based conservation in Africa

Democratic Republic of the Congo: A milestone for community forest concessions

In eastern DRC, we are working to secure the collective land tenure, forest governance and management of traditional forestlands for local communities and forest peoples. These efforts promote biodiversity conservation while improving community livelihoods and climate change resilience and adaptation.

In 2023 the project laid groundwork for 11 Forestry Concessions for Local Communities (CFCLs) that are contiguous to the 13 CFCLs established in 2022. The complete corridor links Itombwe Natural Reserve to Kahuzi-Biega National Park—an area important for the Critically Endangered Grauer's gorilla and other wildlife.

The corridor is a massive undertaking led by our partner Strong Roots. Supported by ICFC and others (Rainforest Trust, Erol Foundation, Good Energies Foundation, and the Forest Health Alliance) the efforts are ground-breaking. Once completed (we hope, in 2024!), the corridor will cover 602,061 ha, spanning 9% of the South Kivu Province.

Size of area: 112,300 hectares (ICFC portion)

Field partner: Strong Roots

Since 2020: \$ 1,009,725

Previous page: Community members prepare nursery bags for tree seedlings for community farms.

Above, right: The fossa is a carnivore species found only in Madagascar. Photo: Joaquim Fargas

Below: Mapping is needed to develop forestry concessions for local communities. This photo and preceding page: Strong Roots



Madagascar: Farankaraina forest

The Forêt Classée de Farankaraina is a community-managed forest in the Antongil Bay area, which is home to the highest diversity of Madagascar's emblematic lemur species and more than half the known endemic species on the island. The main threats to the forest are the growing demand for land for subsistence farming, illegal logging, unsustainable collection of non-timber resources, some artisanal mining, and poaching.

ICFC's partner Fandroakando NGO works with local village associations (VOIs) to protect and restore the forest. Fandroakando appointed a new executive director in April 2023 and she has improved communication and collaboration with the VOI (through monthly meetings, elected patrollers from all villages, and a 5-year collaboration agreement). A new technical director hired in August runs all field operations and is providing SMART app training to all rangers and VOI patrollers, and compiling data at the end of each month.

Due to limited funds, reforestation was limited to managing tree seedlings. This included employing 60 VOI members for two weeding campaigns. The Aye-Aye Environment Club now has over 100 student members attending weekly meetings and they host a popular weekly radio program that raises awareness of Fandroakando's work.

Two Canadians—Kevin Tate and Claudia Morawetz—were instrumental in Fandroakando's creation in 2020 and they remain involved. Kudos to them and to the local staff and communities.

Size of area: 3,000 hectares

Field partner: Fandroakando NGO

Since 2021: \$ 366,486





Kenya: Maasai-led conservation of a vulture sanctuary

The Great Rift Valley runs through Kenya north to south and features escarpments, volcanoes, and lakes, along with the region’s distinctive wildlife.

Our project has worked to establish the Maasai-led **Kwenia Vulture Sanctuary** (3,671 ha) for Rüppell’s Vulture (CR) and other raptors. Highlights of 2023 include the construction of a solar-powered field office, well-attended ranger training sessions, and enthusiastic community gatherings in support of the still-expanding sanctuary for Kwenia Cliff vultures and other raptors. The project has reached an improved level of professionalism with better staff capacity and board governance.

Size of area: 3,671 hectares
Field partner: The Kenya Bird of Prey Trust
Since 2021: \$ 133,035

Kenya: Bat conservation at Mount Suswa

Harrison’s long-eared giant mastiff bats inhabit a few lava tube caves on the slopes of an old volcano at Mt. Suswa. There we partner with the Mt. Suswa Conservancy and the community-based Angaza Vijiji group. In 2023 drones were used to make high-definition aerial maps to help the

guards protect all cave entrances. Recordings are used to determine if colonies have young in order to inform where and when to increase protective closures. Four workshops had a broad array of attendees including one chief, two assistant chiefs, six village elders, local residents of two villages, and 12 wildlife club students.

Size of area: 5,000 hectares
Field partner: Angaza Vijiji
Since 2021: \$ 105,989

Above: The raptor guardian team being trained to monitor Rüppell’s Vultures. Photo: KBPT

Below: David Wachuli, bat project manager, with his favorite creature. Photo: Angaza Vijiji



Kenya: Kijabe Forest

Kijabe Forest, part of the eastern Afromontane biodiversity hotspot, was historically connected to the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest Reserve. We are working to restore connectivity and mitigate damage to the Kijabe forest.

Our community rangers had a busy year including daily patrolling, monitoring biodiversity and illegal activities, liaising with partner organizations and developing opportunities for alternative livelihoods derived from the forest. Rangers covered 2,000 km monthly during their patrols.

The rangers have noticed increased pressure on the Kijabe Forest ecosystem, including creeping pasture and firewood extraction. They remove wire snares set to poach small game and dismantled 1,177 snares in 2023—a ten-fold increase from 2022.

A community forest cleanup elicited great interest from the community and plans are underway to make it an annual event.

2023 marked the 10-year anniversary of our field partner Kijabe Forest Trust. We wish them continued success!

Size of area: 5,000 hectares
Field partner: Kijabe Forest Trust
Since 2017: \$ 512,208

Kenya: Mount Elgon’s “cave mining elephants”

The elephants of Mount Elgon are the only elephants in the world known to go deep into caves in search of salt. With this project, we are working to resolve human-elephant conflict, habitat loss, and poaching.

