

# IMPACT REPORT

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## 2024



One reserve.  
One night.  
4,800 species  
of insects.  
(more on pg. 60)



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**JOCOTOCO**  
ECUADOR

Saturniid moth (*Dirphia subhorca*),  
Canandé Reserve

Photo credit: Javier Aznar



# A LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear Friends of Jocotoco,

Across the globe, communities face the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. For millennia, ecosystems like forests, wetlands, and oceans have sustained life, stabilized climate, and supported civilization. But these natural systems are under threat—deforestation is rising, oceans are being overfished, and species are vanishing at alarming rates. We are approaching a tipping point, and continuing on this path puts us all at risk.

The impacts are felt everywhere. In Ecuador, an unprecedented drought in 2024 nearly collapsed the hydroelectric grid, leading to months of blackouts. Wildfires burned in places that had never seen flames before.

**WHILE MANY SOUND THE ALARM, AT JOCOTOCO, WE ARE ACTING—AND ACHIEVING RESULTS WHERE THEY MATTER MOST.**

Despite its small size, Ecuador ranks ninth in global biodiversity. Yet its ecosystems are under serious pressure. In the 20th century, Ecuador had the highest deforestation rate in South America.

Jocotoco works across Ecuador's diverse landscapes—from the Amazon to the Andes, the Chocó to the Galápagos—protecting and restoring habitats, saving endangered species, and applying science, technology, boots on the ground, and local leadership to maximize impact. Our solutions are effective, scalable, and driven by urgent need.

At Jocotoco, we've created a conservation model that offers real hope. Let me show you how it works.

With gratitude,



Martin Schaefer, CEO

Martin Schaefer - CEO  
Photo credit: Wendy Willis



**Watch this video showcasing  
where we came from and  
where we're going.**





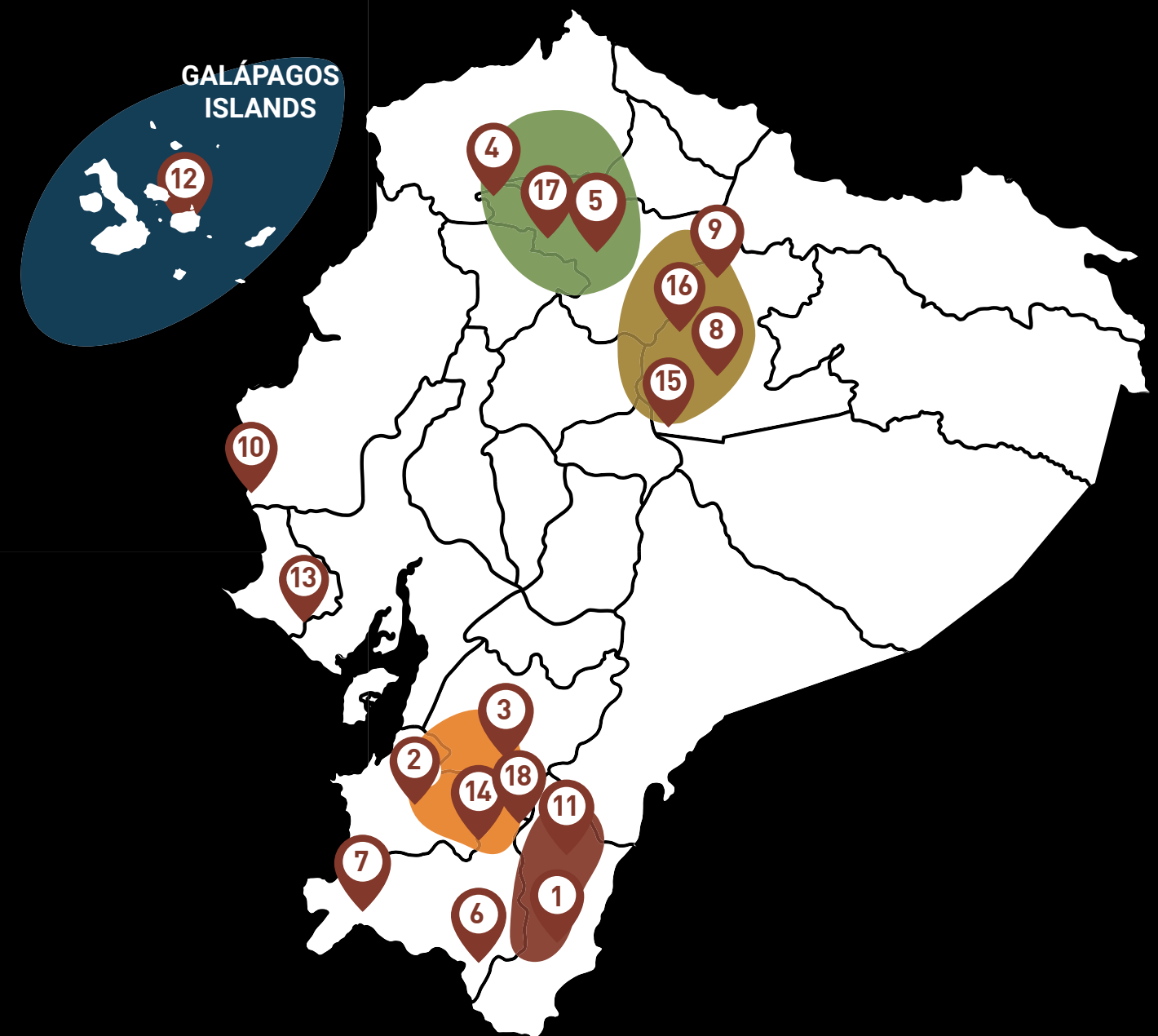
# FROM LOCAL TO REGIONAL CONSERVATION

Jocotoco's early years were dedicated to protecting rare and endangered species locally by creating and managing private nature reserves. Our 10-year strategy (2023-2033) is driven by the realization that Jocotoco needs to achieve regional conservation successes across entire landscapes and seascapes if we are to stem the tide of biodiversity collapse.

We established five priority regions in Ecuador to implement regional conservation:

- **Chocó - Andes** ■
- **Galápagos** ■
- **Podocarpus - El Cóndor** ■
- **Andes - Amazon** ■
- **Chocó - Tumbes** ■

In each priority region, we expand, buffer, and connect protected areas. We create corridors that include our own reserves, national parks, marine reserves, other governmental protected areas, communal and indigenous reserves, and other private reserves. These corridors allow wildlife to move safely throughout vast territories and along ancient migration routes, as they once did. These corridors also protect the natural resources our societies depend on.



## RESERVES:

01. Tapichalaca	07. Jorupe	13. Las Balsas
02. Buenaventura	08. Narupa	14. Cerro de Arcos
03. Yunguilla	09. Chakana	15. Cuyuja
04. Canandé	10. Ayampe	16. Jondachi
05. Yanacocha	11. Copalinga	17. Tandayapa
06. Utuana	12. Los Petreles	18. Ridgely



# CHOCÓ-ANDES

## THE RING OF DEFENSE

The Chocó, stretching from Panama through Colombia to northwest Ecuador, is one of the most biodiverse ecosystems on Earth. It is considered the floristic hotspot of the Americas, having more range-restricted species than the better known Amazon. The Ecuadorian Chocó alone supports more than 8% of all bird species on Earth. But decades of deforestation have devastated the region: in western Ecuador, 95% of lowland forests vanished by 1988, and only 3% remain today.

