

### Dear supporters and friends,

A longer than usual newsletter this time as we happen to have had several members of the ICFC family (staff, volunteers, donors) visit project sites in the past few months—travel that seems inconceivable these days—and we wanted to relay their trip reports. And, well, perhaps you have more time for reading, now!

We have been evaluating effects of the pandemic on our projects. (ICFC's small staff are unaffected; we were a virtual office already.) As it stands now, most work will carry on, but adjustments are being made to education components of programs. Ecotourism offered by our field partners will have a hiatus. The Kayapo are required to remain in their remote communities and no one from the outside can enter their Indigenous Territories for now. Overall, we carry on!

### New projects

#### Protecting Grauer's gorillas in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

There has been a rapid population decline of the world's largest gorilla from an estimated 16,900 individuals in the mid-1990s to fewer than 3,800 today. But conservation efforts by groups such as ICFC's partner Strong Roots are showing promise. By helping local chiefdoms and indigenous communities gain legal management authority over their land, forest management plans can be enforced locally to keep illegal goldminers out. This will ultimately form part of a ~3,000-square-kilometer biological corridor connecting two existing protected areas. ([Project details](#))



A red knot mascot points to a sign welcoming birds “home” to the Golfo de Santa Clara, Mexico.

#### Protecting Red Knots in the Sea of Cortez, Mexico

Every spring a marvel of nature unfolds on the shoreline of the Golfo de Santa Clara where millions of small fish known as gulf grunions lay their eggs along the shore. This attracts over 9,000 Red Knots (44% of the entire subspecies population). ICFC is now supporting a local women's environmental group, under the guidance of Pronatura Noroeste, who protect the fish and birds from beach traffic. The women are called the *Pejerreinas* (Grunion Queens).

#### Saving the Togo slippery frog in Ghana

Ghana's Togo-Volta Hills harbour remnant highland forests that are home to many species found nowhere else. Our

[new project](#) with Herp Conservation Ghana will conserve the Critically Endangered Togo slippery frog, which faces habitat loss and hunting. Involving local communities is critical, and the best way to do this is to help them develop low-impact ecotourism, which will increase tourism revenue in support of ongoing conservation.



## News

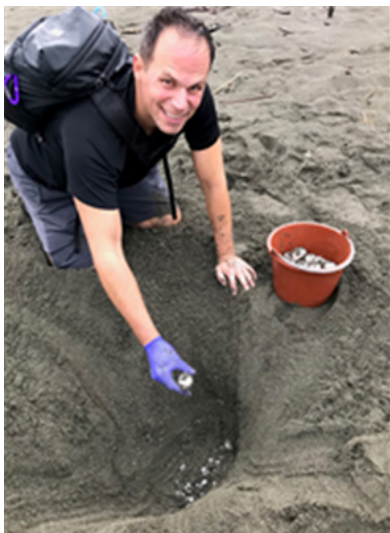
### The Poon Fund for Tropical Nature Reserves

ICFC donor Winnie Poon has generously endowed a new fund, to be managed by ICFC, with an initial contribution of \$500,000. The fund is dedicated to *“conserving private protected areas by funding land acquisition, protection and stewardship, with a primary focus on important tropical habitat for endangered and threatened birds in Latin America and Asia”*. We are delighted to have this long-term support for one of the core components of ICFC’s work. Winnie and her husband Roy Smith are active birders well known in the Ontario birding community and beyond, including for their extensive field studies of the Northern Mockingbird in Ontario. They travel the world to see birds and have visited several ICFC projects and sent back helpful trip reports. We have Winnie to thank as well for help in financing the new *comodor* (dining hall) and other improvements at Barba Azul Reserve (Bolivia) in 2018. Winnie and Roy will serve on the Fund’s committee along with a representative of ICFC. Thank you, Winnie!

### A boost for ICFC’s Shorebird Conservation Initiative

We warmly welcome a new donor who has long supported shorebird conservation and who identified our Shorebird Initiative as a place where she now wishes to make conservation investments. The donor, who wishes to be anonymous, has this year designated her support – of \$100,000 (US dollars) – to our work in Chile’s Maullin wetlands and to our project in Asia for the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper. (Our U.S.-based sister organization, the volunteer-run [International Conservation Fund](#), has enabled our American supporters to directly receive a tax-deductible receipt.)