With the addition of four scouts in December 2022, our team monitored a broader swath of national forest. Twelve scouts now conduct patrols, recording data on elephant sightings, human-wildlife conflicts, and other illegal activities. They have mapped protected areas and elephant movement routes, aiding authorities with law enforcement and landscape management.

Significantly, elephants have been sighted crossing into Uganda on the north side of Mt. Elgon. This is a positive sign of a wider dispersal of elephants across the mountain to locations where they have not been seen in a long time. We have anecdotal reports of an increase in the elephant population, including the sighting of an elephant being born on the Uganda side of Mount Elgon, which, to our knowledge, would be the first since the 1970s.

The project is actively engaged in conservation, community involvement, and fundraising to sustain its operations and expand its impact in the Mount Elgon region.

Size of area: 73,700 hectares
Field partner: The East African Wild Life Society & Mount Elgon Foundation
Since 2022: \$ 69,356

Above: Mount Elgon landscape. Photo: Mount Elgon Foundation

Right: Part of the job of Kijabe rangers is to deter illegal extraction of wood from the reserve. Photo: KFT



Land and threatened species conservation in Asia and Africa



The Endangered Anoa in Sulawesi
Photo: Alliance for Tompotika Conservation

Nepal: Forest guardians continue to champion the red panda

Our Forest Guardians in Nepal continue to monitor biodiversity by transect and camera traps. A camera trap survey conducted in two Jajarkot community forests documented ten mammal species including the red panda. This was complemented by monitoring data collected by the Forest Guardians traversing 116 km of red panda habitat.

The management plans for two community forests were revised to include provisions for red panda conservation. These community forests in Rukum-West cover 84 hectares and will be managed for red panda habitat. This is thanks to the efforts of local forest users, the Divisional Forest Office, and Red Panda Network staff.

The project continues to distribute building supplies for greenhouses and to support sapling nurseries that grow panda-friendly plants. Outplanting and knowledge workshops augment local efforts to conserve the red panda. We also supported dog vaccination efforts with the goal of reducing rabies infection both for local communities and the wild red panda population.

Size of area: 261,600 hectares
Field partner: Red Panda Network (in Nepal)
Since 2017: \$ 274,883

Laos: Asian Elephants

Nakai-Nam Theun National Park (4,000 km²) in the Annamite Mountain Range is one of the largest remaining contiguous forest blocks in the Indochinese peninsula. In 2008, the Nam Theun 2 Hydropower project created a 450-km² reservoir that flooded the core habitat of the resident elephant population on the Nakai Plateau. Since then, elephants have moved closer to villages and there has been evidence of increased human-elephant conflicts off the plateau.

In 2023, Association Anoulak completed its survey of the Asian elephant population on the Nakai Plateau and surrounding areas, using a non-invasive genetic sampling method (collecting elephant dung). A total of 652 samples of elephant dung were collected from November 2022 to May 2023. Completion of the DNA data analysis is expected in 2024. The information gained from this research project will inform protected area management and Asian elephant conservation plans at the local, regional, and national levels. The species is classified as Endangered on the IUCN Red List.

Size of area: 4,000 km²
Field partner: Association Anoulak
Since 2022: \$ 52,482



Left: This nursery cultivates plants to restore habitat for the red panda. Photo: Red Panda Network
Below: Red pandas are largely arboreal and feed on bamboo, fruits and blossoms. Photo: Christopher Scharf





Indonesia: Busy year for our budding field partner in Papua

Now in its second year of existence, the Indonesian NGO YAPPENDA is maturing into an impressive and nimble group with a dedicated staff. YAPPENDA is committed to protecting and restoring the natural environment of Papua by integrating traditional knowledge and science into conservation practices for and by local Papuans.

To date, we've launched a program to plant native tree species to either restore previously degraded land, or, in the highlands, to help stabilize land around communities to avert potentially disastrous landslides. Five tree nurseries were established in the Highland and coastal areas. Nurseries are stocked with trees that can provide non-timber forest products and with seeds of native trees collected from nearby forests.

YAPPENDA is in the early stages of establishing a nature centre dedicated to preserving the astounding biodiversity of New Guinea.

Size of area: 2,700 hectares

Field partner: YAPPENDA

Since 2022: \$ 495,431

Above: Remote highland villages look to balance development goals while preserving the local environment on which they depend. Photos: YAPPENDA

Rediscovery of Attenborough's echidna

A highlight from 2023—which made the news internationally—was the rediscovery of Attenborough's long-beaked echidna (*Zaglossus attenboroughi*). This is one of five species of monotreme—egg-laying mammals that evolved 200 million years ago. Before the 2023 expedition led by YAPPENDA with Cenderawasih University students and international researchers, there was concern the species was extinct. The team captured the first-ever photos and video of the echidna



Indonesia: threatened wildlife of Sulawesi

Sulawesi's Toppotika Peninsula continued to host the world's healthiest population of the Critically Endangered maleo, which is increasing at three sites thanks to the efforts of our partner AIto.

In 2023, AIto's continued protection of their nesting grounds brought accelerating recovery for the maleo. During the year, AIto produced a new maleo poster and a field guide to the birds of Sulawesi (which AIto's staff were delighted to have).

AIto's sea turtle hatcheries had 4,868 eggs from 45 Olive Ridley nests and 7 green turtle nests, with a hatching success rate of 73%. There were no nests of the Critically Endangered hawksbill, which is concerning.

