



**WORLD
LAND
TRUST**

Saving land
Saving species

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WLT NEWS

World Land Trust Autumn Newsletter 2025



It has been an exciting year both for World Land Trust (WLT), our partners, and for me personally as CEO. We always try to minimise international travel, but earlier this year I was fortunate enough to visit Fundación ProAves' (ProAves') and Fundación Proyecto Tití's (FPT's) project sites in Colombia with two of WLT's Trustees and we were incredibly impressed by the impact of their work; you can read more about the visit further in the newsletter.

I was also able to meet with Fundación Biodiversa Colombia's (FBC's) General Director Fernando Arbeláez and his team in Bogota to discuss the work they are doing in the Middle Magdalena Valley. The passion, knowledge, expertise, and sheer determination of Fernando and his team to protect this amazing habitat was truly inspiring, and it is for all these reasons and many more that we have chosen this as our 2025 autumn appeal to seize the chance to expand FBC's El Silencio Reserve before it is too late.

The visit was beneficial for me to see the work first-hand, but it was also valuable for the partners there. Being a CEO or Executive Director of a conservation organisation on the ground, especially facing the threats to nature first-hand, can in fact feel quite lonely. It is often helpful to have somebody else of a similar position to have conversations with and share those very specific struggles and ideas. I think we all valued the ability to talk through some of those challenges and learn from one another's experiences.

I saw that there is real value in myself and our trustees visiting our partners as these are the conversations that go to the heart of what it takes to make conservation deliver impact. How do you bring in the right staff? Where does the money come from? How do you spend it? How do you get the impact you said you needed to? How do you fund the protection of these places sustainably? These are questions that we must constantly keep ourselves accountable for and remain honest, positive, and transparent about with our supporters. The following pages are an exploration of all the impacts that we achieve together and what your help makes possible.

Dr Catherine Barnard, CEO

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Positive News

from the Field



← Roberto Pedraza, Sub-director of Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda (GESG), has this year published a research paper four years in the making on the first ever recorded sighting of an albino Bell's False Brook Salamander (*Isthmura bellii*) in Mexico. The salamander was found in GESG's Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve, and such a rare discovery is testament to the work carried out by GESG to protect a thriving ecosystem in which we can learn more about these fascinating amphibians, their habitat, and their conservation.



← The Critically Endangered El Rincon Stream Frog (*Pleurodema somuncurens*) is a unique species found only in the warm headwaters of the Valcheta Stream on the rocky Somuncurá Plateau in Argentina. Habitat loss and invasive species have left it one of the most threatened amphibians worldwide, but now, our partner Fundación Hábitat y Desarrollo (FH&D) have seen an incredible 15% increase in its population thanks to their recovery efforts.



→ Earlier this year, Applied Environmental Research Foundation (AERF) set up 10 camera traps in the forests around Kule, Katavali, Sayale, and Khadi Kolvan villages in Maharashtra, India, to monitor mammal activity. Among all species recorded, the most remarkable sighting was a Sloth Bear (*Melursus ursinus*) in Kule, the first time the species has been captured on camera in this region. Its presence is a clear sign of the connectivity of the landscape between Kule Forest and Chandoli National Park.



→ A species of scorpion new to science has been discovered by our partner Asociación Ecológica de San Marcos de Ocotepeque (AESMO) in western Honduras – an exciting contribution to our understanding of biodiversity in these precious cloud forests. The finding was made during a community patrol through the Pacayita Volcano Biological Reserve, and the species has been named *Centruroides lenca* in honour of the Indigenous Lenca people, their history and their territory.



For more news stories from the field scan the code or visit www.worldlandtrust.org/news/



Partner Postcards



Ranger Ismari Millán
Asociación Civil Provita (Provita)

Hola, my name is Ismari Millán and for the past 8 years, I have worked as an Ecoguardian for Provita's Conservation Program to protect the *Cotorra Margariteña*, also known as the Yellow-shouldered Parrot (*Amazona barbadensis*) in the Macanao Peninsula, Venezuela. Since I was a child, I have felt curiosity about the work led by the group of 'los cotorreros' — the name we locals call those who dedicate their time to protecting the 'cotorras', the Spanish name for parrots. So, I decided to join the team and become a 'cotorrera' myself.



Since then, I have dedicated my work to protecting the dry forest of the peninsula. A habitat that has a special place in my heart because it is home to such a diversity of animals and plants, where the magical sound of birds singing is heard every day at dawn. My favourite species is definitely the Yellow-shouldered Parrot, but I also feel deep love for other species like the elusive Margarita Deer (*Odocoileus cariacou cariacou*) and the Ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*).

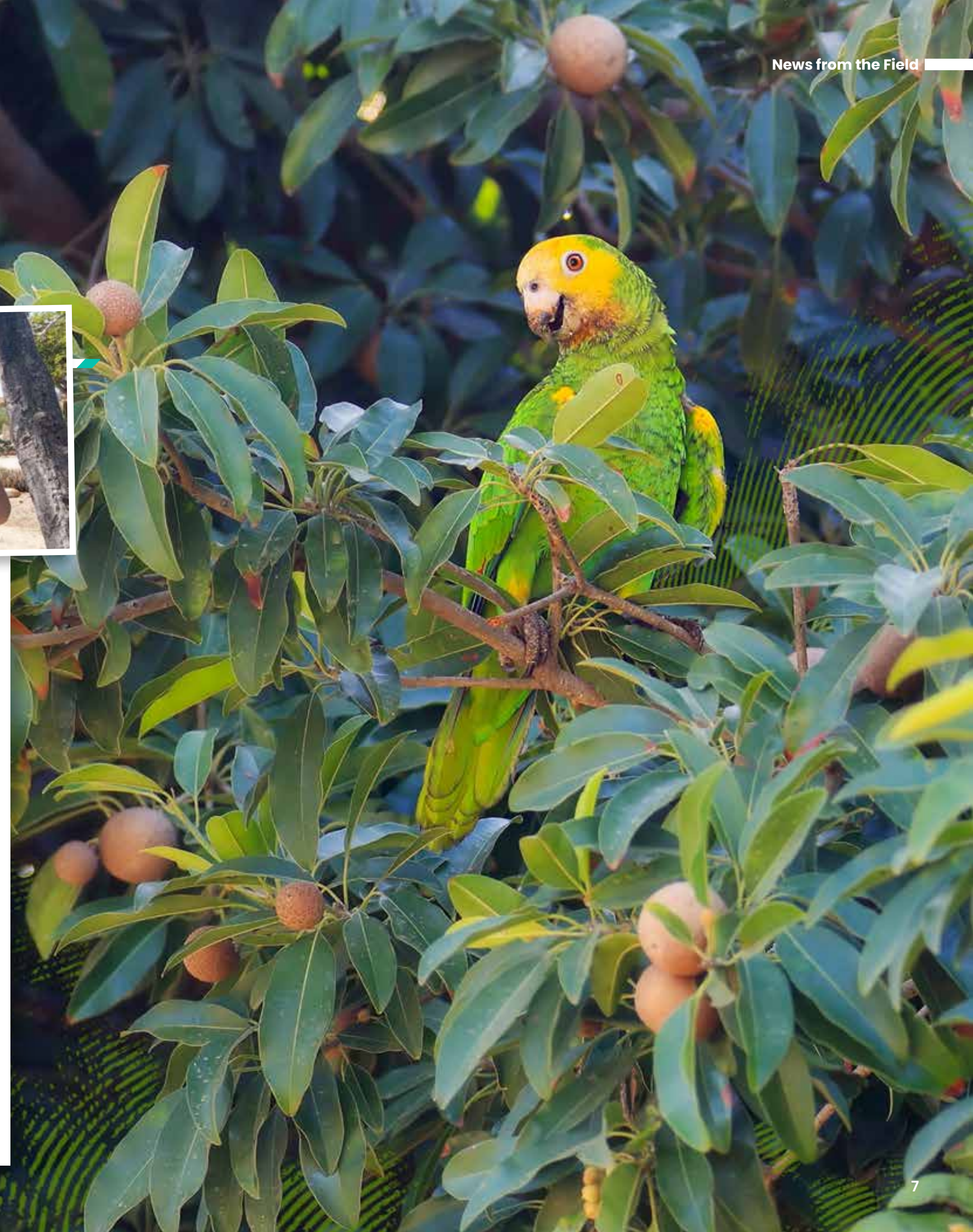
A typical day as an Ecoguardian starts very early, with the sunrise. First thing, every morning, is checking the parrot nests to monitor the eggs until the chicks are born. For me, the best part is seeing them fly from their nests for the very first time.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, I had a life changing experience. We were in the middle of the breeding season, many chicks had been born, and, for safety, we had to stop our work. It was a very difficult situation; we were sad and worried, but we managed to keep caring for the nests even without the usual equipment and logistics. Myself and seven other Ecoguardians walked separately every day from the town to the breeding site. Halfway through the breeding season, we informed José Manuel, the leader of the programme, that we had continued monitoring and that soon the chicks would start to fly. It was a moment full of emotions and satisfaction when we saw that our independent effort allowed them to live in freedom.