*Bottom right (left to right)*  
Godwin Lai, Carlos R. Garcia,  
Jason Schuy and Neda Omidvar  
at Piro Research Station. *Below:*  
Jason collects turtle eggs. *Above*  
*right:* Andy Whitworth and  
Godwin in tree climbing mode.



### Experiencing Costa Rica’s Osa Peninsula

In late January, ICFC’s Carlos R. Garcia and guests Godwin Lai, Neda Omidvar and Jason Schuy travelled to the Osa Peninsula of Costa Rica to take part in an unforgettable conservation tourism experience! The expedition offered participants the opportunity to ‘get their hands dirty’ and engage in on-the-ground conservation activities. One such experience occurred on the waters of Golfo Dulce. During a boat ride to a coral restoration project site, suddenly and without warning, a super-pod of an estimated 400 pantropical spotted dolphins appeared and several proceeded to leap into the air in a playful and interactive manner for about 15-20 minutes ((see video on the [project page](#)). Another wildlife ‘close encounter’ occurred during a night walk with Osa Conservation’s Dr. Andy Whitworth. The climax of the night walk was when a fer-de-lance hastily slithered away to safety by going right through Godwin Lai’s legs! Thankfully everyone was OK (including the snake) and Godwin now has one amazing jungle story to share.



## Visit to projects in Indonesia and Cambodia

- Anne Lambert and Tom Welch

There is nothing like seeing things first-hand. In February, we made visits to projects in Indonesia and Cambodia that ICFC has been supporting since 2010 and 2016 respectively. The trip strengthened our already high regard for both projects and for the remarkable people behind them. Other take-aways: zillions of motorbikes, likeable people in both countries, and heat (mid-30s C daytime).

Indonesian Sulawesi's Tompatika Peninsula is mountainous, beautiful and isolated from the developed world. We visited communal nesting sites of the endangered maleo bird that our partner, the Alliance for Tompatika Conservation (AITo), is protecting. Watching over 80 maleos furiously digging their meter-deep nests and squabbling with their neighbours was captivating (see our video on [this page](#)). AITo is also protecting sea turtle nesting sites and an island with a large colony of roosting fruit bats. Another highlight was attending "Festival" ([see video](#)), featuring conservation-themed performances and games and activities for kids. Like a travelling circus, Festival moves village to village and the whole town turns out! As further evidence of the cultural shift this project has spurred in just over a decade, an election campaign poster had an image of a maleo behind the politician and the message "You should love me as much as you love the maleo".



Anne beside the mighty vessel that took four of us to a maleo nesting ground.

In Cambodia, our partner Marine Conservation Cambodia has achieved the country's first Marine Fisheries Management Area (MFMA). During our four days at the rustic island field base in the MFMA we witnessed in the distance the dozens of illegal bottom trawlers and electric fishers (mostly from neighbouring Vietnam) that are daily – or more accurately, nightly – destroying the marine ecosystem over large swaths. The MFMA is now largely protected from bottom trawlers due to 160 anti-trawling devices placed on the sea floor. And so we also witnessed the recovery within the MFMA of seagrass beds, corals, invertebrates, and fish – a recovery that has led to strong support from local small-scale fishermen. We heard in more detail about the challenging mix of government cooperation and corruption and the perils and triumphs experienced by MCC's dedicated personnel, volunteers, and independent researchers. The highly collaborative research underway there goes hand-in-hand with conservation action and public education, and encompasses seagrass, corals, marine mammals (including the endangered Irrawaddy dolphin), and illegal fishing.

Special thanks to the directors/founders of AITo and MCC, Marcy Summers and Paul Ferber, respectively, who helped us make the most of our short time with them. To them and their wonderful staff: keep up the good work!



Paul Ferber sits atop a demonstration anti-trawling device on Koh Seh Island in Cambodia's Kep Archipelago.

