



WORLD
LAND
TRUST

Maya Forest

WLT's Buy an Acre
project in Belize

Belize Maya Forest



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Country

Belize

Partner/Organisation

**Belize Maya Forest Trust
(newly established)**

Biome

Petén-Veracruz moist forests

Ecoregion

Tropical and subtropical moist
broadleaf forests

Habitats

Predominantly evergreen
broad-leaved woodland

Project summary

The Belize Maya Forest is a truly landmark project that has arrived at a pivotal time for the planet.

Led by The Nature Conservancy with aid from WLT and other international conservation NGOs, this project shows how collective action can make a real difference against the interlinked extinction and climate crises. It also builds upon WLT's vision for the natural world that saw the light right here, in Belize, over 30 years ago. Our first ever project, the Rio Bravo Conservation Management Area, will now sit adjacent to the Belize Maya Forest, and together they will now protect 9% of Belize's entire landmass.

The Belize Maya Forest has been established through the purchase of two properties totalling 260,000 acres (105,218 ha), bringing permanent protection to the largest intact forest area remaining in Belize set to be managed by the newly established Belize Maya Forest Trust. Buy an Acre supporters will be funding a 1,267-acre (512 ha) portion of the project area. All in all, the newly protected land now safeguards a critical gap within the Selva Maya, the northernmost contiguous intact tropical forest in the Western Hemisphere.

Ocellated Turkey



© Project for Belize

In addition, around half of the project area sits within the Rio Bravo CMA Gallon Jug Estate Key Biodiversity Area (KBA). Alongside safeguarding an extraordinary array of wildlife, the Belize Maya Forest will also deliver natural solutions to the damaging effects of climate change. In the coming years, the project will preserve significant amounts of sequestered carbon that would otherwise be lost due to deforestation, while allowing for the natural regeneration of forest areas that have been subjected to selective timber extraction over the last decade.

Put together, the contribution of the project is estimated at an aggregate value of 13 million metric carbon tonnes over its lifetime.



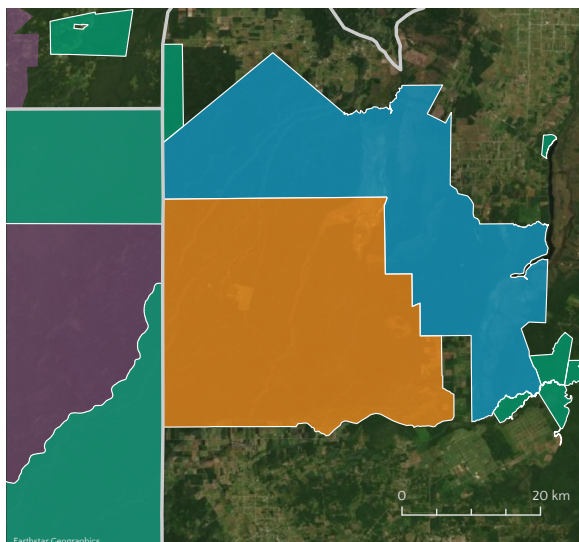
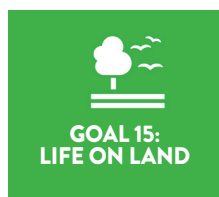
Key species¹

Jaguar (*Panthera onca*, NT), Puma (*Puma concolor*, LC), Baird's Tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*, EN), Ocellated Turkey (*Meleagris ocellate*, NT), Great Curassow (*Crax rubra*, NT), Margay (*Leopardus wiedii*, NT), White-lipped Peccary (*Tayassu pecari*, VU), Morelet's Crocodile (*Crocodylus moreletii*, NT), Geoffroy's Spider Monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi*, EN).

¹Footnote

The Red List of Threatened Species, maintained by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), includes categories of Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN), Vulnerable (VU), Near Threatened (NT) and Least Concern (LC).

UN Sustainable Development Goals advanced by this project



- Belize Maya Forest
- Rio Bravo Conservation Management Area
- Protected area
- Biosphere reserve
- National border



Main threats to the area

Competition for agricultural land use is increasing across Belize at an alarming rate. Since 2011, the Maya Forest Corridor that connects Belize's Maya Mountain Massif to the Belize Maya Forest has faced deforestation rates almost four times the national average. Along the southern boundary of our project area, slash-and-burn conversion for livestock and feedstock is intensifying – in the last 10 years alone, forest cover has fallen by a staggering 59%. If WLT partners and supporters do not secure the necessary funding to purchase the project area, the only other likely buyers with enough funds are the Mennonite community. Mennonites have cleared very large areas of land for agriculture in other parts of Belize to the east of the Rio Bravo Conservation Management Area, and it is likely the Belize Maya Forest would suffer the same fate.

Global prioritisation

The land protected by the Belize Maya Forest project will serve as a vital wildlife corridor within the Selva Maya region, a 38-million-acre (15 million ha) expanse of forest that includes over 11.1 million acres (4.5 million ha) of contiguous protected areas spread across Mexico, Guatemala and Belize. The project area is also part of the Mesoamerican Biodiversity Hotspot and connects internationally with the Maya Biosphere Reserve in Guatemala and the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve in Mexico, forming the largest protected area complex in Central America.

Biodiversity

The Belize Maya Forest is a tropical biodiversity hotspot, home to 200 tree species across a patchwork of forest, savanna and wetland, as well as 70 mammal species and more than 400 species of bird, over 100 of them migratory. Charismatic megafauna that depend upon this precious ecosystem include howler monkeys, spider monkeys and the Baird's Tapir – together with some of Central America's largest surviving populations of Jaguar, Puma, Margay and other native cats.

Local communities

No local communities live in the project area, although there is likely to be some use of forest areas (both legal and illegal) by neighbouring communities for hunting, timber and non-timber forest products (NTFPs). The newly established Belize Maya Forest Trust will be protecting this new reserve area and will engage with and include local community members as they develop their patrol and protection plans.

Partner/Organisation

The management of this project will fall to the Belize Maya Forest Trust, an organisation established in December 2020 through the support of conservation charity The Nature Conservancy and a consortium of other funders, as well as the government of Belize and a host of Belizean conservation NGOs.