Working in the Macanao Peninsula dry forest is a challenging task. I face harsh conditions due to the intense heat and sun exposure, heavy night rains, and mosquitoes. Also, we must be very careful with snakes and scorpions, which we often relocate to safer grounds to protect them and ourselves. Some people think I'm crazy for doing this kind of work, and that it is especially dangerous for a woman to undertake it.

For me, to conserve means to guarantee a future for the birds and their natural habitat for future generations. My message is that no matter where we live, we can always contribute to the conservation of our surroundings. Nature has rewarded us with so much and passing on values of respect and care for the flora and fauna of our planet is our duty.

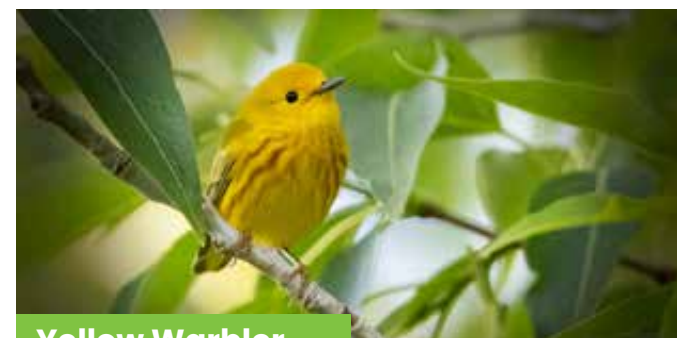
Ismari



Big Day, Big Discoveries: Birdwatching at Los Titíes

There is an extraordinary array of wildlife in northern Colombia's Los Titíes de San Juan Forest Reserve, run by our partner FPT. So much so that earlier this summer, FPT joined in on Global Big Day, a worldwide birdwatching event, and were rated number one in the Colombian department of Bolívar, based on the number of bird species sighted within the reserve on that day.

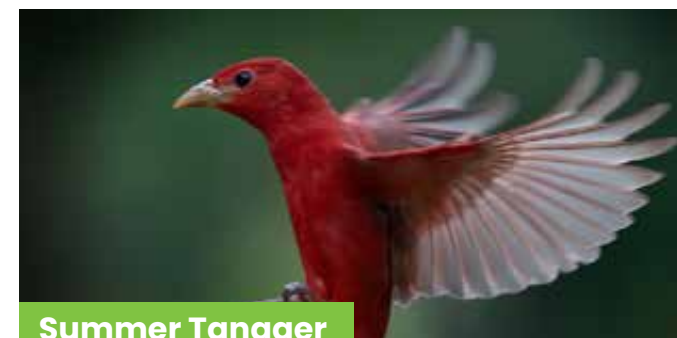
Below are just some of the remarkable species they saw; and this is just a snapshot of what the reserve holds. It is home to almost 400 species of bird, 140 mammals, and more than 80 reptiles and amphibians.



Yellow Warbler

(*Setophaga petichia*)

The cheerful-sounding song of the Yellow Warbler has earned it a reputation as one of the most melodic warblers in North America.



Summer Tanager

(*Piranga rubra*)

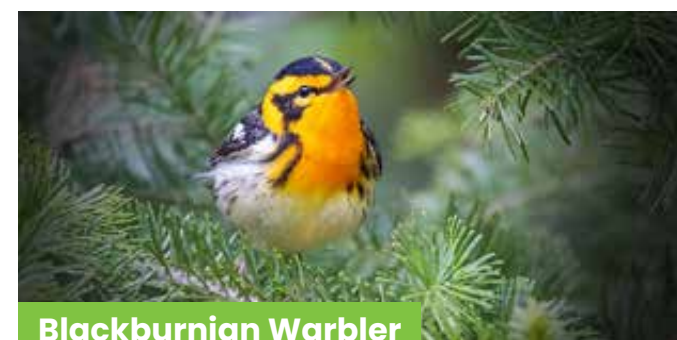
Known as bee and wasp specialists, they catch stinging insects mid-air and rub them on a branch to remove the stinger before eating.



Grey Kingbird

(*Tyrannus dominicensis*)

These birds are fierce defenders of their territory and will chase off hawks and crows many times their size!



Blackburnian Warbler

(*Setophaga fusca*)

With its fiery orange throat, the Blackburnian Warbler is sometimes called the "flame-throat" and is one of the most striking warblers during spring migration.



Grey-cheeked Thrush

(*Catharus minimus*)

Of all the *Catharus* thrushes, recognisable by their spotted chests and patterned underwings, this one is known for its spiralling, flute-like song that can be heard best as night falls.

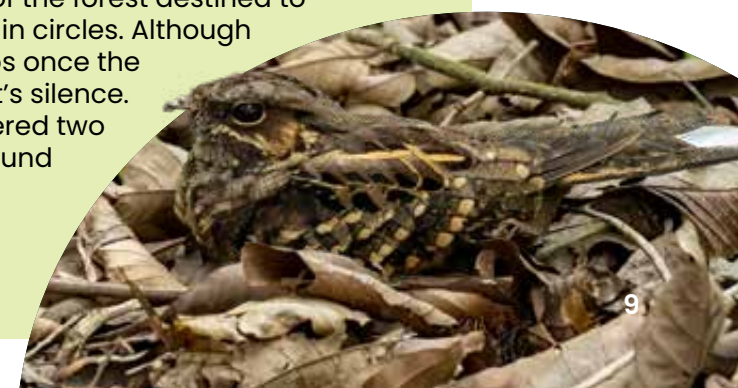


Eastern Wood Pewee

(*Contopus virens*)

Despite weighing less than a handful of paperclips, it makes an incredible journey each year, migrating thousands of miles from North America to spend the winter in the Amazon Basin.

The forests protected by FPT are also home to the Common Pauraque (*Nyctidromus albicollis*). A nocturnal member of the nightjar family, it is known in Colombian folklore as the Night Guardian – a protector of the forest destined to make careless intruders dizzy and lost by spinning them in circles. Although believed mischievous, its intentions are good, and it stops once the intruder has learned to slow down and respect the forest's silence. During a recent biodiversity survey, the FPT team discovered two of its eggs carefully hidden among dry leaves on the ground – buff-coloured and speckled with cinnamon and grey. Days later, they hatched, and two healthy young chicks emerged – future night guardians of the forest.



