

# The John Burton Memorial Fund



Saving land and protecting habitat in Paraguay, Bolivia and Armenia, and giving a helping hand to struggling young conservationists.



“JOHN BURTON, IN MY VIEW, WAS A TRULY WONDERFUL MAN, MORE ALTRUISTIC, MORE ENERGETIC, BRAVER AND MORE ORIGINAL THAN ALMOST ANYONE I HAVE KNOWN.”

Sir David Attenborough,  
Patron, World Land Trust

[worldlandtrust.org](http://worldlandtrust.org)

# John Burton Memorial Fund

Following in John's footsteps to the Gran Chaco of South America and the Caucasus mountains of Armenia. Saving land and protecting species

**TARGET: £500,000**  
**PLEGGED: £243,000**  
**STILL TO GO: £257,000**

In 1989 John Burton founded the World Land Trust and acted tirelessly as its Chief Executive for 30 years. This fund has been established in his name to continue and complement some of the urgent conservation work that was so close to his heart.

After stepping aside as Chief Executive in 2019, John continued to support and mentor many of WLT's project partners and was always looking for innovative and novel ways for them to achieve their conservation goals. This Fund will support Nativa (Bolivia), Guyra Paraguay and FPWC (Armenia). Very many thanks for supporting this fund in John's memory.



The vast Gran Chaco is South America's second largest intact forest after the Amazon, but it is home to more large mammals than the Amazon; they include The Endangered **Chacoan Peccary** or **tagua** (*Catagonus wagneri* or *Parachoerus wagneri*). Thought to number about 3,000 in the wild, the Chacoan Peccary has the unusual distinction of having been first described in 1930 based on fossils and was originally thought to be an extinct species. In 1971, the animal was discovered to still

be alive in the Chaco. It was well known to the indigenous Gran Chaco people but it took a while for Western scientists to acknowledge its existence.

Other mammals include Jaguar, Puma, Giant Armadillo, Giant Anteater and Lowland Tapir. In total more than 150 species of mammals have been recorded, 3,400 species of plant, 500 species of bird and 220 species of reptiles and amphibians. But millions of acres of natural vegetation continue to be lost, primarily for beef and soy production.

## Putting the Gran Chaco on the map



The Gran Chaco is spread across western Paraguay, eastern Bolivia, and northern Argentina, into western Brazil.

### Project areas being supported

- Cañada El Carmen:** 4,000 hectares (8,900 acres) within the Dry Chaco Biological Corridor
- Campo Iris:** 3,444 hectares (8,500 acres) is exceptionally rich in fauna and flora
- Palo Santo Nature Reserve, Bolivia** (see page 3)



Writing from **Guyra Paraguay**, Rodrigo Zarate, Head of Conservation, says:

*"First and foremost, we want you to know how immensely grateful we are that funds raised will support Guyra Paraguay and honour John's legacy through the Dry Chaco. As you know, the Dry Chaco was very close to John's heart and his enthusiasm for our work has always given us strength and belief in our vision."*

*"We urgently need funds to help us continue our patrolling and monitoring work and to ensure against illegal activities."*

## Protecting the Dry Chaco with Guyra Paraguay

WLT's partnership with Guyra Paraguay started in 2004 with the aim of protecting the country's complex mosaic of rainforest, grassland, savanna and wetland habitats. In 2006 WLT raised funds to help create the Chaco-Pantanal Reserve, followed by protection of Atlantic Rainforest at San Rafael before focusing on the threats facing the Dry Chaco.

Funds raised in memory of John will help develop Guyra Paraguay's conservation efforts in two Dry Chaco reserves: **Cañada El Carmen** and **Campo Iris**.

**Cañada El Carmen** protects an important example of the Chaco xerophytic vegetation: trees and shrubs that are able to survive with very little water. **Campo Iris** provides a home for Lowland Tapirs, Chaco Peccaries, Crowned Eagles, Puma and Jaguar. It is also a centre of armadillo diversity with at least ten species occurring in the Paraguayan Chaco. The reserve protects the only semi-permanent lake in the region which, in periods of extreme drought, is a vital wildlife refuge.