Since hiring an Outreach Manager in January 2023, AIto is now fully engaged with the government, mining officials, and community leaders in efforts to protect key areas. With support from IUCN Netherlands, AIto produced a 12-minute video about the effects of nickel mining on biodiversity and local communities titled "Toppotika: Forests, Mining, and Critical Choices".

AIto did two more expeditions into Toppotika's interior forest, documenting biodiversity and community uses of the forest. Re:wild funded protection and restoration of this area, especially the maleo corridors. The expedition verified the presence of the Sulawesi giant civet (VU) in this region for the first time.



Winning fans for the maleo

Here's one way to change the world: On World Maleo Day on November 21, 2023, AIto got busy:

- **Maleo goes to Campus** – the team visited the two Luwuk universities and gave presentations on the maleo to full houses
- **Maleo on the Road** – staff and volunteers dressed in the maleo costume, held banners and passed out leaflets at a busy intersection in Luwuk
- **Maleo on the Radio** – the team were guests on local radio for an hour talking maleo. (In 2022, the recording of a radio spot later won a radio journalism prize!)
- **Maleo on Jumbotron** – a one-minute message from Marcy Summers (AIto's Director) was aired on a continuous loop for a week at several public Jumbotron locations.
- **Maleo with the Government** – AIto had meetings with government officials to discuss maleo conservation. AIto's video about mining elicited strong interest.

Size of area: 250,000 hectares

Field partner: Alliance for Toppotika (AIto)

Since 2010: \$ 2,224,028

Below, left: Performing students and coaches from area high schools at the Toppotika International Maleo and Sea Turtle Festival. Photo: AIto

Below, right: A new Maleo poster





Mali elephant project

This project is important as a successful model of community-based natural resource management—one that protects Mali's elephants and the essential forage and water resources needed by both elephants and pastoral communities.

The project deals with the entire range of Mali's nomadic elephant population, which moves over long distances between the dry and wet seasons. Some of this range is protected by the Gourma Biosphere Reserve, created in 2021. The reserve tries to balance the needs of people and elephants, and as part of this, communities that have relocated from the core of the reserve have been provided with access to safe drinking water. Successful borehole installations at two locations were followed by the development of systems to regulate access, ensuring equitable distribution and environmental protection.

Monitoring elephant distribution and movements:

Community reports of elephant sightings show that elephants remain concentrated in the center

and west of the range, with a concerning number around the densely populated area.

Addressing human-elephant conflict: The presence of armed groups in the region accounts for the shift of elephants away from traditional areas into more settled areas. In response to this development, representatives from communities along the elephant migration route participated in training sessions focused on managing human-elephant conflicts and bushfires. This training is vital for fostering coexistence and keeping humans and elephants safe.

Elephant census: A major effort to census elephants has yielded encouraging results. High-resolution satellite images and traditional ground counts by ecoguards gave a count of 316 elephants. This included 84 males, 162 females, and 70 undetermined. The age breakdown was: 85 adults, 167 subadults, and 64 juveniles.

Size of area: 33,534 km² (size of Belgium)

Field partner: Project director Susan Canney and Field Manager Nomba Ganame

Since 2010: \$ 4,172,529



Above: The construction of boreholes helped two communities relocate away from Lake Banzena, where cattle compete with elephants for critical water resources in the dry season.

Left: General assembly to set up management committees for water infrastructure. Other assemblies established pasture perimeters around the boreholes. Photos: MEP



South Africa: Rhino conservation

South Africa is internationally recognized for its rich biodiversity, including around 80% of the world's remaining rhinos. Increasing black market prices for rhino horn and involvement of criminal syndicates in recent years pose a significant threat to rhinos. Efforts to combat rhino poaching in South Africa continue to be challenged by well-organized and agile criminal syndicates, but counter-measures by both the private sector and state agencies are managing to hold the line.

In 2023, 499 rhinos were killed by poachers for their horns—51 more than in 2022. This is well below the much higher losses experienced in earlier years. Reduced losses are thanks

to a combination of governmental strategies, collaborative interventions, and strengthened security efforts in most of the country's rhino reserves. Efforts to counter poaching remain a 24/7 commitment.

ICFC's partner Stop Rhino Poaching (SRP), focuses on supporting rangers, protecting rhinos, and sustaining security capabilities in selected reserves and security clusters around South Africa. In 2023, strategic efforts in support of effective enforcement teams contributed directly to the arrest of 15 suspected poachers, all linked to multiple rhino poaching incidents. Our project with SRP has further enhanced security efforts with technology deployments, operational readiness training, and tailored workshops for security managers.

A big thank you to the Elliott Family Foundation for supporting this work.

Size of area: 400,000 hectares

Field partner: Stop Rhino Poaching

Since 2019: \$ 549,502



Above: The lead rhino is sporting an AI-enabled foot collar for real-time monitoring and security alerts.

Left: The project deployed this tracking dog, Pongo, in January 2023 to assist anti-poaching efforts. Pongo is "doing incredibly well". Photos: SRP

Conserving threatened waterbirds



Hooded Grebe pair
Photo: Daniel Pettersen

Saving the Spoon-billed Sandpiper in Southeast Asia

Our project for the spoon-billed sandpiper (CR) continued in coastal landscapes across four countries in Asia, with a total count of 54 spoon-billed sandpipers, up from 42 in 2022. Also tallied were 85,555 other waterbirds of 68 species. As an “umbrella species” this project is really for the birds!