## Seeing results on the ground in the Ecuadorian Chocó

by Wendy Reimer

In 2018, my son asked me to do something to help the world instead of buying Christmas presents. I chose to donate to [land purchases in the Ecuadorian Chocó](#). I am a family doctor in Canada. The health of humans is clearly linked to the health of our planet, and with climate change and increasing weather and environmental catastrophes, it is urgent that we preserve our world's rainforests.

Canandé is remote. It is a 6-hour drive from Quito, the last few hours on rutted dirt roads. When you arrive, you find a small lodge with 4 rooms, and down the hill, a beautiful screened dining hall and kitchen. The staff are friendly and knowledgeable. The food is plentiful and good. It is wet. Take rubber boots! Hiking trails are up and down and up and down and slippery (we visited in rainy season).

We went on a night hike, and saw tarantulas, a large coral snake (!), and smaller insects and amphibians. I am scared of spiders, but it was still amazing, and I wish we had had time to do another night walk. We travelled to the local weekly market, where farmers bring their cacao beans to sell to a middleman for a paltry \$1 per pound. We took a trip up the river in a dugout canoe – really! carved from one tree! – to visit the remote village of Gualpi. Children were swimming in the river and families were resting in hammocks inside their raised wooden homes (it was the heat of the day). We went tubing down a river. In a rainforest! We tasted fresh cacao. The large pod holds many seeds, and the soft white casing can be sucked off the beans. Who knew?

We enjoyed several evenings with Efraín, who educated us on the plans for expansion of the Canandé reserve and showed us maps of land that is available for purchase currently. By strategic land purchase, he and Jocotoco have stopped the development of logging roads into more territory.

**I challenge you:** What world do you want to have? Does it matter what retirement income I have if the world is dying? I never envisioned myself as an activist. Seeing the rainforest in Ecuador and seeing the devastation of the rainforest through the greed of big corporations (and you and me), is inspiring me to join a small band of environmental warriors. – W.R.



Wendy Reimer and Robin Young at Canandé reserve in Ecuador. Wendy is a physician in Waterloo, Ontario and Robin is a retired Professor of Paramedicine and volunteer Disaster Relief Worker.

“Part of our Ecuador trip included presentations of emergency medical procedures for common injuries and medical conditions. Given the relative isolation of the reserve and surrounding communities and understanding that emergency assistance is quite delayed, our approach was teaching the participants to stabilize any injury as best as possible and send for assistance as soon as possible.” – Robin Young

### *Experiencing a rainforest*

*Walking in a rainforest is a reminder that we are small on this planet, and that soundscape is as vital as visual landscape in the journey. Close your eyes. There is a constant buzz of crickets. There is the hum of insects and hummingbird wings. Leaves are so large that they make impressive noises when they fall, disturbing the surrounding foliage. Birds sing - so many varieties that there is constantly changing music, punctuated by howler monkeys. Open your eyes. There is green as far as you can see, in all directions. It is hard for the mind to encompass. The canopy is far above, sometimes moving as birds or monkeys land and jump. There is so much variety in green, that there should be many more words for it. The forest floor is thick with decomposing leaves and branches. With a guide, you see an impressive variety of insects, arachnids, and reptiles. To walk in a rainforest is to understand that it is complex, beautiful, and endangered. Close your eyes. Hear the music of the insects and wind on the trees, and then hear the chain saw in the background, and the logging trucks struggling up the dirt road. Open your eyes. See the beauty of the rainforest, and then see the red spray paint on the tree that marks the boundary between reserve and logging company. See the clear cuts, and the palm tree plantations, and the cacao fields. See the poor housing and subsistence farmers, who have so little control over how they earn their income. See the logging truck filled with tree trunks that are irreplaceable in our lifespan, and which earn a villager \$80, but earn the company thousands as they sell to North America. We need to save the rain forest. – Wendy Reimer*



In closing, a big THANK YOU to Wendy and to all of our supporters and friends.

Stay safe, everyone.

**Your ongoing support makes a difference! [Donate now](#)**

Visit our website: [ICFCanada.org](http://ICFCanada.org) Contact us: [HQ@ICFCanada.org](mailto:HQ@ICFCanada.org)  
(844) 781-2129 ICFC, PO Box 40, Chester, NS B0J 1J0

