



A close-up photograph of a bear's face, looking slightly upwards and to the left. The bear has dark brown fur with a lighter brown patch around its eye and nose. The background is blurred green foliage.

# PROTECTING A SANCTUARY OF WATERFALLS AND WILDLIFE IN EASTERN ECUADOR

Our Buy an Acre project with Fundación EcoMinga



Black-and-chestnut Eagle

## Country

Ecuador

## Partner/Organisation

Fundación EcoMinga

## Biome

Tropical and Subtropical Moist Broadleaf Forests

## Ecoregion

Eastern Cordillera Real montane forests

## Habitats

Located on the eastern slopes of the Ecuadorian Andes, the project site mainly consists of montane and high montane forest with smaller patches of páramo grassland – a high-altitude grassland habitat unique to Central and South America, as well as many waterfalls.

## Project summary

The Llanganates-Sangay Corridor in eastern Ecuador contains an exceptional diversity of highly threatened species. Among these are several which, until recently, were unknown to science. These include the Critically Endangered and endemic Punzan Rainfrog (*Pristimantis punzan*), first discovered by our partner Fundación EcoMinga (EcoMinga) in 2014.

Despite its global conservation importance, this region is under threat from deforestation and illegal hunting. But with your support, this Buy an Acre project will contribute to our partner EcoMinga's wider efforts to expand their 80-hectare (198-acre) Sanctuary of Waterfalls and Wildlife Reserve by an additional 485 hectares (1,198 acres). These efforts will not only safeguard precious habitats such as montane forest, páramo grassland, and waterfalls – but will also create new connections between these two reserves and the wider Sangay National Park. Once secured, the new land will also be monitored by EcoMinga's reserve rangers and with camera traps, thus reducing illegal hunting within the reserves.

## Main threats to the area

The main threats facing this landscape include deforestation driven by agricultural expansion for both crops and cattle. Slash-and-burn clearance also increases the risk of forest fires. In addition, illegal hunting driven by poverty poses a threat to key species such as the Spectacled Bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*), Mountain Tapir (*Tapirus pinchaque*) and highly threatened amphibians.

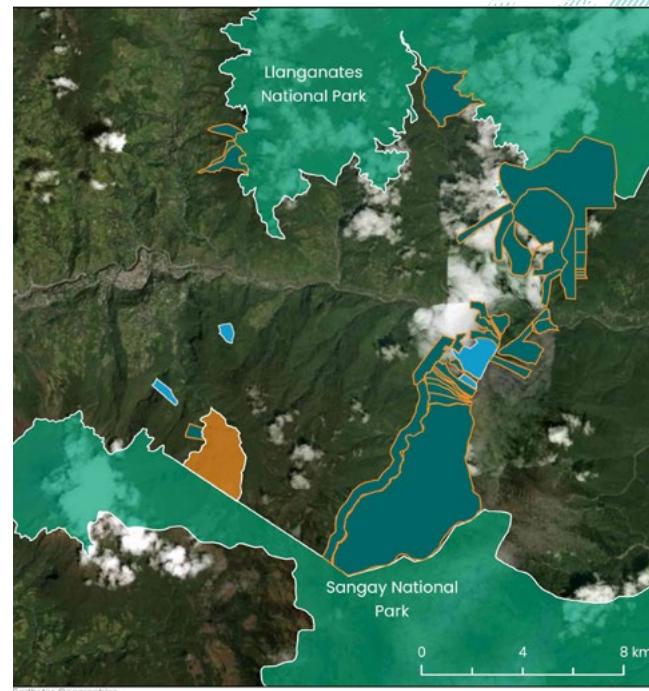
## Global prioritisation

The project site falls within the Tropical Andes Biodiversity Hotspot and the Llanganates-Sangay Corridor Key Biodiversity Area.

## Biodiversity

The project site is home to a diverse array of species, many of which are highly threatened and found nowhere else on Earth. These include the Critically Endangered and endemic Punzan Rainfrog (*Pristimantis punzan*), the Endangered Tungurahua Rainfrog (*Pristimantis tungurahua*) and *Riama balneator*. These are joined by over 10 species of reptile and 15 species of large- to medium-sized mammal including the site's flagship species, the Spectacled Bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*) and Mountain Tapir (*Tapirus pinchaque*).