The habitats protected for “Spoonies” also supported 335 globally endangered Nordmann’s greenshanks, 3,210 curlew sandpipers, about 10,000 great knots and 5,000 red stints, 1,200 Eurasian curlews, 500 Asian dowitchers, 700 red knots, and 250 bar-tailed godwits.

Bird guards in Bangladesh covered 43 sites on the Bay of Bengal. The team organized a national boat race to celebrate World Migratory Bird Day with a thousand community members from Sonadia Island in attendance.

In China, bird net patrols were increased and for the first time no new illegal nets were found. (Birds are caught in “mist nets”, which are elsewhere used legally for bird banding purposes.)

In Myanmar, the team could only conduct a partial survey due to the crisis in Rakhine.

In Thailand, the capacity for field work increased and Pak Thale experienced an increase in visitors



hoping to see the spoon-billed sandpiper. ICFC Director of Bird Conservation Scott Hecker was one such visitor and was shown how the artisanal salt farming is conducted to benefit shorebird congregations. One Spoonie has returned to Pak Thale for its 8th year!

Coming soon... Stay tuned to hear about the first ever spoonies tagged with satellite transmitters during the northbound migration that left Thailand in early April 2024.

Field partners:	Sayam Chowdhury, Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force; Bangladesh Spoon-billed Sandpiper Conservation Project (BSCP); Nature Conservation Society-Myanmar; Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force China, Bird Conservation Society of Thailand
Since 2016:	\$ 548,760



Above: Spoon-billed sandpiper in winter plumage. Photo: Daniel Pettersson
Left: Looking for Spoonies at Pak Thale. Photo: Scott Hecker



Left: Site of the new visitor facility on San Cristóbal. Photo: Fundación Jocotoco

Below: Birders at the Maullín River Wetlands Nature Sanctuary. Photo: Fundación Conservación Marina



Ecuador: Galápagos Reserve

Fundación Jocotoco established its Los Petreles Reserve on San Cristóbal Island to protect the breeding habitat of the Critically Endangered Galápagos petrel, which nests on the ground under native humid Miconia forest. The main threats to this long-lived seabird are predation by cats, rats, and other feral animals and the loss of Miconia forests due to invasive plant species.

In 2023, Fundación Jocotoco continued monitoring nesting sites of the Galápagos petrel, noting since 2020 an increase in reproductive success and population density, which is promising. Satellite tracking of petrels is now being done to learn more about their preferred foraging sites and to identify threats at sea. Work continues on the construction of a visitor facility and camping area.

The reserve's irregular topography with many hills and slippery ground pose a risk for people working there and so a nature trail is under construction to provide safe access to nesting colonies. That is where ICFC's support was applied (**our thanks to the Bradstreet Family Foundation**). The nature trail is expected to be completed in 2024, having fallen behind schedule due to heavy rains, the scarcity of materials from mainland Ecuador, and delays in the transportation of construction materials.

Size of area: 120 hectares

Field partner: Fundación de Conservación Jocotoco

Since 2021: \$ 28,106

Chile: Maullín coastal wetlands

Maullín wetlands, spanning 8,000 hectares, are one of the best conserved hydrological corridors in southern Chile. In 2023 our field partner constructed a new viewing deck for birders and welcomed participation of local residents, with 14 new trainees in the wetland management course and 15 new volunteer monitors in the citizen environmental watchdog group. They assisted 19 bird-watching tour operators on best practices and marketing. To cap all this off, a first-ever Shorebird Festival was launched with 1,500 participants.

Support was provided for two warehouses for artisanal fishing families in the Curaco de Vélez Bay Nature Sanctuary. The warehouses help eliminate litter in bird resting areas and have the value of involving local fishermen more in bird conservation.

Since the project began in 2015 the area protected has expanded from 738 ha to over 8,000 ha extending from the edge of the Pacific upriver 100 km to Lago Llanquihue, below the west slope of the Andes. The immense estuarine ecosystem of the Maullin River attracts thousands of Hudsonian godwits and whimbrels, other migratory shorebirds, nesting waterbirds, and Chilean flamingos. Without careful management the area would be impacted by advancing coastal development, unregulated recreational activities, livestock trampling, and aquaculture.

Size of area: 8,152 hectares

Field partner: Fundación Conservación Marina

Since 2015: \$ 672,436

The hooded grebe (CR) and the Magellanic plover (NT) share similar habitats—barren, remote areas associated with freshwater lagoons in Patagonia.

Argentina: Magellanic Plover

In the windswept, treeless, dry, cold Patagonian Steppe lives a shy ash-colored shorebird that looks more like a dove. Recent surveys indicate that perhaps fewer than 1,000 remain.

In late 2023 field staff launched a protection effort modeled after successful measures for Piping Plovers using “predator exclosures” for nests to reduce trampling by sheep and predation by mammals and birds. Field staff surveyed 350 lakes, finding 83 adults, 4 nests at incubation stage, 11 chicks, and 11 juveniles. Nests with exclosures all produced chicks. Unlike Piping Plovers, the chicks remain protected in the exclosure after hatching and are fed by the adults. This effort will be expanded in 2024.

Size of area: 5,000 hectares

Field partner: Aves Argentinas and Ambiente Sur

Since 2022: \$ 60,493

Argentina: Hooded Grebe

During a decade of work in the highland plateaus of Patagonia this project has halted the hooded grebe's rapid decline and we are now seeing signs of increase. Impacts from invasive mink and trout and poor nesting success due to high winds are being stopped or mitigated. In addition to the annual control of predators, new-found success with hand-rearing chicks from abandoned eggs and the deployment of artificial nesting platforms is making a difference.