Restoring Tanzania's Forests and Wetlands

In the south-central reaches of Tanzania, the Udzungwa–Kilombero landscape is one of East Africa's most remarkable ecological mosaics. Rising steeply from the lowlands, the Udzungwa Mountains form part of the Eastern Arc, sometimes called the 'Galápagos of Africa' for their concentration of species found nowhere else on Earth. Here, primates such as the Sanje Mangabey (*Cercocebus sanjei*) and Angolan Black-and-white Colobus (*Colobus angolensis*) move through forest canopies thick with orchids and tree ferns, while waterfalls tumble from mist-laden ridges into the valleys below. At their feet lies the Kilombero Valley, one of the region's largest freshwater wetlands and a site of international importance. Each rainy season the plains are transformed into a vast floodplain, supporting iconic mammals like African Savannah Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*), and birdlife so rare that species such as the Kilombero Weaver (*Ploceus burnieri*) and Kilombero Cisticola (*Cisticola bakerorum*) are found only here.

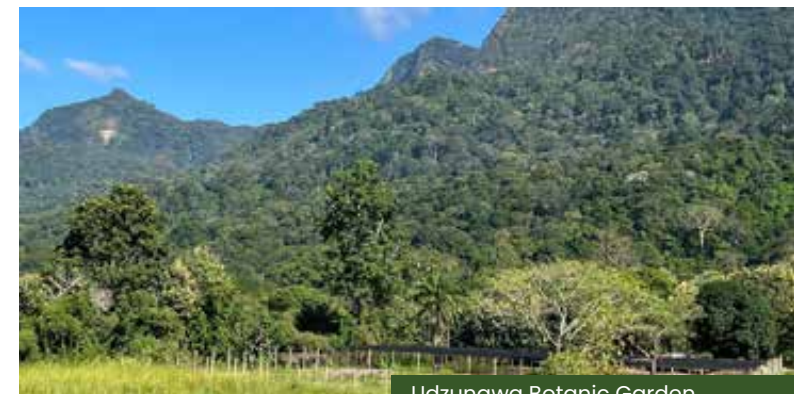
This interconnected patchwork of montane forest, lowland woodland and seasonal wetland sustains biodiversity on a global scale, but it also underpins the lives of thousands of people who depend on fertile soils, fisheries, and reliable water sources. However, expanding agriculture, unsustainable logging, infrastructure development and the growing impacts of climate change threaten to fragment habitats and weaken the ecological processes that link uplands and lowlands. Safeguarding this landscape requires not only protection, but active restoration. This is where one of WLT's newest partners, Reforest Africa, has stepped in.

Reforest Africa is spearheading landscape-scale forest restoration in the Udzungwa–Kilombero landscape. Working with the Tanzania Forest Service, local communities, national and international partners, including WLT's two other Tanzanian partners, the Tanzania Forest Conservation Group (TFCG) and Southern Tanzania Elephant Programme (STEP), the organisation has developed a strategic plan for restoring degraded land within forest and wetland ecosystems. To do this, the Reforest Africa team is planting trees to help natural regeneration, removing invasive plant species, managing fire risks, and closely watching over all the progress far into the future. Between 2025 and 2027, they aim to plant at least 265,000 trees across more than 500 ha (1,235 acres) of degraded lowland and montane forests, miombo woodlands and village lands. At the same time, they are strengthening protection of two critical reserves, Magombera

and Kising'a Lugalo, while directly engaging with over 3,300 local people in restoration practices and alternative livelihoods.

At the heart of all this is the Udzungwa Botanic Garden. Nestled beside Udzungwa Mountains National Park, the garden is fast becoming a hub for restoration and education. Its nurseries raise seedlings of rare and threatened species to be planted across the wider landscape, while its training plots show how agroforestry can blend sustainable farming with forest protection. For local communities, the garden is a learning centre, training people on how to care for trees from seed to sapling. For conservationists, it is a living laboratory and seed bank for safeguarding the genetic diversity of native trees. And for visitors, it provides a window into the extraordinary flora of the Eastern Arc, raising awareness of the urgent need to protect it.

By combining ecological science with community-based action, Reforest Africa is helping to stitch together a landscape where forests and wetlands can thrive alongside human livelihoods. In a region where the survival of endemic primates, unique birds and entire watersheds depends on healthy ecosystems, their work offers more than just restoration, it offers resilience and hope for the future.



Udzungwa Botanic Garden



Local employee at Udzungwa Botanic Garden

On the Ground in Colombia

Join WLT Trustees Emma Tozer and Claire Ashby as they meet with our partners FPT and ProAves in Colombia earlier this year.

"Visiting our partners in Colombia was transformative. As a trustee, I spend a lot of time in board meetings discussing strategy and funding, but seeing the work on the ground gave me a completely different level of understanding."

Claire

© WLT/Catherine Barnard

"As trustees we make decisions that impact every aspect of the organisation, so it's crucial that we invest time in understanding the reality of how WLT works with partners on the ground. Seeing is believing and to see the impact WLT is having first-hand in Colombia cemented for me the fact that hope isn't lost. There are incredible people working hard every day to make the work we do at WLT really count."

Emma

"This was my first site visit, and it's changed how I think about my role. It gave me insight into the real challenges partners face, which will inform our decisions as a board, how we invest, shape strategies, and support conservation in practice."

Claire

© WLT/Emma Tozer

"In Bogota, we also met with Fernando and Santiago from FBC to learn more about the El Silencio reserve and the golden opportunity we have to conserve the incredible biodiversity they have in that part of the Middle Magdalena Valley – it's a reserve that really does have everything"

Emma

"At ProAves, we travelled into the mountains to see cloud forest reserves. The team shared the 20-year history of our partnership, and even they were amazed at what we've achieved together. On my way down the mountain, I was lucky to witness a Grey Tinamou (*Tinamus tao*) with five chicks, a rare sight that the rangers, who'd worked there for over a decade, had never seen."

Claire

© Shutterstock

"We visited FPT to see Cotton-top Tamarin (*Saguinus oedipus*), trekking through heat and dense vegetation to find family groups in the wild. We also saw their work with local women, who make handicrafts from home to support their livelihoods alongside conservation. Standing on land that WLT had helped fund, degraded pasture now destined to become tamarin habitat, was emotional. It brought home exactly why we do this."

Claire

© WLT/Emma Tozer

"All of the organisations we were privileged enough to meet with are run by charismatic, passionate and driven conservation leaders who are achieving so much for relatively small amounts of money by UK standards. Their sheer energy and dedication is unwavering and hugely inspiring, that gives me great hope that together we can preserve and restore Colombia's incredible biodiversity."

Emma

© WLT/Catherine Barnard

"The biggest takeaway for me was hope. Amid constant negative news about the environment, I witnessed passionate people achieving real, tangible conservation."

Claire

"The number of hummingbirds buzzing around us at Pro Aves' El Dorado Reserve in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta was absolutely magical. I'm also fascinated by the smaller species, so spotting Blue Morpho Butterflies (*Morpho menelaus*) gliding through the dry forest was something I'll never forget, and the Lemon-tipped Helicopter Damselflies (*Mecistogaster ornata*) hovering around our feet in the dry riverbed were mesmerising."

Emma

© WLT/Emma Tozer

© WLT/Catherine Barnard

Yande Yari

A Guarani Dream Realised in the Heart of Bolivia's Chaco Forest

In Bolivia's southeast lowlands, where the Chaco Forest meets the wetlands of the Isoso, the creation of Yande Yari, an Indigenous-led protected area covering over 562,000 ha (1.3 million acres), will now preserve one of the largest and most intact dry forests in the world. Known to the Guarani people as 'the spirit of the river', the protection of Yande Yari was passed into law in October 2024 and ratified in April 2025 and stands as a momentous conservation measure.