Our response to this devastation is simple: create a 'Ring of Defense' around existing protected areas to form a contiguous conservation network spanning more than 1.2 million acres (500,000 ha). This conservation network will stretch from the tops of the Andes at more than 16,000 feet in elevation to less than 200 feet above sea level (50-4,900 m). We are not starting from zero - more than half of the land is already protected.

**WESTERN ECUADOR IS THE ONLY PLACE IN THE WESTERN TROPICAL ANDES WHERE AN ALTITUDINAL GRADIENT OF NEARLY THREE MILES (5 KM) CAN BE PROTECTED. THIS ALLOWS PLANTS AND ANIMALS TO ADAPT TO A CHANGING CLIMATE BY ENABLING THEM TO MOVE UPSLOPE TO COOLER TEMPERATURES.**

Jocotoco has assembled a coalition of 10 Ecuadorian community and conservation organizations called the Chocó-Andes Alliance to spearhead this effort.

### PROGRESS IN 2024:

- We expanded our Canandé Reserve in the lower Chocó by nearly 7,000 acres (3,000 ha). It is our largest reserve and now covers more than 45,000 acres (18,000 ha). The reserve buffers the adjacent Cotacachi-Cayapas National Park from illegal logging, mining, and poaching; problems that are rampant in mainland governmental protected areas in Ecuador. Every acre protected in Canandé has an exponential impact on preventing deforestation beyond its borders.
- We helped Earthkeeper, a partner organization, create a nearly 1,500-acre (600-ha) reserve in the upper Chocó, called Tandayapa. We manage the Tandayapa Reserve with our own staff.
- We supported indigenous Chachi communities in defending their land rights by paying for their attorneys to argue land disputes in court. We also supported the Chachi Federation in resolving issues with the Socio Bosque program (a governmental program that pays communities to maintain their forests), allowing the Chachi to continue to receive payments for conservation.

The outlook for the Chocó is no longer bleak—its unique flora and fauna, as well as the people that call it home, have a chance for a vibrant future.



Our camera traps captured photos of a group of Great Curassow (*Crax rubra*) just outside of our Canandé Reserve in late 2024. This is part of the last known population in Ecuador.

Photo credit: Javier Aznar







# THE GALÁPAGOS

## FROM RIDGE TO REEF

The famed Galápagos Islands lie 600 miles off the coast of Ecuador in the Pacific Ocean. The islands are home to unique volcanic landscapes and wildlife that evolved into new species over millions of years. The waters surrounding the islands are some of the most biodiverse marine environments in the world. Despite its importance, the diversity of life—on land and in the sea—is at risk.

To be effective, regional conservation on the Galápagos has to include landscapes and seascapes together. What happens on land impacts the surrounding waters, and what happens in the seas impacts life on land. On the Galápagos, we are leading innovative conservation programs that protect and restore habitat from the tops of the tallest volcanic ridges, to the coral reefs offshore, and to the deep oceans beyond.

Seabirds on the Galápagos perfectly illustrate the connections between land and sea. Galápagos Petrels, Galápagos Penguins, and Waved Albatross are 100% dependent on the ocean for feeding, but they must come back to land to nest. When they return to land, they bring nutrients from the ocean through their guano, creating habitat for other wildlife. For some seabirds, their main threats are at sea—entanglements in fishing lines and depletion of food sources from overfishing or coral reef destruction. For other seabirds, their main threats are at their nesting sites—invasive predators that eat their eggs and young.

Photo credit: Mara Speece  
Waved Albatross (*Phoebastria irrorata*)



## REWILDING FLOREANA

An astounding story that exemplifies a holistic approach to conservation is unfolding right now—the rewilding of an entire island, Floreana, the sixth largest island in the Galápagos. Endemic wildlife on Floreana has suffered over the last two centuries. Whalers and pirates hunted all of the Floreana Giant Tortoises. Introduced predators, like rats and mice, ate the eggs and young of other endemic wildlife. Many species disappeared. Luckily, many of those species survived on larger Galápagos islands or on tiny islets free from rats and mice.

Right now we have the opportunity to rewild Floreana and bring back 12 species that disappeared generations ago. We will make the island safe again for the 61 threatened species still present on the island—more threatened species than any other Galápagos island—of which 55 are vulnerable to invasive species.

**This is the most ambitious rewilding effort ever in the Galápagos, and the largest rewilding effort on a populated tropical island in the world.**

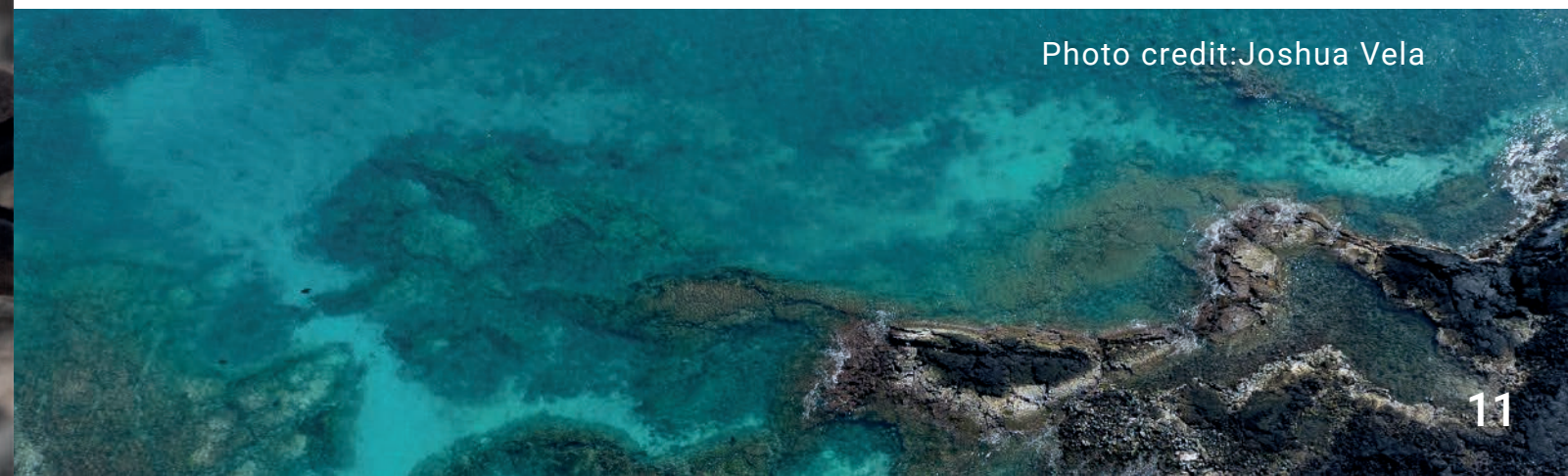
To do this, we must first restore the island's ecosystems, from the forests at the top of its central mountain to its rocky coasts.