Since 2022, it has become clear that “hoodies” love the artificial nesting platforms our field partner has developed. 2023 marked the start of a mass deployment of up to 50 in each prime nesting lagoon. The grebes were quick to adapt to the new structures, and it is clear that these platforms are increasing their success after several years with almost no productivity.

Size of area: 575,000 hectares

Field partner: Aves Argentinas

Since 2012: \$ 799,899



Above: Hooded grebes on artificial nesting platforms

Left: Magellanic plover and chick.

Right: Predator exclosures over nests are anchored to withstand winds.

Photos:
Aves Argentina





Aquatic biodiversity

New

Brazil: Protecting aquatic biodiversity in the western Amazon

Conservation need

A tributary of the Amazon River, the Juruá River meanders for 3,500 km within Brazil alone and is characterized by its large and highly productive floodplains. These are linked by thousands of channels connecting old and new oxbow lakes which support important freshwater fisheries for local communities, piscivorous vertebrates, and several threatened and historically overexploited species such as the air-breathing pirarucú (*Arapaima gigas*)—the world's largest scaled freshwater fish—and the giant South American river turtle (*Podocnemis expansa*). Illegal fishing and poaching are the problems that need addressing.

What we're doing

Since 2013, Instituto Juruá has developed a highly effective community-based fisheries management model—one that empowers local communities to guard their fishing grounds against large-scale commercial fisheries and illegal actors and to protect floodplain lakes and fluvial beaches. ICFC's support is helping to extend this successful model.

2023 Highlights

Instituto Juruá expanded community-based management of pirarucú to 70 new floodplain lakes. These communities are now legally empowered to protect their fishing grounds (oxbow lakes) against large-scale commercial fisheries through an official Fishing Agreement document.



Training on river turtle protection techniques was provided to 75 people from 40 rural communities across 1,500 kilometers of Juruá River. Another 51 men and women received technical training on pirarucú management and monitoring techniques.

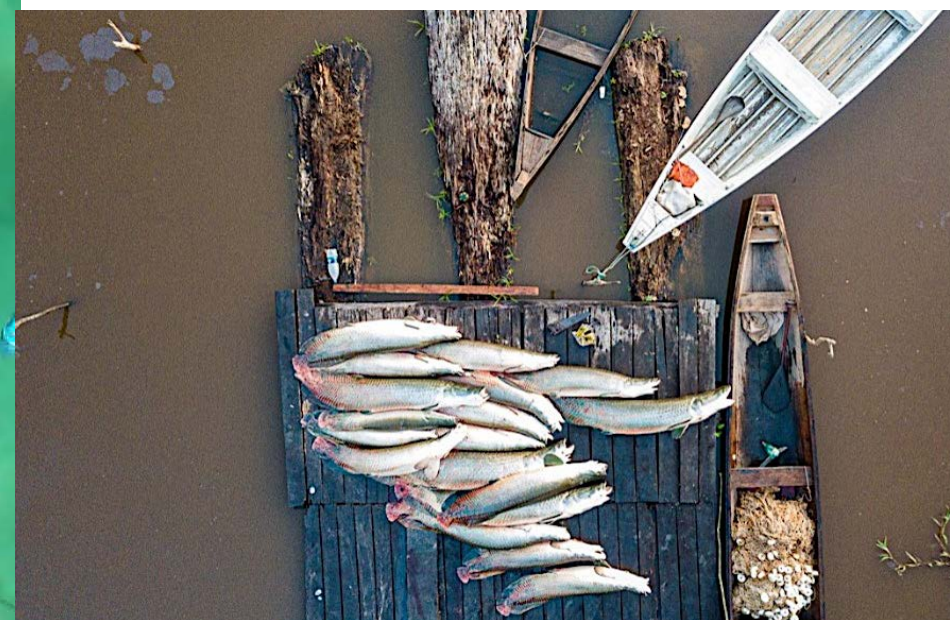
Sustainable harvest is a focus. Instituto Juruá provided technical support at 24 protected beaches, monitoring turtle egg-laying and the birth of 300,000 hatchlings. They built artificial tanks in four rural communities where they are raising 5,000 hatchlings for later sale.

There was also training in various communities for intelligence gathering for counter-poaching activity and ranger patrolling.

Size of area: 2,500 km of Juruá River

Field partner: Instituto Juruá

In 2023: \$ 63,107



Top, right: Oxbow lakes support important fisheries.

Left: There is strong evidence for pirarucú population recovery within areas benefiting from the project. Pirarucú are particularly vulnerable due to their size and their need to come to the surface to breathe.

Photos: Instituto Juruá

Previous page: Lake Malawi cichlid fish.
Photo: Elena Kis



Cambodia: Progress for marine life

Illegal fishing is declining but remains an active concern in the Kep Archipelago and Kampot province, where Marine Conservation Cambodia continued to deploy underwater Conservation and Anti-trawling Structures (CANTS). CANTS deter illegal bottom trawling and serve as an artificial reef.

In 2023, field surveys recorded that seagrass increased by more than 2,000 hectares, largely thanks to a reduction in illegal and destructive trawling resulting from patrols.