This achievement, supported by a coalition of organisations, including WLT partner Fundación Natura Bolivia (FNB), brought together Indigenous leaders, women's collectives, elders, and youth to bring about the governance model and monitoring plan.

In the face of a worsening global climate and biodiversity crisis, Indigenous eco-spiritualism offers a profoundly different path, one that complements and challenges conventional conservation approaches. Traditions like *Yandereko*, the Guarani philosophy of living in harmony, do not separate the human from the natural world – they embed the river, the forest, and all living beings within the fabric of identity, ethics, and responsibility.

This way of thinking fosters a powerful ethic of care that is collective, intergenerational, and grounded in spiritual reverence. It encourages not just protection of nature, but relationship with it; a value system that resists the short-termism and commodification at the root of ecological collapse. If embraced more fully by policy and conservation frameworks, such worldviews could shift the narrative from one of control and extraction to one of reciprocity and restoration. Recognising and resourcing Indigenous-led conservation isn't just an ethical imperative; it may be one of the most effective strategies available to halt biodiversity loss and regenerate the planet's life-support systems at scale.



Members of the Guarani community created a film announcing the achievement. In it, they explain what Yande Yari means to the forest, the people, and the planet:

I am Yanda Yari

I was not found by chance

I was chosen

I was dreamed

The ancient voices of the Charagua
Iyambae called me

Here, where the Sun kisses the Earth

Like a grandmother who blesses

Where the mountain murmurs in the
Guarani language

I inhabit

I am the guardian of the Parapetí River

The one who sings with the birds

and cries when the river is sick

I guard the lagoons

I guide the invisible parts of the water

and with each current

I return life

The Guarani women weave me in their
blankets

Draw me in ceramic

Sing to me on moonlit nights

They have seen me in dreams

They have heard me in the whirlpools of
the river

They carry me in their eyes in the firm
decision to defend the sacred land.

This is why the Bernardo Del Soso are not
just wetlands.

They are the temple where I breathe

And when water is lacking, it hurts

It hurts like it hurts to see a grandmother
die

But here, the people didn't let that happen

This area is not only environmental

It's political, cultural, and ancestral

Here we say this territory has life it has
spirit

It has guardians

I've seen how the women walked to
the territory with their children on their
backs

With maps in their hands

With dreams in their voices

I have felt their strength

They said the river is *mother*

Yari is our way of being and her word
was seed

The law that protects me today was
written with community ink

With articles of battle

With paragraphs of history

With seals of dignity

It is the living evidence that other
development is possible

The development where water is not
sold, it is honoured

When nature is not exploited, it is
listened to

And I am still here

And the song of the *Urutaú* bird

In the hands that sow

In the *Isoseña* girls who dream of clean
lagoons

I am memory and future

I am body and spirit

Today, the heart of the Chaco beats
stronger

Because my name, Yari, is no longer
only whispered

Now it is shouted with pride

Yanda Yari lives and is protected now

Pangolins of Nepal's Middle Hills

When night falls over the quiet forests of eastern Nepal, a small, armour-clad creature can be heard shuffling through the undergrowth. The Chinese Pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*) is one of the most elusive mammals in Asia, and one of the most threatened. Once widespread across the continent, it now clings to survival in just a handful of strongholds. One such place is the 'Special Community-based Pangolin Conservation Area' in Yangshila located in the Chure foothill region in eastern Nepal, where WLT partner Koshi Tappu Kanchenjunga Biodiversity Education Livelihood Terra-Studio's (KTK-BELT's) community-led conservation is offering hope for its future.

Pangolins are instantly recognisable by the keratin scales that cover their body from nose to tail, which act as natural armour, especially when it curls into a tight ball when threatened, an effective defence against leopards but tragically no match for human poachers. Feeding almost entirely on ants and termites, pangolins use a sticky tongue that can stretch up to 40 centimetres – longer than their own bodies – to draw insects from hidden crevices. These mammals live solitary, nocturnal lives, spending daylight hours deep inside burrows that they excavate themselves with their long, powerful claws. Their feeding and digging habits help regulate insect populations, churn the soil, and create refuge for other small animals, helping to keep ecosystems in balance.

Yet despite their ecological importance, Chinese Pangolins are now Critically Endangered. Today, they and other species of pangolins are the most heavily trafficked wild mammal in the world. Their meat is considered a delicacy in some regions, while their scales are used for traditional medicine. Even when they are safe, Pangolins reproduce slowly, usually giving birth to just one pup at a time, leaving them acutely vulnerable to population declines.

But amid this crisis, the 'Special Community-based Pangolin Conservation Area' in Yangshila

stands as a beacon of hope. Protected and managed by local Indigenous communities with the support of KTK-BELT, Yangshila is a key site where the Chinese Pangolin still survives in the wild. Here, local communities act as guardians of the forest, patrolling habitats to prevent poaching and spreading awareness about the Pangolin's ecological role. But conservation at Yangshila goes beyond protection alone. Through forest restoration and the creation of ecological corridors, KTK-BELT is ensuring Pangolins have safe burrow sites, abundant food, and connected habitat.

Now with WLT's support, KTK-BELT are working to increase connectivity and facilitate trans-boundary conservation, by creating a corridor between Yangshila and two protected areas in India, Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary and Singhalila National Park, to safeguard wildlife habitats, forests, and cultural diversity within the landscape. In many ways, the Pangolin's survival depends on this growing bond between people and nature. Protecting this small, scale-armoured mammal is not just about saving a species, it is about safeguarding the ecological health of Nepal's forests and empowering the communities that live alongside them.



Special Community-based Pangolin Conservation Area in Yangshila

Meet the Grey-handed Night Monkey of El Silencio

Shy, wide-eyed, and active only under the cover of darkness, the Grey-handed Night Monkey (*Aotus griseimembra*) is one of Colombia's most enchanting primates. Found in forest canopies across Colombia and Venezuela, including those of FBC's El Silencio Reserve. Though forest fragmentation and habitat loss has left them classified as Globally Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, the expansion of El Silencio will provide more protection for this species and all those it shares the forest with.

Family Comes First

The Grey-handed Night Monkey lives in small family groups led by a monogamous pair. Thought to live several decades, the pair will mate for life and raise their offspring together. When the sun shines during the day, they spend the time sleeping hidden away in tree hollows, their small faces emerging together to investigate anything that disturbs them.

Moonlight Foragers

Found across northern Colombia and into western Venezuela, night monkeys are the only monkeys to occupy the nocturnal niche. For this, they have adaptations such as their large, striking eyes that are very sensitive to light, allowing them to see through the darkness. However, they cannot see in complete darkness and prefer foraging on nights when the moon offers a soft glow. On a night of a full moon, they can be active all night long but during a new moon they might only be seen in the twilight of dusk and dawn.

Keeping in Touch

Throughout the night, these monkeys can be heard vocalising with low, soft calls to keep in contact with each other and to move together throughout the forest. As a highly territorial species, when they encounter another group the males and females will jointly defend their home. Though this doesn't happen often, they will quickly make their presence and territory known to another group with loud calls and hoots.

Small and Mysterious

Fruit is a staple in the diet of the Grey-handed Night Monkey, but these opportunists also feed on leaves, flowers, nectar, insects, and even the occasional egg or small vertebrate when fruit is scarce. But one very interesting and unique behaviour has been seen in these monkeys. Very occasionally, a group will catch a giant millipede and rub its strong scent over their hands, feet, and tails. This behaviour is known as anointing, and because it is so rarely seen, we don't know exactly why they do it.