After years of planning, we conducted intense invasive species removal at the end of 2023. During the invasive species control process, we relocated individuals of five species of Darwin's finches on Floreana to aviaries to protect them. In early 2024, we released 510 finches back to the island. They quickly returned to their territories and, with fewer invasive predators, they started reproducing immediately. As a result of invasive predator control, several species of Floreana's endemic land snails, as well as endemic Lava Lizards, have rapidly expanded their populations.

But rewilding on this scale is not a linear process. In fall 2024, our high-tech monitoring system – a grid of automated camera traps using AI to identify species – detected a population of rodents in Floreana's highlands. Invasive species control continues.

Once the island is safe for their return, we will reintroduce Floreana Giant Tortoises, whose descendants were rediscovered on Wolf Volcano on Isabela Island. These tortoises are environmental engineers and will help restore the island's ecosystems – they eat vegetation, disperse seeds, and maintain small muddy wallowing holes. The tortoises will improve the island's habitats for the other species to be reintroduced.

Photo credit: Joshua Vela





A stunning discovery in early 2025 shows that our work has already been successful. With fewer invasive predators on Floreana, we recorded multiple individuals of the endemic Galápagos Rail, one of the 12 species we plan to bring back.

This incredible finding occurred on an expedition with scientists from Jocotoco, the Charles Darwin Foundation, and Galápagos National Park. These are the first sightings of the Galápagos Rail on Floreana since Charles Darwin recorded the rail during his visit in 1835.

Thanks to the significant reduction of rats and mice, the rails reemerged. They may have returned on their own from nearby islets, or they may have been hidden on the island all along.

**The Floreana Island Restoration Project is led by the Galápagos National Park, the Galápagos Biosecurity Agency, and co-executed by Jocotoco with technical assistance from Island Conservation and scientific support from many other national and international institutions.**



**Listen to the song of the Galápagos Rail at xeno-canto above.**

Galápagos Rail (*Laterallus spilonota*)  
Photo Credit: Carlos Espinosa

## PAOLA SANGOLQUÍ

### PROTECTING THE OCEANS

Paola spent most of her childhood in Puerto Ayora on Santa Cruz, the most populated island in the Galápagos. She saw her first hammerhead shark at age five, and the oceans became her calling. She trained to be a divemaster, then studied marine biology on mainland Ecuador. One of her first jobs after returning to the Galápagos was patrolling the marine reserves with the Galápagos National Park. That's when she saw firsthand one of the worst ever examples of illegal fishing: a single fishing vessel had caught more than 300 tons of fish, mostly protected sharks.

This experience galvanized her resolve not only to study the oceans, but to protect them. She went to the U.S. where she received her master's degree from Arizona State University. After returning again to the Galápagos, she began working for Jocotoco in early 2024, leading our marine conservation team. She is pursuing her PhD while she works for Jocotoco.

Paola Sangolquí  
Photo credit: Greenpeace

In just one single year, Paola greatly expanded our marine conservation program.

- Along with Greenpeace, she participated in the first-ever expedition of the unexplored seamount in international waters between mainland Ecuador and the Galápagos.
- She supported the work to restore over 5,000 corals around Isabela Island in partnership with Galápagos Reef Revival.
- She led the work to protect Galápagos Petrel nests, endangered seabirds, on Santa Cruz and San Cristobal.
- She achieved a 100% increase in airport monitoring to prevent wildlife trafficking.
- She helped improve systems and equipment for management, interception, and surveillance within the Galápagos Marine Reserve and La Hermandad Marine Reserve.

Paola is determined to protect the marine life that is so abundant around the Galápagos. Her impact will continue to grow.





# RESTORING CORAL REEFS

We won't stop our restoration at the coastline. The coral reefs offshore of Floreana, as well as most of the reefs in the Galápagos, were decimated by the warm waters brought by El Niño between 1983 and 1985. Partnering with Galápagos Reef Revival, we are bringing those coral reefs back to life. Using corals grown at our own underwater coral nursery, we have already reestablished more than 5,000 corals on Isabela Island, representing a restored area of approximately 65,000 square feet (6,000 m²). These corals were selected from reefs that have proven to be the most resilient to climate change. We aim to restore the coral reefs around Floreana in coming years.



Coral nursery on Isabela  
Photo credit: Joshua Vela

# PROTECTING MARINE RESERVES

We support the sustainable management of the 55,000-square-mile (142,000-km²) Galápagos Marine Reserve and the recently established 23,000-square-mile (60,000-km²) Hermandad Marine Reserve. La Hermandad connects the Galápagos with Cocos Island in Costa Rica and protects an important migratory corridor for whales, sharks, rays, and sea turtles. In 2024, with support from the Bezos Earth Fund, we provided a new patrol boat to the Galápagos National Park Directorate which doubled their interception capacity for control and surveillance activities in the marine reserves.



Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*)  
Photo credit: Joshua Vela





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Galápagos Sea Lion (*Zalophus wollebaeki*)  
Photo credit: Juan Carlos Figueroa



# ANDES - AMAZON

## SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION

The Andes - Amazon program covers a region that stretches from the top of Antisana Volcano to the lowland rainforests of the Amazon basin. The eastern slope of the Andes is renowned as one of the world's most bird-rich regions. You can find species like Andean Condor at high elevations, migratory birds like Cerulean Warbler spending northern winters in the foothills, and iconic species like Harpy Eagle nesting in the lowlands.

Our nearly 7,000-acre (3,000-ha) Narupa Reserve and the more than 500,000-acre (200,000-ha) Sumaco Napo Galeras National Park are located within a matrix of indigenous communities. In 2024 we worked with three indigenous communities—Wamaní, Payamino, and Ávila Viejo—to support conservation efforts on their own communal nature reserves. We trained these communities in monitoring and patrolling techniques so they can understand the status of biodiversity on their reserves and create management plans based on scientific information. We also provided training to help improve livelihoods through bird tourism.





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Narupa Reserve  
Photo credit: Rhett Ayers Butler for Mongabay



# PODOCARPUS - EL CÓNDOR JHULY DÍAS, WATER GUARDIAN

Southern Ecuador is home to El Cónдор Mountains, a mountain range older than the Andes. The region has an astounding botanical diversity, including more than 4,000 species of plants, of which nearly half only exist here. There are two large national parks, Podocarpus and Yacurí. Podocarpus National Park harbors arguably more orchid species than any other place on the planet. Sitting between the two national parks, connecting them together, is our Tapichalaca Reserve, and encompassing and surrounding our reserve is a municipal protected area, called ACMUS Palanda.

Rich in freshwater flowing down from the mountains, Palanda, a small town in this region, has been inhabited for thousands of years. The town is home to the oldest known evidence of cacao use dating back 5,300 years. In recent decades, this community started changing rapidly, and not for the better. People began asking themselves questions. Can we stop the deforestation in the hills around us? Can we ensure our children have abundant and clean water, like we always have?

In 2018, the Palanda community designated a massive 190,200-acre (77,000-ha) conservation area, called an ACMUS, to protect water by protecting forests. After the designation, the idea of the ACMUS could have faded away, forgotten by the community, a reserve on paper only.