Our marine protection work is attracting more dugongs, turtles and dolphins, but also leading to increased by-catch outside of the core zones protected by CANTS. Photo ID is being used to estimate population abundance of the Endangered Irrawaddy dolphin.

Continuing priorities are liaising with government regarding enforcement and engaging with local communities that depend on marine resources for livelihoods. We are helping communities develop mariculture such as green mussels and ecotourism for marine mammal watching.

Size of area:	16,900 hectares
Field partner:	Marine Conservation Cambodia (MCC)
Since 2016:	\$ 1,217,099



Philippines: Manta ray protection

Near the island of Palawan, a small population of reef manta rays frequent a set of coral reef formations that jut out of the shallow seabed like skyscrapers. The towering reefs are an oasis for the manta ray on their long-distance migration and a “cleaning station” where wrasse fish clean off their parasites.

For the locals on Palawan, the reef represents opportunity, identity, and livelihood. These interests can sometimes conflict and our field partner, LAMAVE, is working to address this, with support from ICFC from mid-2022 to mid-2023.

Video rigs installed at the manta cleaning station recorded over 4,000 sightings of reef manta ray, 1,200 of sea turtles, 200 of sharks, 93 of spotted eagle ray and 14 of dugongs. Sixty-one individual manta rays have been identified through the unique pigmentation on their underside.

Sea creatures are not the only attendees at the reef towers. Throngs of tourists visited hoping to catch a glimpse of rare sea creatures. Tourism represents an economic opportunity that must be carefully managed to avoid harm.

LAMAVE made presentations at schools, hosted workshops for tourism operators, held meetings with community groups and government, and involved communities in coastal clean-up efforts, oil-spill surveys, and preparedness workshops.

Size of area:	3,200 hectares
Field partner:	Large Marine Vertebrates Research Institute (LAMAVE)
2022 - 2023:	\$ 27,280

Left: Concrete blocks are deployed for underwater construction of a Conservation and Anti-trawling Device.
Top, left to right: Dugongs are increasing as seagrass recovers in Cambodia; marine mammal survey; manta ray. Photos: MCC, Scott Hecker, LAMAVE

Malawi: Fish for today!

In Lake Malawi, a failed fishery is transforming into a productive one, yielding biodiversity benefits.

Covering 736 kilometers of the lakeshore, Ripple Africa’s Fish for Tomorrow project has helped establish and train 474 Beach Village Committees (BVC) across five districts. This is how communities are taking charge of fisheries management.

The solution to unsustainable fishing has involved new bylaws restricting the type and size of net that can be used; protecting fish breeding areas (133 of them!); and having a three-month closed fishery season.

Fishermen are reporting larger catches of bigger fish and are now making more money and can better provide for their families. This matters a lot in a country in which 70% of the people live below the international poverty line.

Malawi’s Department of Fisheries is very supportive of our approach to fish conservation and they are keen to see the project extended to cover all districts along lake Malawi. (Funding is the limiting factor.)

Governance is also key. The performance of all Beach Village Committees is monitored to ensure that they are carrying out their duties effectively. Some BVCs have required additional training, and some have had to be revamped with new members being elected.

Size of area:	22,000 hectares
Field partner:	Ripple Africa
Since 2019:	\$ 1,296,654

Above: Turtle hatchlings. Photo: Gabriela Paredes
Below: Banner for signing ceremony for fisheries bylaws in Salima District, Malawi. Photo: Ripple Africa



Nicaragua: Salinas Grandes sea turtles

ICFC supports a grass-roots sea turtle conservation project in Playa Salinas Grandes, 26 km from the city of León. This initiative involves a community-run sea turtle hatchery and educational activities with school children to build local support and awareness of the need for sea turtle conservation.

Once again, flooding necessitated moving the hatchery at Playa Salinas Grandes to a better location (further inland). In 2023, 16,704 hatchlings were safely released into the ocean. As part of the project’s environmental education and awareness work, children from the community were recruited to form two local environmental groups named the “Tora” (Leatherback) and “Torita” (Pacific Black) in honor of two of the sea turtle species that nest on the Pacific coast of Nicaragua. The two groups met with project staff throughout the year (from April to December) and participated in seminars and outdoor activities.

Size of area:	8 km of beach
Field partner:	Gabriela Paredes, Lucia Balladares, Antonia Duarte and Yaoska Torres
Since 2020:	\$ 174,559





photo: Paula Olson

Mexico: Vaquita porpoise

In the aquamarine waters of the Upper Gulf of California two ICFC field partners are dedicated to saving the Vaquita—the world’s most endangered sea mammal, with just 10-13 seen in 2023.

Significant progress was made after the Mexican government deployed the navy to protect vaquitas in the Zero Tolerance Area of the vaquita refuge. To aid this defense, hundreds more cement anti-net devices were deployed by the Navy. A complementary program helps local fishermen change over to vaquita-friendly fishing gear and represents a longer-term conservation measure.

In the fall of 2023 ICFC’s Scott Hecker and project supporter Doug Bender visited the remarkable (mostly women) staff and volunteers and saw firsthand their dedication and enthusiasm, working in one of the hottest and most rugged places in the Americas.

Size of area:	225 km ²
Field partners:	Pronatura Noroeste; & Cetacean Action Treasury
Since 2022:	\$ 208,536

Right: "Grunion queens" install fencing to protect grunion sardines and the red knots that feed on their eggs.

