

Dear supporters and friends,

### A thank you to Molly Bartlett

After ably serving as ICFC's executive Director from 2017 through most of 2023, Molly has left ICFC and is now focusing on ICFC's US-based sister organization, the International Conservation Fund. Molly guided ICFC during a period of growth and helped form strong relationships with peer conservation organizations and our wonderful field partner organizations. We thank her and wish her well!

### New project: Fishing cats of Cambodia



Thanks to donor Doug Bender, ICFC has started a new small project aimed at securing legal protection of the Prey Nup mangroves, home to the threatened Fishing Cat (VU).

### Success X 2 in Patagonia (Argentina)

The breeding season of two endangered birds endemic to the remote lakes of windswept Patagonia is cause for celebration! In the fall of 2023, ICFC ramped up support to our partner Aves Argentinas to (1) deploy experimental "predator enclosure" fencing for the Magellanic Plover to protect nests from trampling and predation and (2) add more of the artificial floating nest platforms that have proven effective at boosting reproductive success of the Hooded Grebe. The field staff could not contain their excitement on observing Magellanic Plovers entering the protective "cage" to incubate their eggs safely for the first time ever on December 18th. They had the same reaction after deploying arrays of anchored nesting platforms at lakes where Hooded Grebes nest, watching the grebes compete for the "best real estate" (the platforms). These two ICFC supported measures are "game changers" for two species whose declines in recent decades may be reversible after all!



*Left: Hooded Grebe pair on nesting platform.*

*Below left: Magellanic Plovers usually raise a single chick, which they feed.*

*Below right: The Kayapo Field Course merges cultures and knowledge.*



### Kayapo intercultural exchange and ecotourism

Conserving threatened land areas takes more than surveillance and protection, as crucial as those are. With the Kayapo Project, ecotourism and intercultural exchange have proven important for Kayapo understanding of sustainable development options and for fortifying traditional culture and territorial protection.

Ecotourism generates equitably distributed community benefits (including livelihoods) and perspective on the outside world, which supercharges conservation and territorial protection. Kayapo guides teach and learn with ecotourists, who value Kayapo culture and the wilderness landscapes they defend. These positive, culturally affirming exchanges contrast with the prejudice and exploitation the Kayapo encounter in the frontier towns they frequent. In addition, participating ecotourists at times become life-long supporters the Kayapo Project.

### Sportfishing and Ecotourism

In 2015, ICFC partner and Kayapo NGO Associação Floresta Protegida (AFP) partnered with the sportfishing company Untamed Angling (UA) to build [a lodge](#) and develop an international catch-and-release sportfishing enterprise on the Iriri river in the northern Kayapo wilderness territory: The success of this venture led UA to develop a [second sportfishing site](#) on the mighty Xingu River in 2019. Feedback from participants made clear the added value of engagement with Kayapo culture on top of their first-rate fishing experience. As a result, the Xingu site is being developed as a mixed fishing and eco/ethno-tourism experience to include hiking, wilderness viewing, and cultural exchanges. In 2024, the AFP and UA will collaborate with the Brazilian company [Aniyami](#) to run a handful of ecotours on the Xingu River.

### Internship and Field Course with the A'Ukre community

The Kayapo Field Course and Internship is a one-of-a-kind opportunity for students, offering an immersive introduction to the issues, landscapes, and livelihood of the Kayapo. Participants spend two weeks with the A'Ukre community, immersing themselves in village life and exploring the Pinkaiti Ecological Research Station. The course brings revenue and the benefits of a cultural exchange to the community.





**Christmas Bird Count with the Wounaan in Panama**

– Scott Hecker, ICFC Director of Bird Conservation

This past winter I was invited to join the Wounaan community of Puerto Lara in the Darien region of Panama on their 5th Christmas Bird Count, and I happily accepted as it gave me a chance to see how our project there is going.

Here’s the background: In 2018 I first met members of the Wounaan Indigenous people at two other villages in the Maje Mountain foothills to learn about their interests in bird conservation and eco-tourism. This led in 2021 to ICFC’s project with Native Future aimed at conserving forested and riparian habitats of three Wounaan Indigenous territories totalling 22,326 hectares.

My return for the Count included a stop at Rio Platanares where I had a chance to see progress on their nature tourism effort. (It was a trip of superlatives!)

On New Year’s Day I arrived in Panama to join Marsha Kellogg, ED of Native Future, to travel with her by panga (boat) 2 hours east to the Rio Hondo mangrove forest and then upriver to the village of Rio Platanares. There on the riverbank I was greeted by a large welcoming party and escorted to the community center. Over the next three days I hiked the new and improved trails with their educational kiosks, complete with QR codes linking to info on flora and fauna in 3 languages. I saw many species of uncommonly seen birds and mammals, enjoyed cultural dances and arts, and dined on traditional foods of the Wounaan.

On January 4th, we returned by boat and drove half a day into the Darien province to Puerto Lara. Again, we were greeted by a colorfully dressed Wounaan welcome party.

*Above: Wounaan birders poised for the Christmas Bird Count in Puerto Lara, Darien province. ICFC Director of Bird Conservation, Scott Hecker, is at centre with camera.*

*Below, left: One of the most frequently seen (and heard) birds of the count was the Whimbrel. The Rio Hondo estuary likely supports over 1,000 individuals.*

*Below, right: A Three-toed Sloth quietly chewing on leaves high in the trees can be easily overlooked, but not by the Wounaan.*

The Christmas Bird Count was a serious event and their community gathered to plan the details and assign portions of the count circle to groups of 5 or so, each with a lead birder. It was great to see that anyone in Puerto Lara from age 8 to 80 was welcome to participate. I chose to join the group called “Acuaticos” who would travel by panga on the river. At 7 the next morning we walked through ankle-deep mud to board the panga and then covered about 5 km of the river. Highlights included Roseate Spoonbill, King Vulture, Boat-billed Herons, and high numbers of Whimbrels. The total species count was 143.

**My conclusion:** From this visit, I was both amazed at what they have accomplished and delighted by their infectious enthusiasm for sharing their knowledge of their natural world.

This rewarding time with the Wounaan joins the ledger of “one of the best experiences in my life”, especially since we at ICFC have been helping them pursue their dreams and protect their lands and livelihoods.



**Thanks and best wishes from all of us at ICFC!**

**Your ongoing support makes a difference!**

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