The montane and páramo vegetation is equally diverse, with many endemic orchids and approximately 70 species of endemic, herbal species. Due to the mountainous landscape, the endemism is often extremely localised meaning some of the species found here are not found in any other EcoMinga reserves. This underscores the importance of this specific Buy an Acre project to securing the conservation of the region's wildlife.



- Sanctuary of Waterfalls Reserve extension for purchase
- Fundación EcoMinga's WLT-supported properties
- Fundación EcoMinga's wider project areas
- Other protected areas



## Key species<sup>1</sup>

### Mammals

Mountain tapir (*Tapirus pinchaque*, EN); Spectacled bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*, VU)

### Birds

Black-and-chestnut Eagle (*Spizaetus isidori*, EN); Andean Condor (*Vultur gryphus*, VU)

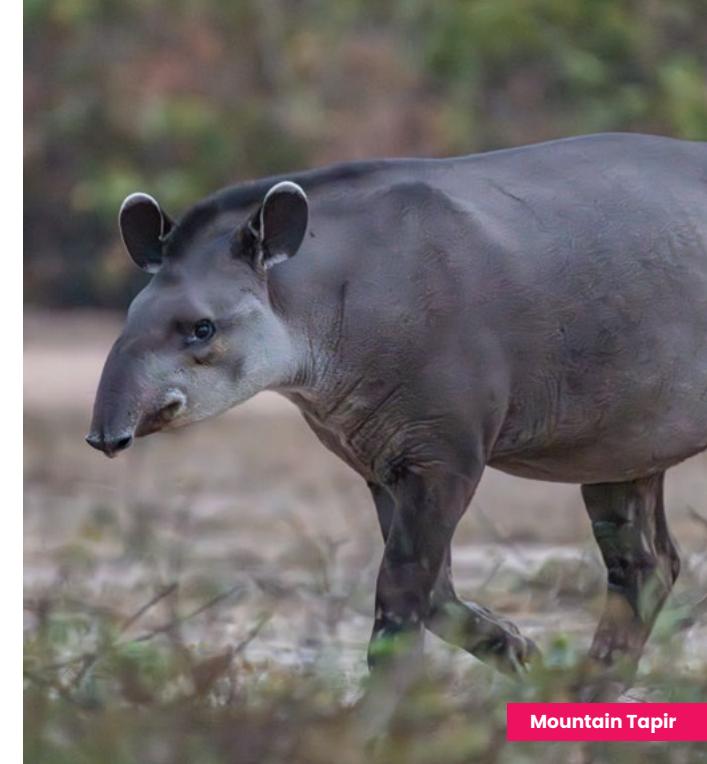
### Amphibians

Punzan rainfrog (*Pristimantis punzan*, CR); Pastaza Rainfrog (*Pristimantis pastazensis*, CR and endemic); Tungurahua rainfrog (*Pristimantis tungurahua*, EN and endemic)

### Plants

*Aphelandra harlingii* (EN and endemic)

<sup>1</sup>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), Least Concern (LC) and Data Deficient (DD).



Mountain Tapir



Andean Condor

## Local communities

A major part of EcoMinga's work involves supporting local community members and helping them to identify alternative revenue sources. Although this specific project is predominantly environmental in focus, it will indirectly create employment opportunities in reserve monitoring. This will help provide them with a sustainable income through guiding, hospitality, and other tourism-related services.

## Partner/Organisation

EcoMinga is an Ecuadorian NGO dedicated to the conservation of the unique foothill forests, cloud forests, and páramo grasslands of the Andes. In particular, they focus on the edge of the Amazon basin in east-central Ecuador and the western Andean slopes of the Choco region in northwest Ecuador.

WLT has been supporting EcoMinga since 2007 to protect and expand their reserves between Llanganates and Sangay National Parks. In addition,

EcoMinga rangers have been supported through WLT's Keepers of the Wild programme since 2011. These rangers patrol EcoMinga reserves and protect them from poaching and illegal logging.

**UN Sustainable Development Goals directly advanced by this project:**



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