That's where Jhuly Días comes in. Born and raised in Palanda, Jhuly was Jocotoco's first female park ranger. In 2021, to support the community's initial goals, Jocotoco began managing the ACMUS with its own staff. Because of her incredible expertise and her close connections with the community, Jhuly rose up our ranks and is now our coordinator for managing the ACMUS.

Our long-term goal in Palanda is to strengthen local capacity to protect the ACMUS. Thanks to Jhuly and the rest of our team, we are already seeing a transformation. A group of community members in Palanda now meets regularly to make joint decisions on the ACMUS.

A decade ago, people in Palanda asked themselves what they could do to make their home better for their children. Jhuly is guiding them to answers.

Jhuly Días at Tapichalaca  
Photo credit: Alex Wiles

**Watch this great video of  
Jhuly's work in Palanda.**





# PROPAGATING RARE PLANTS

## TAPICHALACA'S MINILAB

The Tapichalaca Reserve sits high in the cloud forests of southern Ecuador. The forest is awash in an incredible diversity of rare and endangered plants. Scientists discover new plant species here every year, like the *Elleanthus loxensis*, a white orchid described for the first time in 2024. Scientists also rediscover species, like the *Bomarea longipes*, a critically endangered vine with a beautiful flower that was thought to be extinct for over 100 years, until it was found in Tapichalaca 20 years ago.

Habitat destruction has reduced or fragmented populations of many of Tapichalaca's plants so much that they struggle to reproduce naturally in the forest. Some orchids are illegally collected and sold in local markets, putting them at risk of extinction.

Jocotoco created a high-tech minilab at Tapichalaca to propagate some of the rarest and most endangered plants so they could be transplanted back into the reserve. We hired Fanny Hidalgo to run that minilab in 2024.

Because each of the priority species is so rare, there is little to no information about how they reproduce. Fanny must develop new methodologies for propagating them, and she has already been successful. In her first year, she germinated seven different species. This includes the *Bomarea longipes* vine. Right now, Fanny is testing ways to propagate seven endangered species of orchids found only in Tapichalaca. She also supported our outdoor plant nurseries, which produced 1,200 rare plants that were transplanted into the Tapichalaca Reserve in 2024.



Fanny Hidalgo in the Minilab of Tapichalaca  
Photo credit: Jennifer Martínez



Bromelia (*Tillandsia* sp.) found on a botanical expedition in Tapichalca earlier this year.  
Photo credit: Fanny Hidalgo



Andean White-fronted Capuchin (*Cebus yuracus*),  
Copalinga Reserve  
Photo credit: Pedro Bernal



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# CHOCÓ - TUMBES

## PROTECTING ENDEMIC SPECIES

**BUENAVENTURA RESERVE**

**El Oro Parakeet**

- Endangered
- Distribution: 1,467 sq. miles (3,800km<sup>2</sup>)
- Global population: 600
- Population in Buenaventura: 254

***Magnolia buenaventurensis***

- Status undetermined
- Distribution: known only from Buenaventura
- Global population and in Buenaventura: 58

**Blue Whiptail**

- Critically Endangered
- Distribution: 8 sq. miles (20 km<sup>2</sup>)
- Global population and in Yunguilla region: 30

**CERRO DE ARCOS RESERVE**

**Blue-throated Hillstar**

- Critically Endangered
- Distribution: 179 sq. miles (465 km<sup>2</sup>)
- Global population: 80-110
- Population in Cerro de Arcos: 32

**YUNGUILLA RESERVE**

**Pale-headed Brushfinch**

- Endangered
- Distribution: 14 sq. miles (36 km<sup>2</sup>)
- Global population: 240
- Population in Yunguilla: 204

**RIDGELY RESERVE**

**Red-faced Parrot**

- Endangered
- Distribution: 8,996 sq. miles (23,300 km<sup>2</sup>)
- Global population: 1,200-1,600
- Population in Ridgely: monitoring in progress

### JOCOTOCO RESERVES

- El Oro Parakeet distribution
- Blue-throated Hillstar distribution
- Red-faced Parrot distribution
- Blue Whiptail distribution
- Pale-headed Brushfinch distribution

The Chocó - Tumbes region in southwest Ecuador is the blending of two distinct ecosystems, wet Chocó forests and dry Tumbes forests. This region is characterized by many endemic species that have low populations and small distributions. The map on this page shows some of the range-restricted species that we protect on our reserves.





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Cerro de Arcos Reserve  
Photo credit: Documencia



## JOCOTOURS

Through Jocotours, you can travel to Ecuador and experience an incredible diversity of landscapes and wildlife. You can stay in one of our five lodges, see Andean Condors just outside of Quito, or walk with Giant Tortoises in the Galápagos. Jocotours can arrange your travel to anywhere in Ecuador, even if you're not staying in our lodges. When you travel with Jocotours, all proceeds go back to Jocotoco's conservation work.

Contact Jocotours at +593 99 244 0038  
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Birdwatching at Yanacocha Reserve  
Photo credit: Afuera Producciones



# NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

At Jocotoco, our nature-based solutions to complex global problems are straightforward: protect what's left and restore what's lost. These solutions help slow down climate change, secure freshwater, and maintain biodiversity.

We counted 143 endangered Brown-headed Spider Monkeys (*Ateles fusciceps fusciceps*) at the Canandé Reserve in 2024, representing half the estimated global population.

Brown-headed Spider Monkey (*Ateles fusciceps fusciceps*)  
Photo credit: Scott Tregeser

## EXPANDING OUR RESERVES

Private nature reserves are key to our regional conservation goals. Jocotoco now protects and manages 18 reserves that cover more than 110,000 acres (44,000 ha) acres, while we cooperatively manage another 188,000 acres (76,000 ha) of communal protected areas. Combined, this represents an area larger than New York City. We select places that have the greatest impact on biodiversity – for example, approximately 10% of all the species of birds in the world occur within the 18 reserves that we protect and manage.

In 2024 alone we acquired nearly 12,400 acres (5,000 ha). This growth included the expansion of existing reserves, such as cloud forests in Tapichalaca, Chocó rainforests at Canandé, land at higher elevations at Buenaventura, Amazonian foothill forests at Narupa, and Andean páramo at Cerro de Arcos. We created a new reserve in southern Ecuador to protect the habitat of the endangered Red-faced Parrot. We also helped create and began managing a new reserve for a partner organization called Earthkeeper - cloud forests on the western Andean slope at Tandayapa.

The natural vegetation of each of our reserves stores carbon, slowing down climate change. When we protect an intact forest from being cut or burned, we prevent the release of that carbon into the atmosphere. When we protect a previously degraded forest and allow it to regrow, the vegetation captures carbon as it grows. We strategically locate many of our reserves to buffer larger national parks that are susceptible to illegal logging and forest clearing, exponentially expanding the impact of the acres protected at our reserves alone.

Our reserves also help maintain water quality and quantity for communities. Our Canandé Reserve in the Chocó is part of a network of protected areas that help maintain the source of drinking water for more than 1.2 million people. Some of Quito's freshwater originates in the páramos at the Chakana Reserve. At Buenaventura, we have agreements with two neighboring communities that allow them to divert water coming from a stream in the reserve for use in irrigation. Maintaining the forests of the Jorupe Reserve helps maintain the water in a very arid region of northwest Perú.