*"I was fortunate to know John for many years. He established WLT over 30 years ago, and the organisation's work in protecting wildlife across the globe is rooted in his visionary thinking. John's commitment to threatened wildlife, before, during and after his three decades leading WLT, was an inspiration to so many of us."*

Dr Mark Avery, Chairman,  
World Land Trust



## Dry Chaco Reserve of Bolivia

The Palo Santo Reserve in Bolivia is strategically located within a priority area for the conservation of the Chaco, and was purchased with funds provided by IUCN Netherlands. It borders community lands of the Wennhayek people, is close to the Pilcomayo River and connects with protected corridors of the chaco near the triple border where Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay meet.

The reserve is named for the Endangered Palo Santo (*Bulnesia sarmientoi*), an endemic, slow-growing tree that was added to the IUCN Red List in 2018 due to high levels of exploitation for the timber trade and logging for livestock farming.

Iván Arnold, Director of WLT's partner **Nature, Land and Life (NATIVA)**, has highlighted the region's importance for biodiversity and how NATIVA plans to commemorate John's work in the Dry Chaco, saying,

*"The territory is home to more than 100 species of mammals, 300 species of birds, and at least 80 species of reptiles and amphibians. In particular, Jaguar, Puma, Southern Night Monkey and Southern Tamandua depend on this habitat and it is one of the few places in Bolivia where long-term plans can be made for the Jaguar population and for other large animals that inhabit it."*

*"Aware of John Burton's great work and contribution to conservation and in recognition of his support for the acquisition of the land for the creation of Palo Santo, we intend to name the research station after him in order to disseminate his legacy and commitment to conservation. We seek to promote research and knowledge generation in the region, responding to the trust placed in us to work for this region of the planet."*

*"We do this as a posthumous tribute to a person who dedicated a good part of his life to conservation and whose actions were also a strong contribution to make the Gran Chaco Americano a little better known in the world."*

## New land purchase in Armenia

**We hope to raise the funds to purchase a strategically important parcel of land which contains twin lakes within the Khosrov Forest State Reserve. This is crucially important habitat for very many species of plants and animals listed on the IUCN Red List.**

The current status of the land is agriculture and used mainly for pasture. With support from WLT, FPWC has been able to rent this land with three year contracts in order to prevent overgrazing and illegal hunting but every time the government changes the security of the land is in doubt. FPWC believes that purchasing will solve the issue and conservation can be achieved long-term.

We would also like to support an endowment fund to cover the costs of another vital ongoing land-lease where FPWC has placed John's Memorial Stone which is surrounded by waterfalls and flowers.

The Caucasus is one of the world's lesser-known biodiversity hotspots: one of



*Location of the Caucasus Wildlife Refuge*

the 25 regions which together cover only 1.4 per cent of the Earth's land surface yet contain nearly half of all plant species and a third of all terrestrial vertebrate species. Natural habitats in the Caucasus are under huge pressure from overgrazing, uncontrolled hunting and human-induced wild fires.

Supporting FPWC since 2010 WLT helps fund the protection of the Caucasus Wildlife Refuge (CWR) which adjoins the 29,000 hectare (72,000 acre)

Khosrov Forest State Reserve and acts as a corridor for wildlife. The

CWR itself safeguards 5,261 hectares (13,000 acres) and in 2010 wildlife very little survived due to hunting, but today trail camera footage records good numbers of Bezoar Goats, wolves, bears, lynx and Caucasian Leopard, as well as all four species of vulture found in Armenia: Lammergeier, Griffon Vulture, Eurasian Black Vulture and Egyptian Vulture.

## Supporting next generation conservationists

*"Someone once wrote: A mentor is someone who sees more talent and ability within you, than you see yourself, and helps bring it out of you. John did exactly that. He was a brilliantly unconventional mentor, the guiding light in my career, never judgmental and always supportive."*

Marc Hoogeslag, Coordinator Land Acquisition Fund, IUCN Netherlands  
During his lifetime John enjoyed nothing more than enthusing and supporting young people's passion about wildlife, and helping them find a way to make their own contribution. We are looking at a variety of ways in which we can help mentor young conservationists through this fund and will announce our plans shortly.