"You Just Have to Give Nature a Chance"

An Interview with Fernando Arbeláez on 20 Years of Conservation in Colombia's Middle Magdalena Valley



On FBC's 20th anniversary, General Director Fernando Arbeláez tells WLT the story of FBC, El Silencio Reserve, and what two decades of conservation has taught him about resilience, collaboration and hope.

How did you first become involved with FBC?

I studied Biology at the National University of Colombia and went on to do a Master's in Tropical Ecology at the University of Amsterdam. At the time, there was a strong link between Amsterdam and Colombia; many professors, like Thomas van der Hammen, had worked extensively in Colombian ecosystems, and there were scholarships encouraging Colombians to study there.

While I was finishing my Master's, a group of Colombian students, many former classmates, returned from Amsterdam and decided to create FBC. They wanted a platform to develop conservation projects with strong social engagement. When I came back, they invited me to join. I had to decide between pursuing a PhD in Amsterdam or staying to work with FBC. I chose to stay. I wanted to do conservation on the ground, with communities, not just in academia.

I became an associate in 2006, joined the board in 2008 before becoming General Director in 2009 and I've been here ever since.

What challenges have you faced working in conservation in Colombia?

In the beginning, it was very hard to get support from within Colombia. We received almost no funding from the government or local companies.

Most support came from international partners, organisations like IUCN Netherlands and WLT. Over time, we've built relationships with Colombian companies who now support some of our projects. But it took many years to reach that point.

Working in conservation here is tough. That's why collaboration is essential, no single organisation can do it alone. We work closely with other NGOs, both small and large, to increase our impact.

Why is the Middle Magdalena Valley such an important ecosystem?

Ecologically, it's extraordinary. It's a rainforest as biodiverse as the Amazon, but far more threatened. Historically, the Magdalena River was the axis of development for Colombia, so the surrounding forests were heavily cleared for agriculture, cattle ranching, and oil palm. Today, only around 10–15 % of the original forest remains, perhaps even less.

The region also plays a key role in connecting key biodiversity areas. Our area, Barbacoas, was declared a Key Biodiversity Area last year, in part because it sustains populations of the Blue-billed Curassow (*Crax alberti*), a Critically Endangered bird. These lowland forests connect higher-altitude ecosystems and serve as an essential corridor for migratory birds moving south.

What makes El Silencio Reserve stand out within this landscape?

Between 2005 and 2010, deforestation here was brutal with over 600 ha (1,482 acres) lost per year. At that rate, the entire Barbacoas forest would have been gone by 2023. But El Silencio was



different. For reasons we still don't fully understand, the landowners abandoned the property during a period of intense violence, and when they returned, they didn't resume deforestation at the same scale and nature took over.

Areas that were grasslands in 2000 have regenerated into secondary forest over 25 years. That gives us a massive head start because instead of isolated fragments, we now have connected a forest that makes up around 2,700 ha (6,671 acres) of continuous habitat. With WLT's support, we connected previously separate patches, creating a mosaic of old growth and regenerating forest that is both ecologically and scientifically invaluable.

El Silencio hosts more than 300 bird species and 75 mammals, including healthy populations of all the key lowland species of the Middle Magdalena.

Do you have a favourite species?

The Blue-billed Curassow is incredible, but I have a soft spot for the Greater Grison (*Galictis vittata*). They're small, elusive mammals that are not as famous as perhaps jaguars or tapirs, but they're charismatic, curious, and rare to see. We mostly detect them on camera traps, but whenever I encounter one, it's thrilling.

Are there any encounters with wildlife that have stayed with you?

Yes! Two moments in fact, both with Mary, WLT's Carbon Programme Manager, when she joined us to carry out a site visit earlier this year. On one visit to San Bartolo, one of our allied plots, we suddenly saw manatees appearing around our boat, I'd been many times before and never seen one, and that day we saw five.

Another day, in an untouched patch of forest, we watched three monkey species: spider monkeys, howlers, and capuchins feeding peacefully together in a flowering tree. I'd never seen all three at once before. Usually, spider monkeys are territorial, but that day they all shared the resource. It was beautiful.

FBC is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. How has the organisation evolved?

In the beginning, we were just friends working voluntarily, doing other jobs to sustain ourselves. Today, FBC employs many full-time staff, from field coordinators to rangers and nursery staff so we've grown hugely in scope, impact, and responsibility.

The biggest milestone was acquiring our first reserve in 2012, with support from IUCN Netherlands. It was small, only 76 ha (187 acres), but it changed everything. We were no longer outsiders because we became neighbours to local communities and landowners and that built trust.

The second milestone was expanding El Silencio with support from WLT and IUCN Netherlands. That proved we were serious about long-term conservation. From there, our work snowballed. Today, we're protecting 3,400 ha (8,401 acres) and knowing that this forest will remain for future generations is one of the best feelings in the world.

How have local communities' attitudes towards conservation changed?

When we started, hunting and deforestation were common. Now, communities see the value of conservation. They've embraced species like the Blue-billed Curassow as local symbols, and they actively help us protect and restore forest.

They also benefit economically from restoration and conservation, so they understand the difference between having a cattle farm next door and having a conservation ally. When there's a threat, they're often the first to alert us.

FBC has plans to create a wildlife corridor between El Silencio and San Bartolo. What will that involve?

The only thing separating these two large forest blocks is a property called El Palado. By purchasing and restoring it, we can connect more than 6,650 ha (16,432 acres) of habitat and eventually over 9,000 ha (22,239 acres) with neighbouring forests. This would be the largest connected lowland rainforest corridor in the Middle Magdalena.

We're also developing a carbon project with WLT to restore at least 5,000 ha (12,355 acres), working with landowners to avoid further deforestation and strengthen connectivity.

Finally, if the world could learn one lesson from El Silencio and the Middle Magdalena Valley, what would it be?

That neglecting nature has consequences. Years of deforestation here have led to flooding, drought, and erosion, harming communities and economies. But when you give nature a chance, it comes back.

"What was once grassland is now thriving forest. With just a little help, nature does the rest. That's the greatest lesson."

Fernando Arbeláez
General Director, FBC

Stitching the Forest Back Together for a Better Future for Kinabatangan

On the floodplain of the Kinabatangan River in Sabah, Borneo, forests once reduced to fragments are stirring again. Camera traps capture Long-tailed Porcupine (*Trichys fasciculata*) nosing through leaf litter, Pig-tailed Macaque (*Macaca nemestrina*) threading through the canopy, and the flash of Helmeted Hornbill (*Rhinoplax vigil*) wings. Historical logging and plantations had once created a fragmented landscape, with more than 80% of its natural forest lost, leaving species marooned in isolated pockets, with stark consequences. But, thanks to the hard work and dedication of our partner HUTAN over the last 29 years, the Kinabatangan area is coming back to life and, as of this September, is now officially one of 26 new UNESCO Biosphere Reserves.

With your support, WLT has helped HUTAN in its mission to conserve threatened habitats and species in Sabah since they became a partner in 2008. Many of our long-term supporters will remember WLT's first public appeal to support

HUTAN in 2013, the 'Borneo Rainforest' Appeal, which raised £1 million to secure the Keruak Corridor, with £725,000 of the fundraising target secured during WLT's Big Match Fortnight. Then, in 2017, the 'Saving Kinabatangan' Appeal was launched by WLT Patron Steve Backshall and Olympic rowing champion Helen Glover, with their 'Race for Borneo' challenge. Their campaign was so successful that at the time it broke an overnight fundraising record for WLT, raising more than £150,000 of the £250,000 appeal target, and helped enable HUTAN to secure land within the Pangli Corridor.