Yanacocha Reserve  
Photo credit: Antonio Páez

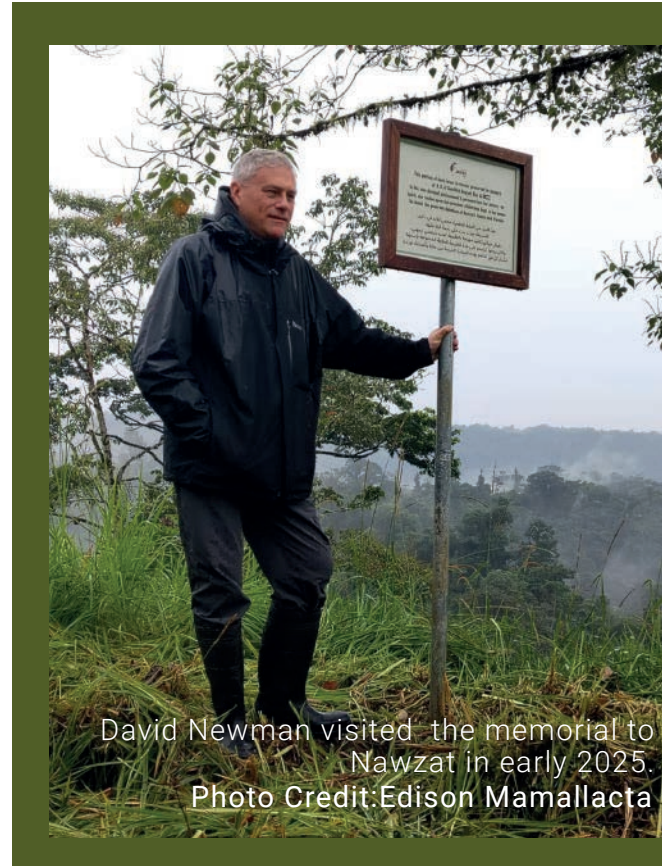


# PROTECTING A RAINFOREST IN MEMORY OF H.H. AL SHARIFEH NAWZAT BINT ALI

David Newman, a Londoner, approached a sign in a clearing at the end of a long trail in an Ecuadorian rainforest, far from home. The sign was a memorial to David's late wife, Nawzat. A member of the Jordanian Hashemite Royal family and a devoted conservationist, Nawzat had passed away a few years earlier after a long battle with leukemia.

When Nawzat passed away, David and his friends pooled their money together to protect 170 acres (70 ha) of land and add it to the Narupa Reserve in the foothills of the Amazon, to honor Nawzat's memory.

This was David's first visit to Narupa. Torrential downpours had kept him awake most of the night. Thunder and lightning were in the forecast for the next morning, the morning of the hike to Nawzat's memorial. He thought to himself, "Nawzat must be testing me." Accompanied by Jocotoco guides, David persisted. After a muddy hike, and as the memorial sign came into view, David became overwhelmed with the realization this beautiful forest would forever be a forest, and Nawzat's legacy would always have a home here.



David Newman visited the memorial to Nawzat in early 2025.  
Photo Credit: Edison Mamallacta

You too can honor or remember a loved one by giving to protect a forest in Ecuador. Reach out to Jocotoco to learn more.

Narupa Reserve  
Photo credit: Javier Aznar

## JOCOAMBIENTE

Jocotoco's subsidiary company, called Jocoambiente, provides unique conservation services to our partners. Jocoambiente draws upon the decades of experience and passion of Jocotoco. Some partners need support in creating, protecting, managing, and restoring their reserves. Jocoambiente, through its partnership with Jocotoco, brings staff such as forest guards, biologists, and reforestation experts. It has infrastructure including research labs and plant nurseries. It has access to advanced technology that can help monitor biodiversity and conduct research. Jocoambiente is another innovative solution that we bring to conservation; its revenues support Jocotoco's work. Jocoambiente will help us achieve regional conservation strategies, even beyond Ecuador's borders.



Installing a camera trap to monitor wildlife in the Yanacocha Reserve.  
Photo credit: Documencia



# RESTORING OUR RESERVES

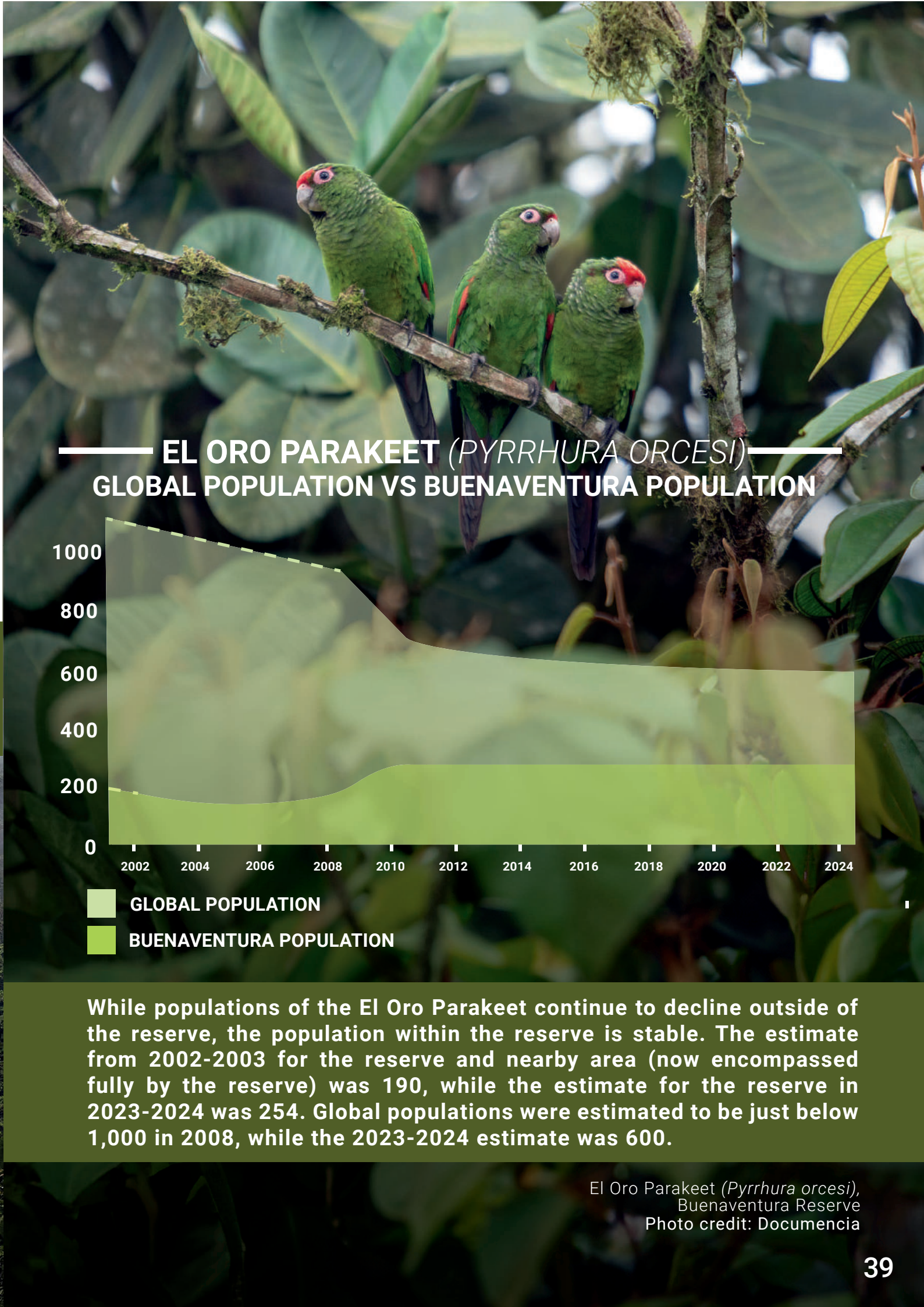
When we create or expand our reserves, we are sometimes purchasing land that has already been degraded – the natural vegetation may have been cleared for timber or pastures. In some places, vegetation can recover on its own once the land is protected. In other places, degradation is so extensive that we have to actively restore the natural vegetation. We have six nurseries where we grow species adapted specifically to our reserves. Combined, we have the capacity to grow more than 120,000 native trees at our nurseries every year.