Below: Public awareness helps this effort succeed. Photos: Pronatura Noroeste



Mexico: Protecting red knots at the Golfo de Santa Clara

In the small town of Golfo de Santa Clara a group of local women, the "Grunion Queens", protect a stretch of beach where a spectacular natural phenomenon plays out each year. There, millions of grunion sardines lay their eggs and thousands of shorebirds gather to refuel on this rich resource during their northbound migration.

The shorebird guardians work with the entire community and local police to erect the roping to protect the fish and birds starting just before the holy week holidays and when the spring shorebird migration is underway.

In 2023 this work was expanded along more kilometers of beach and project personnel installed 17 km of fencing and protected 25 square kilometers of grunion and shorebird habitat. They recorded 34,527 shorebirds of 21 species, including 7,000+ red knots (32.5% of the *Calidris canutus roselaari* population). There were 63 re-sightings of 24 banded red knots. Finally, there were 16 articles about the project published in local and national media.

Size of area:	10 km of beachfront
Field partners:	Pronatura Noroeste
Since 2021:	\$ 67,885



Featured Field Partner: Ruthmery Pillco Huarcaya

by Dr. Andrew Whitworth @AndyRainforest

Wayqecha Cloud Forest Biological Station is a hub of activity, filled with an army of blossoming field interns and biologists collecting camera trap data of elusive wildlife and plant and field samples from remote week-long expeditions in one of the most rugged yet vital ecosystems on Earth. Groups of local school children are experiencing this near-pristine environment on an overnight camping trip for the first time in their lives, learning about the ecology of spectacled bears and the importance of cloud forests as the water pump of the Amazon basin and contributing citizen science observations through iNaturalist. A band of birdwatchers come back to a hearty breakfast following a mystical morning seeking out elusive ant-pittas, long-tailed sylph and sword-billed hummingbirds and mountain toucanets.

Orchestrating all of this... and so much more, is bear biologist, National Geographic Explorer, 2024 Woman of Discovery, botanical graduate of Kew Gardens, but most importantly, local Indigenous Quechua woman, Ruthmery Pillco Huarcaya.

Ruthmery’s hometown of Paruro is about a five-hour bus ride from Wayqecha. When I first met her some 14 years ago, she was one of the first Peruvian interns to join the lowland field station where I was doing my PhD research. Ruth was quiet, speaking only the odd word of English, and Spanish only softly and when necessary. Quechua was her first language. In her career to date, she had been avidly studying interactions between ants and plants.

I challenged Ruth to take on the task of studying woolly monkeys—the large bands of thick-furred poorly known primates that thrived within the dense steep terrain of the foothills. She followed them meticulously, into wilderness, stepping over deadly bushmasters as she looked up into the treetops, sometimes searching for days, staying with her group until sundown, arriving at the station in the dark, then setting out to be with them again before breakfast and first light. She did this for a whole year – for an undergraduate thesis. My own undergraduate thesis data collection consisted of four weeks of field experiments using blind-folded people in a gymnasium in Leeds. Ruth was the real deal, a modern-day Jane Goodall. She is meek and humble, but with strength far beyond her stature.

Wayqecha is one of the world’s most unique field stations. Situated just below the treeline of the Peruvian Andean cloud forest, spectacled bears roam over 4,000 meters above sea level along the high paramos, ambling down through montane forests to the Andean foothills and the start of the vast Amazonian lowlands below.

Ruth went on to launch a botanically focused restoration program in Pacific Costa Rica with Osa Conservation (see page 17). She obtained her Master’s degree from Queen Mary College of London and Kew Botanical Gardens, and is now back in her home country of Peru, leading research on spectacled bears (see page 16).

When you visit Wayqecha, you’ll find Ruth holding the ladder down, sowing seeds everywhere she can, and actively igniting passion in those around her. She is a true leader for conserving nature: every dollar invested in her is exponentially multiplied.

Follow Ruthmery @ruthy_treesandbears



Photo: Andrew Whitworth

Statement of Financial Position as of December 31, 2023

Complete audited financial statements are available on our website.

	2023	2022
ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Cash	—	302,685
Accounts receivable	364,175	17,777
Project advances	1,664,247	1,994,097
	2,028,422	2,314,559
Capital Assets		
Unrestricted investments	49,126	2,212,778
Capital Assets	95,592	96,737
	144,718	2,309,515
Restricted Assets		
ACG Parataxonomist Fund	2,622,152	2,385,594
Los Amigos Conservation Concession Fund	1,657,532	1,577,455
Poon Fund for Tropical Nature Reserves	970,266	726,354
Sustainability Fund for Jocotoco Reserves	1,038,294	880,103
Administration Fund	715,953	868,928
	7,004,197	6,438,434
TOTAL ASSETS	9,177,337	11,062,508
LIABILITIES & FUND BALANCES		
Current liabilities		
Bank indebtedness	763,421	—
Accounts payable	148,168	66,340
Deferred income	500	138,826
	912,089	205,166
Fund balances		
General fund	1,261,051	4,418,908
Restricted fund	7,004,197	6,438,434
	8,265,248	10,857,342
TOTAL LIABILITIES & FUND BALANCES	9,177,337	11,062,508

Note: In prior years Total Expenditures and Total Revenue have generally tracked closely with each other. In 2023 Total Revenue fell short of Total Expenditures by \$2.6 million due to two unusual adverse events. A large grant expected from a past donor toward the Kayapo Project did not materialize. And a unique situation with a donation of securities entailed a major loss. In spite of these unusual items ICFC was able to meet its commitments to our project field partners and we do not foresee this recurring.