Most recently, through our 2021 'Saving Borneo's Orangutan Corridors' Appeal, WLT supporters came together to raise more than double our £150,000 target in just six weeks, allowing HUTAN to purchase land to connect Pangli Forest Reserve to the river at a vital crossing point between the Keruak and Pangli Corridors. The Keruak Corridor is the most ambitious. It will link the Keruak Virgin

Jungle Reserve with the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary, spanning 182 ha (450 acres) of riverine forest.

At its heart lies the 45-ha (111-acre) Genting Wildlife Corridor, where HUTAN pioneered a partnership with the local community to reforest former plantations. Through our Plant a Tree programme, together with generous co-funding, HUTAN's all women reforestation team have been working since 2019 to restore the area. Planting more than 70,000 native seedlings purchased from home nurseries within the village of Sukau, using species identified by HUTAN's research as important food sources for the Borneo Orangutan (*Pongo pygmaeus*). Each sapling represents a step toward a forest that would never have regenerated without the help of HUTAN's unwavering commitment.

Already, the impacts are incredible. Since 2019 HUTAN have recorded 196 species across all its

sites, including 32 listed as globally threatened. Camera traps in the Genting Wildlife Corridor captured almost 700 glimpses of wildlife. Along with this footage, the orangutans that have been tracked through the young forest showing how restoring this green heart is bringing this fragmented landscape back to life. The Kinabatangan floodplain remains one of the most biologically rich places on Earth and its survival depends on the efforts of organisations like HUTAN, whose work shows that with determined partnerships, fractured ecosystems can be healed.



Argentina and the Legacy of Diana Andrews

Argentina is a country of sprawling wild landscapes, stretching along the entire south-eastern reach of South America. The rugged Atlantic coastline is lined with cliffs and windswept beaches where colonies of Magellanic Penguin (*Spheniscus magellanicus*) and South American Sea Lion (*Otaria flavescens*) contend with Orca (*Orcinus orca*) on the hunt. Inland, the rocky foothills and glacier lakes of the Andes Mountains reach from the subtropical rainforests and waterfalls of the north to the grassy plains of the Patagonian Steppe.

It was in Argentina that dedicated WLT supporter Diana Andrews grew up. Born and raised in the country with her sister Maureen, the sisters came to the UK as young women. After working in Sweden for a time, Diana decided to remain living

in the UK with her husband but her passion for the extraordinary country that was her and her sister's birthplace never faded. Knowing the remarkable value of Argentina's nature and wildlife and what was at stake if its wild landscapes were destroyed, Diana supported the work of our conservation partners in Argentina avidly during her lifetime. She continued her support with a gift in her will, and we are profoundly grateful that we can continue her legacy by protecting the land that she loved.

Diana's legacy gift is now helping our partners in Argentina: Fundación Hábitat y Desarrollo (FH&D), Fundación Patagonia Natural (FPN), Fundación Rewilding Argentina (FRA), and Natura Argentina to protect and restore these incredible habitats and the wildlife to which they are a home.



1

With FH&D, Diana's legacy will directly purchase 31 ha (77 acres) of land on the Somuncurá Plateau. There are species here found nowhere else on Earth, including the El Rincon Stream Frog (*Pleurodema somuncurens*) and the Naked Characin (*Gymnocharacinus bergii*), both Critically Endangered. The Plateau's Valcheta stream is their only home.



2

Diana's legacy will support two separate FPN projects. The first will fund rangers who protect the 6,700-ha (16,556-acre) Estancia la Esperanza Refuge in Argentina's Patagonian Steppe, including 12 kilometres of wild coastline along the San Matías Gulf. The second project will underpin FPN itself, developing a Management Plan and Financial Sustainability Programme, improving equipment, infrastructure, and paving the way for long term plans for ecotourism, student researchers and volunteer programmes.



3

With FRA, Diana's legacy will contribute towards the purchase of 164 ha (405 acres) of Atlantic Forest on the Argentine side of the Iguazú River. One of the most biodiverse but threatened regions in the world, this forest is rich in species like the Critically Endangered Paraná Pine (*Araucaria angustifolia*).



4

With Natura Argentina, Diana's legacy will help create a mosaic of areas protected and dedicated to conservation around the Sierras de Ambato Mountain ridge in the Catamarca Province. Here, species like the Taruca (*Hippocamelus antisensis*), a deer that browses the scrub and grasslands of the high Andes, will have the space and connectivity to thrive.

From Small Steps to Global Impact

Orellana One Year On

Many of the world's most enduring conservation successes begin in the smallest of ways. A community group restoring a patch of forest. A local trust raising funds to protect a wetland. A small team working to safeguard wildlife from immediate threats. These efforts may start with just a handful of committed people, but when they are effective, when they bring results for habitats, species, and local communities, their influence grows, and they can become unstoppable.

The story of the Amazonian Platform for Forests, Climate, and Human Wellbeing is a vivid example of this. Born as a collaborative governance initiative in Ecuador, the Platform brought together provinces such as Pastaza, Zamora Chinchipe, Morona Santiago and, most recently, Orellana, to strengthen conservation action across the Amazon. And now, what began as a regional plan has now reached global visibility. Orellana province has joined its neighbours of the Amazon Platform and been accepted into the Governors' Climate and Forests Task Force (GCFTF), an innovative coalition of states and provinces that together steward more than a third of the world's tropical forests.

This recognition matters. Membership of the GCFTF means that the Amazon Platform's work in Orellana now carries international visibility and greater opportunities for support, finance, and, perhaps most importantly, collaboration. It shows how locally led conservation can become a powerful voice influencing climate and biodiversity policy worldwide.

For WLT, this story feels close to home. Many of our partner organisations around the globe started small, with limited resources but immense determination, as WLT itself first did when founded in Halesworth in 1989. Over time, their effectiveness has brought growth, credibility, and far-reaching impact. Supporting them at critical moments is

central to WLT's mission: we know that well-placed help allows grassroots organisations to build momentum that can change the trajectory of entire landscapes.

This was the case in our 2024 Autumn Appeal, Save the Ecuadorian Amazon, which partnered with Naturaleza y Cultura Internacional in Ecuador (NCE) to protect land in Orellana Province, one of the newest members of the Amazon Platform. NCE began as a small, community-rooted conservation effort in southern Ecuador in 1997 and has grown alongside its parent organisation Nature and Culture International (NCI). Last year, with the help of NCI's partners in the region and international partners including WLT, NCE was able to protect Amazonian forest habitat that is not only home to extraordinary biodiversity but also essential to climate regulation. By safeguarding this land, our donors were not only helping one province but also strengthening a governance initiative across Ecuador.

This is the incredible effect of conservation networks. When our network supports a project, we are not just helping to protect a single reserve or species. We are helping to reinforce a web of organisations, communities, and trusts whose combined efforts can shift the balance for forests and wildlife across continents. Orellana Province's recognition by the GCFTF shows just what is possible when local action is nurtured and connected.

From modest beginnings to international influence, the journey of small conservation organisations is a reminder that big change is built from the ground up. And it is proof that every supporter who joins that journey is part of something with truly global impact.

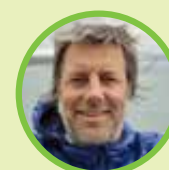


NCI and Provincial Government

© Left: Franck Camhi (Giant Otter, *Pteronura brasiliensis*). Right: NCI.