At our Buenaventura Reserve, we are “Planting the Forest of Tomorrow” by adding 200,000 trees to previously cleared pastures at higher elevation portions of the reserve. Many cloud forest species at Buenaventura, like the endangered El Oro Parakeet, are being pushed uphill by climate change. Without restored forests at higher elevations, these species will run out of habitat and disappear. We started growing the first 20,000 trees in 2024 and planted them in early 2025. With 200,000 trees, we will be able to restore 1,000 acres (400 ha) of high elevation forests.

At Buenaventura, using local data from scientists, we estimate that the combined 1,000 acres (400 ha) of reforestation will have stored 25,050 mt of carbon and sequestered 91,933 mt of CO2 after 20 years from the first planting.



Buenaventura Reserve  
Photo credit: Documencia



## EL ORO PARAKEET (*PYRRHURA ORCESI*) GLOBAL POPULATION VS BUENAVENTURA POPULATION



While populations of the El Oro Parakeet continue to decline outside of the reserve, the population within the reserve is stable. The estimate from 2002-2003 for the reserve and nearby area (now encompassed fully by the reserve) was 190, while the estimate for the reserve in 2023-2024 was 254. Global populations were estimated to be just below 1,000 in 2008, while the 2023-2024 estimate was 600.

El Oro Parakeet (*Pyrrhura orcesi*),  
Buenaventura Reserve  
Photo credit: Documencia



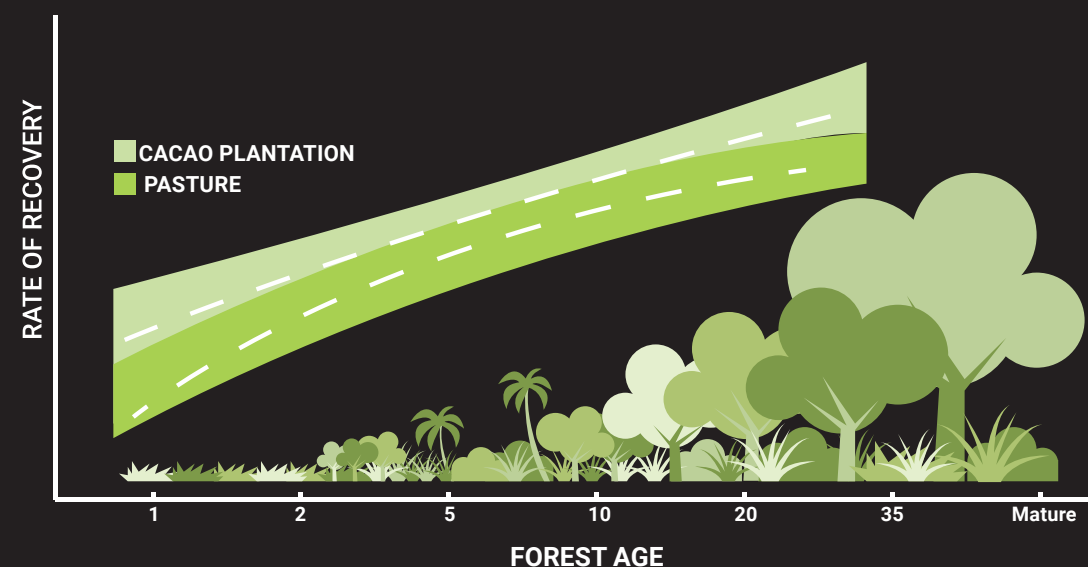
## THE REASSEMBLY OF A RAINFOREST

Our Canandé Reserve is at the center of an innovative four-year research project whose first phase concludes in 2025: Reassembly. Researchers want to understand how we can recover the intricate diversity of beautiful rainforests after they have been cleared. Their findings are stunning. In just two to three decades, cacao plantations and pastures in the Chocó can recover biodiversity to levels comparable to that of a mature rainforest, arguably the most complex ecosystem on Earth.

Reassembly is a collaborative effort implemented by more than 20 universities from Ecuador and Germany, with funding from the German Research Foundation (DFG). Researchers measured biodiversity on 62 plots of land at various stages of regeneration. Using advanced tools such as bioacoustics, artificial intelligence, and metabarcoding—identifying multiple species in a sample by sequencing DNA—they were able to measure the rate of forest recovery.

The remarkable speed of recovery is explicable because Jocotoco was able to maintain 75% forest cover in the region, thanks to protecting and strategically expanding Canandé Reserve for 25 years. And this was inexpensive—nature healed itself.

Our Chocó Lab, the first scientific laboratory of its kind in the Ecuadorian lowland Chocó, is the home base for the Reassembly research team. If you are interested in visiting the Canandé Reserve or conducting research from the Chocó lab, reach out to Jocotoco to make arrangements.



Cacao plantations take 20 years to fully recover, with a steady annual growth rate of 5%, while pastures require 27 years, growing at an annual rate of 3.7%. These figures highlight the incredible potential of nature to regenerate when given the right conditions.

For more information on Reassembly: [www.reassembly.de](http://www.reassembly.de)

## SAVING SPECIES

Targeted, science-backed, community-supported conservation strategies can save endangered species from extinction. In 2024, Jocotoco led the way to bring wildlife back from the brink.



Jocotoco Antpitta (*Grallaria ridgelyi*),  
Tapichalaca Reserve  
Photo credit: Raf Stassen



# MYSTERIOUS JAGUARS OF ECUADOR'S FORESTS

The forest was hot, humid, and still. Two cameras faced each other along an ancient wildlife trail where the tracks of dozens of animals criss-crossed together in the mud. With a sudden click, the cameras turned on and started rolling. A jaguar – golden fur with beautiful black spots – was passing by.

Habitat loss and hunting has decimated jaguar populations in Ecuador. Amazingly, we have identified 11 individual jaguars – eight females and three males – in our system of reserves.