Statement of Operations

	2023	2022
REVENUE	8,245,782	9,211,886
EXPENSES		
Argentina: Hooded grebe & Magellanic plover	120,183	79,515
Bahamas: Salinas Long Island restoration	320,541	270,604
Bangladesh, Myanmar, China, Taiwan: Spoon-billed sandpiper	94,005	90,534
Bolivia: Blue-throated macaw	133,448	30,174
Brazil: Jurua Aquatic Biodiversity	63,107	0
Brazil: Kayapó Project	3,436,362	3,431,806
Cambodia: Marine conservation	275,873	224,222
Chile: Maullin Coastal Wetlands	116,300	132,234
Colombia: Harlequin frogs	82,246	15,449
Costa Rica: ACG marine education & parataxonomists	117,190	141,094
Costa Rica: Osa Peninsula & Youth Nature Program	591,443	325,734
Democratic Republic of Congo: Grauer's gorilla	241,133	241,159
Ecuador: Choco land acquisition	243,956	0
Ecuador: FCAT reserve management and land purchase	79,198	29,671
Guatemala: Laguna Grande reserve	92,117	88,080
Indonesia: Papua forest conservation	231,644	263,787
Indonesia: Sulawesi threatened wildlife	223,114	246,326
Kenya: Kijabe Forest	80,752	95,263
Kenya: Massai vulture sanctuary	92,518	39,524
Kenya: Mount Elgon elephants	53,903	15,453
Kenya: Mount Suswa bats	57,364	46,683
Kenya: Mukutan Conservancy, formerly Laikipia Conservancy	635,143	639,227
Madagascar: Farankaraina community forest	90,385	159,912
Malawi: Lake Malawi fish conservation	633,437	367,958
Mali: Desert elephants	249,170	244,772
Mexico: Vaquita porpoise	137,571	70,965
Nepal: Koshi Tappu wetland & land acquisition	43,995	63,416
Nepal: Red Panda project	76,365	19,681
Nicaragua: Sea turtle project	56,498	91,546
Panama: Majé Mountains Indigenous-led conservation	68,256	46,859
Peru: Andean Amazon -- MAAP	342,382	189,300
Peru: Conservation Graduate Research Fellowship (New Venture Fund)	167,828	61,646
Peru: ICFC Field Training Fellowship	120,026	0
Peru: Los Amigos Conservation Concession	201,239	92,662
Small projects (Argentina, Belize, Bhugan, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, French Polynesia, Laos, Madagascar, Mexico, Mozambique, Panama, Peru, Philippines)	343,055	324,494
South Africa: Rhino conservation	107,178	54,413
Rainforest Trust project (Guinea, African forest elephants)	139,243	2,524
TOTAL Program Expenses	10,158,169	8,236,687
Fundraising ¹	109,848	115,048
Administration ¹	569,859	460,539
TOTAL EXPENSES	10,837,876	8,812,274
EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES	(2,592,094)	399,612

¹ 100% of Administration/Fundraising expenses were covered by ICFC's core group of long-term donors.

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Caterpillars of three of the many species of Lepidoptera at Área de Conservación Guanacaste in Costa Rica. ACG Parataxonomists have created over 1,000 species pages that describe species in detail in the voice of the individual Parataxonomist who has collected and curated the species. Photos: Guanacaste Dry Forest Conservation Fund (GDFCF)

Tropical ecologist Dan Janzen, quoted below, is co-founder of GDFCF and an advisor to ICFC. He is an Emeritus Professor of Biology at the University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Paul Hebert, referenced by Dan, is the founder and CEO of the Centre for Biodiversity Genomics at the University of Guelph, Canada, and a long-time collaborator with Dan Janzen and Winnie Hallwachs. Paul won the Benjamin Franklin Medal for Earth and Environmental Sciences for 2024 for his work pioneering the use of a "genetic barcode" capable of identifying species using a tiny segment of DNA, known as DNA barcoding. The technology underpins a global effort to catalog all life on Earth.

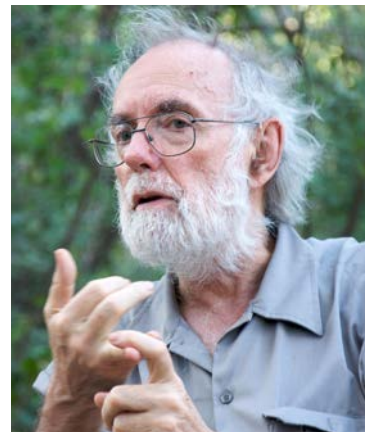


Photo: Sam Beebe, Ecotrust

"There are vastly more species in any piece of intact tropical terrestrial forest than any part of science has ever imagined, so it is a cruel joke to not recognize the millions of species being extinguished daily with tropical forest clearing for Homo sapiens to eat or whatever. Yes, if you give the land back to the beasts they will reoccupy, SLOWLY. Not talking jaguars here. Talking 40,000 species of flying insects in three hectares of ACG forest collected over 7 years with 9 Malaise traps (and only, only, only recognized as such by our DNA barcoding of the catch that Paul Hebert invented). We get these results ALL OVER ACG and elsewhere in Costa Rica." — Daniel H. Janzen, personal communication, April 2024



**Thank you
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Andean condor. Photo: Nick Bartlett

Back cover: Monkey hoppers.

Photo: Murray Cooper



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