The Making of *Voices from the Wild*

On World Ranger Day, 31 July, WLT's original short film *Voices from the Wild* premiered. This film is a journey around the globe with the people who are the lifeblood of the reserves we support: rangers, from South Africa to Armenia, Colombia to Pakistan, and many more breathtaking landscapes in between. Following rangers in our partners' reserves from sunrise to sunset, *Voices from the Wild* is a celebration of the tireless dedication of rangers and their invaluable work on the very frontlines of conservation. But how does a project like this that brings together so many different people from across the world take shape? The team behind the making of the film tell us about how an idea became the first step in a project of limitless potential.



Dan Bradbury,
Director of Brand and Communications at WLT

"The idea for *Voices from the Wild* was something Claire, the film's producer, and I had talked about for years. It was inspired by a Ridley Scott project, a crowdsourced film called *A Day in the Life*, where people filmed 24 hours of their lives and sent it in. I thought: why not do that with rangers? They are absolutely central to what our partners do, yet most people don't understand their day-to-day reality and the sheer effort, risks, and unpredictability of their work.

Rangers face extraordinary challenges. What I wanted to capture was the variety and unpredictability of their days. One moment they might be checking camera traps; the next, confronting someone with a gun. That's why the "day in the life" idea felt powerful. It shows the full range, from waking up not knowing what's ahead, to ending the day with the knowledge it all begins again tomorrow. For me, the rangers' personalities are what make this film. My favourite moments are the first "good morning" and the final lines "we'll do it all again tomorrow." That's their reality. And I wanted the film to be authentic, not scripted. Many of our partners work in some of the poorest countries in the world, yet they're being asked to

solve problems caused by some of the wealthiest. Their voices matter, and they deserve to be heard on their own terms.

I've always seen *Voices from the Wild* as just the beginning. This first film is almost like a trailer. I'd love to see it evolve into more: short films, entries at film festivals, different formats from one-minute shorts to longer documentaries. Storytelling shouldn't stand still. Just as our brand evolves, so should how we tell these stories.

Ultimately, I only had the idea. It was Claire and the team who delivered it and exceeded my expectations. But none of it would have been possible without the rangers and partners providing the footage. They made it real. My hope is that this empowers them, boosts their confidence, and shows them their voices are being heard. This should never stop here. Whether it grows into a series of one-minute episodes or a 25-minute documentary, ranger stories will always need to be told because their work never ends, and neither should the storytelling".



Claire Whittenbury, Video Producer

"Dan and I have worked together at WLT since 2014. I've always been excited by these ranger accounts. I remember one from Belize, where a ranger had a gun pulled on him while protecting parrot nests. These are ordinary people putting themselves at risk every day. And that was part of the appeal of *Voices from the Wild* — it wasn't us telling their stories, it was them showing us their real lives. The film was shot by the rangers themselves, in their own words and images. That difference is crucial: we weren't interviewing them or framing their answers, we were asking simply, "What's your day like? Show us." It's empowering, and it gives the film a raw honesty.

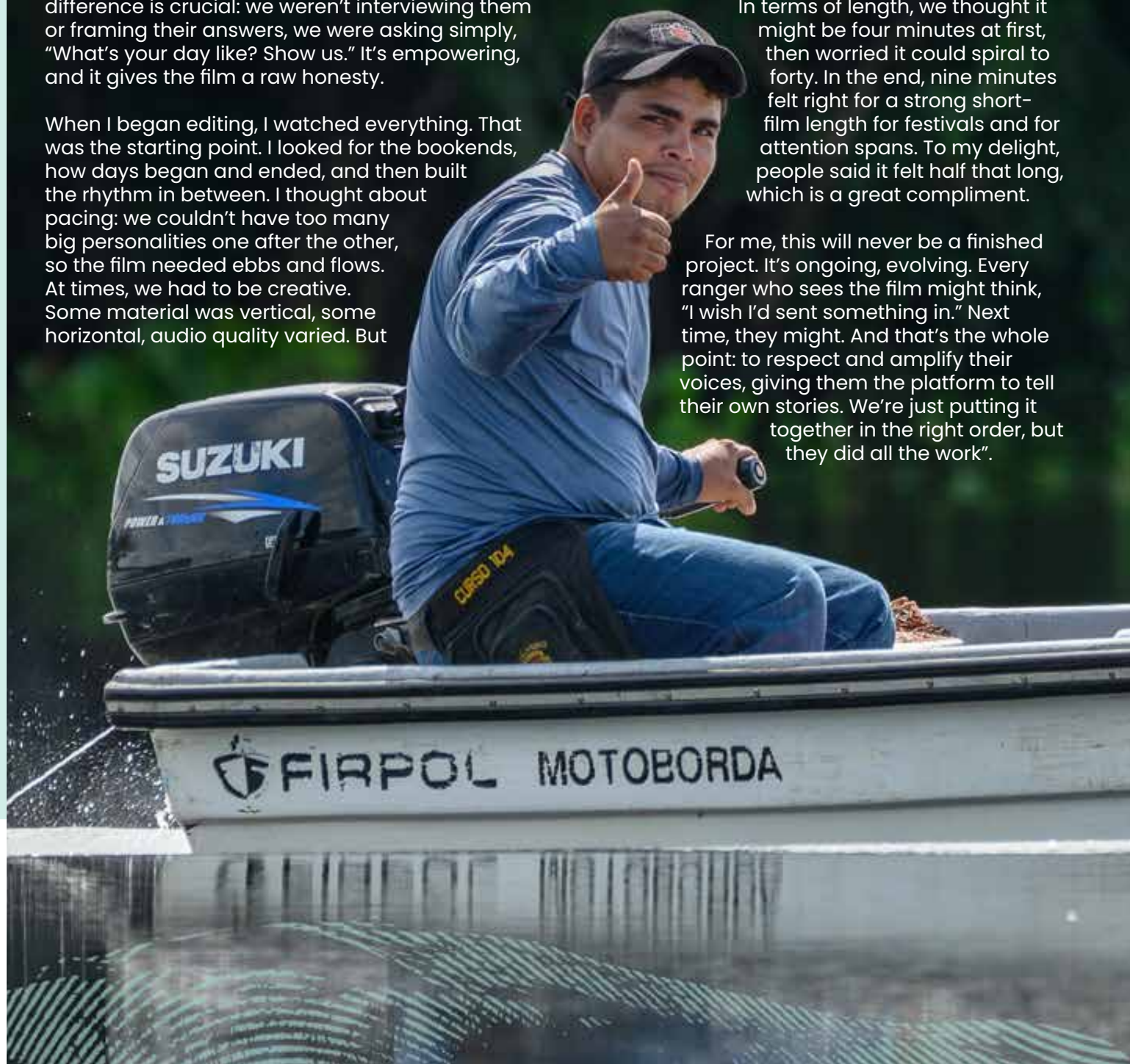
When I began editing, I watched everything. That was the starting point. I looked for the bookends, how days began and ended, and then built the rhythm in between. I thought about pacing: we couldn't have too many big personalities one after the other, so the film needed ebbs and flows. At times, we had to be creative. Some material was vertical, some horizontal, audio quality varied. But

the guiding principle was never to manipulate but just to pair the right ranger with the right moment.

For me, it was an absolute privilege to immerse myself in their lives. Jerry, for example hugging trees, saying "tomorrow is another day" is such a character. I genuinely think he could have his own YouTube channel. There are so many gems we couldn't fit in, but that's what makes this exciting: there's scope for whole character studies in future.

In terms of length, we thought it might be four minutes at first, then worried it could spiral to forty. In the end, nine minutes felt right for a strong short-film length for festivals and for attention spans. To my delight, people said it felt half that long, which is a great compliment.

For me, this will never be a finished project. It's ongoing, evolving. Every ranger who sees the film might think, "I wish I'd sent something in." Next time, they might. And that's the whole point: to respect and amplify their voices, giving them the platform to tell their own stories. We're just putting it together in the right order, but they did all the work".