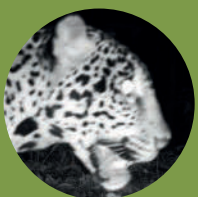
Jaguar 1



Jaguar 2



Jaguar 3



Jaguar 4



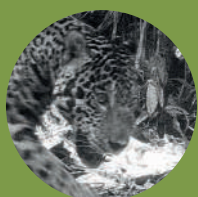
Jaguar 5



Jaguar 6



Jaguar 7



Jaguar 8



Jaguar 9



Jaguar 10

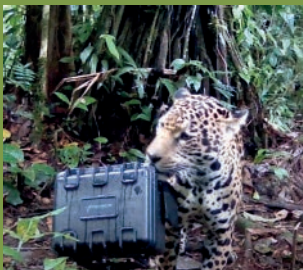


Jaguar 11

How do we know? Every jaguar has a unique pattern of spots, known as rosettes. In late 2024 we deployed a network of 92 camera traps—cameras that automatically take photos and videos when something moves in front of them. Our team then meticulously reviewed each photo and video, studying the rosettes, differentiating each jaguar. We even documented a jaguar at the highest elevation ever recorded for the species in the Andes at nearly 10,000 feet (3,000 m).

The results of this study confirmed what we hoped to be true. Our strategy of creating nature reserves, expanding them over many years, and connecting them to surrounding protected areas can ensure the survival of this iconic species.

**Jaguar # 1 disliked publicity.  
Watch this video of it chewing  
our equipment.**



Video credit: Nicolás Devos

Jaguar (*Panthera onca*)  
Photo credit: Stock  
Made with AI



# THE RED-FACED PARROT

## THE RIDGELY RESERVE

The world's largest population of endangered Red-faced Parrots, native to southwestern Ecuador and northwest Perú, clings to existence in a forest known locally as Selva Alegre, or Happy Forest. The Red-faced Parrot has been decimated by habitat loss throughout its range. In fact, much of the forest in and around Selva Alegre has already been cleared.

In 2024, Jocotoco teamed up with Rainforest Trust, Conserva Aves, and American Bird Conservancy to protect Selva Alegre and save the Red-faced Parrot. We purchased more than 500 acres (200 ha) of Selva Alegre before the year ended. In a fitting tribute to one of Jocotoco's founders, ornithologist Robert Ridgely, we named the reserve in his honor: The Ridgely Reserve.

Red-faced Parrot (*Hapalopsittaca pyrrhops*),  
Photo credit: James Muchmore





# ENDANGERED SEABIRDS OF THE GALÁPAGOS



Galápagos Penguin (*Spheniscus mendiculus*)  
Photo credit: Aura Cruz

The endangered Galápagos Penguin is one of the rarest penguins in the world, with total populations estimated to be between 1,000 and 2,000 individuals. These penguins nest in burrows and caves on the western Galápagos islands. In 2024, we initiated a collaboration with the Center for Ecosystem Sentinels at the University of Washington to identify and monitor nests, and to control invasive predators.



Galápagos Petrel (*Pterodroma phaeopygia*)  
Photo credit: James Muchmore

The critically endangered Galápagos Petrel nests only in the high, humid areas of five islands in the Galápagos. To protect one of its most important nesting sites, we created the more than 250-acre (100-ha) Los Petreles Reserve on San Cristobal in 2018. In 2024, we built protective fencing around the reserve to keep out dogs, donkeys, horses, and pigs that can all damage the nests. We continued to trap and remove invasive predators, like rats. Preliminary data suggests that invasive predator control is working—there has been an increase in fledging petrels year after year.



Waved Albatross (*Phoebastria irrorata*)  
Photo credit: Mara Speece

Española Island is the main nesting site for the critically endangered Waved Albatross. Global populations are decreasing, primarily because they are often entangled in fishing gear as bycatch. We placed GPS radar tags on adult Waved Albatross in 2024 to determine their foraging areas during the breeding season and to assess if there is an overlap with commercial fishing activity. As shown in the map below, we now know that adult Waved Albatross are most likely to have conflicts with fishing activity directly off the coast of northwest Peru and southwest Ecuador.



Floreana shoreline  
Photo credit: Joshua Vela



# BLUE WHIPTAIL

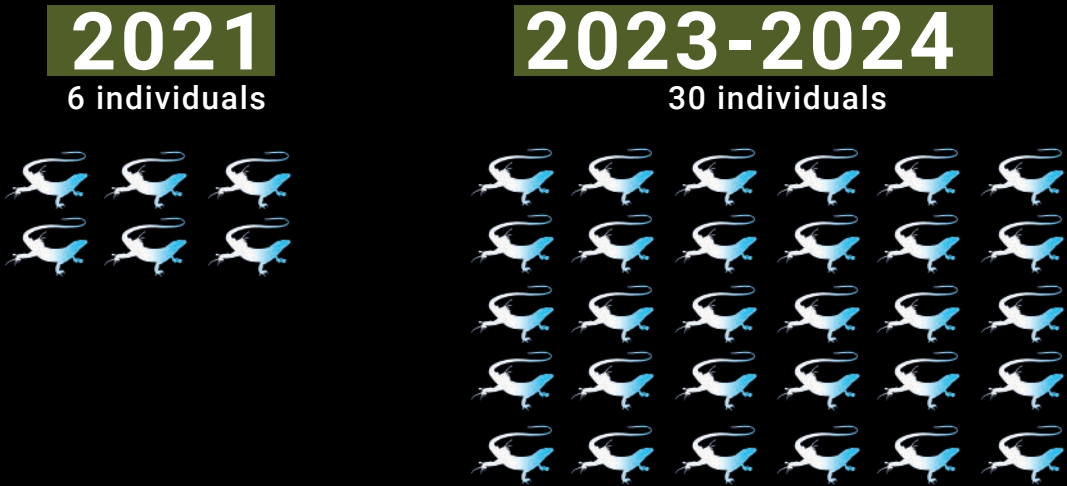
## THE COMMUNITY BRINGS HOPE



Blue Whiptail (*Holcosus orcesi*)  
Photo credit: Juan Carlos Sánchez

The Blue Whiptail, also known as Peter’s Ameiva, was thought to be extinct. This small lizard endemic to the area around our Yunguilla Reserve had not been seen for nearly 55 years. Their rediscovery in 2017 sparked a community effort that has brought hope for the future of this critically endangered species.

We began our efforts by surveying the region, looking for more individuals. We also started raising awareness in the nearby community, and we asked community members to help us find Blue Whiptails. In 2021, surveys found only six individuals in three locations in the wild. Between 2023 and 2024, surveys found 30 individuals and 13 new locations. Amazingly, more than one-third of the documented observations were made by people in the community.