## A 100% Fund

We are delighted and grateful to report that there have been no costs associated with the production of this newsletter. It has been written by Viv Burton and designed by DRAB Ltd, both free of charge and print donated by Kingfisher Press. It is printed on Carbon Balanced Paper supplied free of charge by Denmaur Paper Media meaning that carbon emissions have been offset also. WLT takes no overhead from donations to this fund and Gift Aid is added to the total for conservation.



# Remembering John Burton

by journalist, author, WLT ambassador and member of the WLT council Simon Barnes



**John Burton, co-founder of the World Land Trust, died on Sunday May 22 2022 – World Biodiversity Day, as it happens. Don't worry, he already has a monument. It takes the form of more than a million acres of thriving, teeming wild land.**

How did that come about? The first answer is that it all began on May 5 1989 at Syon House Butterfly House when the World Wide Land Conservation Trust — now the World Land Trust — was launched. The second answer is that it all began in John's childhood in South London.

**“ JOHN WAS A GREAT CONSERVATIONIST AND THE BEST WAY TO REMEMBER HIM IS THROUGH CONSERVATION ACTION. I HOPE YOU WILL SUPPORT THE MEMORIAL FUND SET UP IN HIS MEMORY. ”**

Gerard Bertrand,  
WLT Honorary President (USA)

At the age of six he was making weekly bus-trips to the Natural History Museum in South Kensington, just him and his friend Tony Hutson, now an internationally acclaimed 'bat man'. In his teens John was bird-ringing, surveying foxes and badgers, recording bird migration, working on a project to air-lift turtles to the Caribbean and completing a study of hedgehogs.

He joined the Natural History Museum as an assistant information officer straight from school, before going freelance to write natural history books; he has more than 40 titles to his name. And he was the first wildlife consultant to a new organisation called Friends of the Earth.

**Conservation was changing. There was growing awareness of the surrounding extinction crisis: and with it came new and radical ideas of what to do about it. John was in the forefront. It was not enough just to study wildlife: we had to take major steps before we lost it all.**

He was headhunted by the Fauna Preservation Society (now Fauna & Flora International) and was their chief executive at 31. He then founded TRAFFIC, an organisation that monitors the illegal trade in wildlife, one of the biggest illegal trades after drugs, arms and people. For a good while he ran both organisations at the same time, a back-breaking load.

This ended in 1987, when he stepped down to move full time to Suffolk, with his wife, Viv. First he wrote the excellent *Rare Mammals of the World* and in 1988 a great friend and conservation colleague, Jerry Bertrand, who was president of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, contacted them. Jerry had come up with the radical notion that the people of New England should look after their migrant birds – by giving money to preserve their wintering grounds. Places like the rainforest in Belize.

The Burtons agreed to help him. They were given US\$15,000 with instructions to turn this into US\$50,000 in a year. They reached this target within six weeks of

launching – and so the organisation that became the World Land Trust was formed and a pattern of action was established.

And right from the start it was about partnership. WLT worked with the local organisation Programme for Belize, raising the money to buy rainforest: but it was bought and owned by the organisation on the ground in Belize. It was their project: WLT just helped it along. WLT was founded on an idea of simple genius: that if you take control of the land everything that lives there is safe. If you can save the land you can save the species: all the species that use the place. John and Viv led WLT onwards, taking on projects in more than 30 countries.



Simon Barnes with Vivek Menon (Executive Director of Wildlife Trust of India) and John Burton, inspecting a brand new corridor created for elephants which they had just started to use.

I became a council member and it became a life-defining cause. I discovered the way the WLT worked: it was about partnership with the people who lived in the place and looked after the land. The partnerships were based on friendship, trust, honesty, transparency – and a shared and total love for the wild places we were all trying to save. It was that trust that consistently allowed the WLT to punch way above its weight.

John died at home in Suffolk. The million or so acres are still thriving.

## Donate to the John Burton Memorial Appeal

Online at [worldlandtrust.org/appeals/john-burton-memorial-fund](http://worldlandtrust.org/appeals/john-burton-memorial-fund)  
By post, using the enclosed donation form, or by calling World Land Trust offices  
9am- 5pm Monday-Friday on 01986 874422