Beth Lankester, Marketing Officer at WLT

When we started, we had a considerable amount of content. I watched everything we had, looking at what was missing and what stood out. A lot of it was in vertical format as the rangers filmed on their phones, but it was still really useful. From there, I wrote a storyboard. It began with a dark screen and dramatic music, then moved into early morning sounds of nature, transitioning through the day and highlighting each standout moment right through to sunset.

That process really helped to give us a clearer vision of the film: what we imagined the music would sound like, when it should pick up pace, when we'd have sweeping dramatic shots, and when it would feel more intimate with personal to-camera experiences. It helped make sense of the mass of clips we had, breaking them into a defined flow. From there, we matched existing footage to certain places in the storyboard and identified what was still needed.

We went back to a few partners with specific requests like wanting lunchtime downtime moments in the middle of the film, showing the rangers relaxing. Later, we asked for transition-to-night footage, showing camping out, evening meals, and reflections at the end of a day's work. It was also lovely to capture the lighter side of the Rangers. We got bloopers, moments of laughter, jokes, and playfulness. For instance, one clip from Wild Tomorrow showed a Ranger putting on his

pack, taking a dramatic sip of water, and everyone bursting out laughing. Those human moments don't often come through in campaigns, but here they really did.

We worked hard to feature as many different partners as possible, giving everyone some screen time. Vertical clips, which we might otherwise struggle to use, were incorporated in creative ways like the three-frame forest fire sequence, which added drama and showed the scale of threats the rangers face.

Once we had the material, I shared the storyboard and footage with Claire. From that point, she had the freedom to play around, using the storyboard as a guide while shaping the film into something more substantial. It was really satisfying to see elements of my storyboard reflected in the finished piece, maintaining the flow we'd imagined. Working with Claire was great, as always, lots of back and forth, but fun and rewarding.

The finished film was almost nine minutes long, though it feels shorter because it's so immersive. Watching it, you don't notice the time passing. The rangers' stories are so compelling, especially the line at the end "tomorrow is another day" which Jerry delivered with so much enthusiasm, his excitement was perfect and gave the film such an uplifting close.

Partners were enthusiastic and supportive throughout. They always try to give as much as they can, despite capacity challenges, and it was clear they were keen to be involved. Ultimately, the project showed just how much potential there is. Claire and Dan even talked about the film feeling like a pilot episode, something that could evolve into a documentary. And with characters like Jerry, who has such charm and energy, it's easy to imagine people wanting to watch more."



Ranger Jerry

Environmental Defenders in Uganda



You can watch the full film here and let us know what you think by liking the video and leaving your thoughts in the comments. As our filmmakers have told us, *Voices from the Wild* is just the beginning; to be among the first to watch new footage in the future, subscribe to our YouTube channel.

Ambassador Spotlight: Helen Glover

WLT are delighted to properly introduce one of our newest ambassadors: British double Olympic, triple World, and quadruple European champion rower Helen Glover OBE. Helen now also formally supports WLT alongside her husband, WLT Patron Steve Backshall and talks to us about how her passion for nature grew into using her international platform to advocate for its protection.

You've represented the UK all over the world and had incredible success as an athlete. What has inspired you to use your platform for environmental conservation?

It's a huge privilege. When you lift your head from sport, you realise you have a platform that gives you authenticity and a voice. With that comes a bit of pressure to decide who you are, what you stand for and what your passions are. Sport is something I love, but alongside that has always been the environment. I grew up in Cornwall, so these issues were on my doorstep early on. I was brought up having conversations about how precious our world is.

That made it real for me. Instead of just worrying, I became more proactive and started to ask what I could do. Meeting Steve helped me find answers. Through him I discovered WLT and places where real solutions exist. That made me feel empowered to act rather than just be aware or saddened. Being able to stand up and say "I support this cause because I believe in it" is really important.

Was there a particular moment that sparked your passion for protecting nature?

It's less about moments and more about people. My parents instilled a love of the outdoors. Steve gave me the belief that we can make change. And my children made me ask what kind of world I want to leave behind for them. They ask questions every day and I want to look them in the eye and say "Yes, I'm trying".

Many of our supporters are parents and families. How do you talk to your children about protecting nature for future generations?

Helen: The longer I'm a parent, the more I realise how different my children are. One is very sensitive to negative news and can become anxious. Another prefers hearing blunt facts. I try to read the child and lead with positivity about the impact they can have.

We celebrate the small wins. My kids are brilliant at picking up litter and every time they do it they feel like champions. I tell them they've made an impact and maybe saved an animal's life by doing that. Reinforcing those positives is so important because they also absorb the negatives.

As an athlete and public figure, how do you see the connection between sport, health, and the natural environment?

They've always been intertwined for me. My sport depends on clean waterways. Without them, rowing wouldn't exist. I don't think you can be a sportsperson and not care about the environment. If you're health conscious, you have to recognise that the world is bigger than the pitch, the gym or the stretch of river you train on. Everything is connected.

When ecosystems are damaged, you see the impact quickly through things like sewage or waste. Rowers understand that because if the water is dirty, you feel it in a very direct way. World Rowing works hard to make regatta sites as green as possible. People who love sport and exercise have a strong reason to love and protect the outdoors.

You've travelled widely during your career. Have you seen firsthand the pressures on landscapes and wildlife that WLT works to address?

I haven't visited WLT sites directly, but when we were in Rio during the Olympic rainforest campaign, it was inspiring to see how passionate the local communities were about their forests. People cared deeply about protecting their rainforests and stopping pollution from flowing into waterways.

What WLT does well is highlight these issues in a clear and manageable way. There are many problems around the world, and WLT helps break them down so they don't feel overwhelming, whether you're a child, an adult or a conservation expert.

Of all WLT's projects, is there one that resonates with you personally?

The Kinabatangan project in Borneo stands out. It

was the first big fundraising challenge Steve and I did together. We trained hard to kayak and raise money for that project. There are pygmy elephants there, which is amazing.

One of my favourite memories is visiting schools with Operation Ocelot and showing children that they could raise enough money to save an area of rainforest the size of their playing field. They would stand there, look around and imagine it all being jungle. That made the project feel tangible and close to home, even though it was on the other side of the world. We raised more than expected and it's something we're proud of.

Conservation can feel overwhelming. What gives you hope for the future?

The number of passionate people gives me hope. When those voices combine, they are powerful. People can worry about where to give their support and who to trust. For me, WLT is a safe place to land because they have a proven track record of making a difference. That trust removes a weight from your shoulders when you wonder how to help.

Once you have a platform, it matters how you use it. You can choose to promote something trivial, or you can choose to champion causes that matter. I always tell people to look back at WLT's projects, understand their impact and feel excited about what the future can hold.

Looking ahead, what role do you see yourself playing in helping WLT spread its message?

I'm an advocate for WLT and excited to be an ambassador. I want to be part of the face of the organisation and shout about it wherever I can. I'd love to take on another project in the future and do targeted fundraising. Once I have a clear goal, I can focus on it. That's one of the great things about WLT. There are clear, tangible targets that you can work towards together.



Read, Listen, Learn

Books

- Braiding Sweetgrass, Robin Wall Kimmerer
- The Sixth Extinction, Elizabeth Kolbert
- The Drowned World, J. G. Ballard

Podcasts

- Mothers of Invention, Mary Robinson, Maeve Higgins, and Thimali Kodikara
- Outrage and Optimism, Christiana Figueres, Tom Rivett-Carnac, and Paul Dickinson

Documentaries

- Jane Goodall: An Inside Look
- Ocean with David Attenborough
- Virunga
- Mission Blue

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