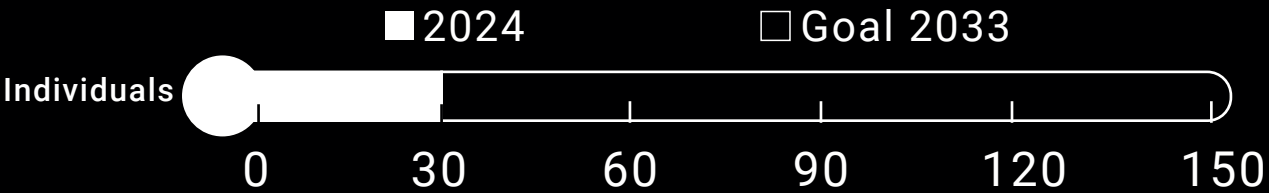


In collaboration with Fundación Amaru, a nearby conservation and wildlife rehabilitation center, we also began a pioneering captive breeding program for the Blue Whiptail. The first year resulted in a single, infertile egg. In 2024, we had six eggs, five of which were fertile, although none hatched. Once we are successful, we will be able to release those individuals to bolster the wild population.

The community has adopted the Blue Whiptail as their own. More than 2,000 local students pledged to be its guardian. A local school added a mural of the lizard to one of the busiest streets in the Yunguilla valley. A lizard once thought to be extinct is now the symbol of the entire community. Together, we will save this species from extinction.

### POPULATION GOAL FOR 2033

#### 150 INDIVIDUALS









# BLUE-THROATED HILLSTAR SAVING A RECENTLY DISCOVERED HUMMINGBIRD FROM EXTINCTION

There are still places in Ecuador that are so remote that plants and animals remain unknown to the outside world. Cerro de Arcos, a windswept mountaintop in southwestern Ecuador, is one of those places. In 2017, Francisco Sornoza, an ornithologist and a founder of Jocotoco, was exploring this mountaintop and found a beautiful hummingbird he knew was distinct. It was a species new to science. It was the Blue-throated Hillstar.

This hummingbird only existed in a small stretch of páramo – high-elevation grass and shrublands. Its numbers were perilously small, estimated to be between 80 and 110 individuals. Jocotoco acted quickly to protect its habitat and created the Cerro de Arcos Reserve which now covers more than 1,900 acres (780 ha).

Last October, the Indianapolis Zoo announced that Jocotoco had won from the inaugural Saving Species Challenge to protect the Blue-throated Hillstar. We were the only organization selected to receive funding out of 52 applicants from across the globe. Over the next five years, we will expand the Cerro de Arcos Reserve, restore degraded páramo habitat, and work closely with local communities to ensure the hummingbird's survival.

Right now, the Blue-throated Hillstar is listed as critically endangered. Our goal is to help its population rebound, bringing this species back from the brink of extinction.

-  CERRO DE ARCOS RESERVE
-  BLUE-THROATED HILLSTAR OBSERVATIONS



In 2024, we monitored Blue-throated Hillstar populations within the Cerro de Arcos Reserve and in habitat outside of the reserve. We identified 21 individuals within our sampling area. With this data, we estimate that our reserve supports at least 32 individuals, representing 29%-40% of the global population of 80-110 individuals.

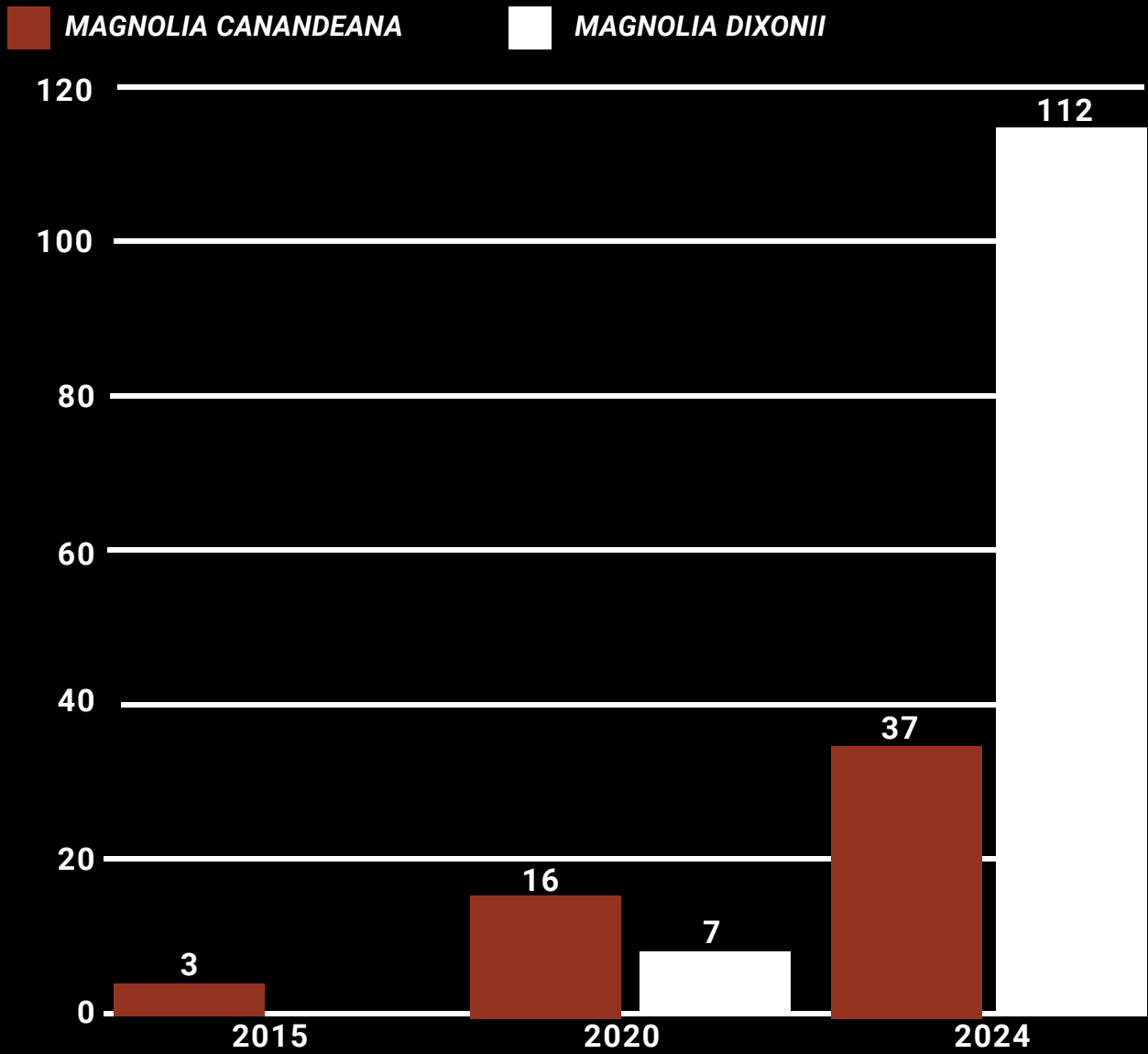
Blue-throated Hillstar (*Oreotrochilus cyanolaemus*),  
Cerro de Arcos Reserve  
Photo credit: Andrés Vasquez



# FROM CRITICALLY ENDANGERED TO ENDANGERED - ENDEMIC MAGNOLIAS IN CANANDÉ

The *Magnolia canandean* and *Magnolia dixonii* can only be found in the Canandé watershed in the Chocó. Jocotoco grows the two magnolias in our nurseries and transplants them in the reserve. Because of our work to reproduce them and to protect their habitat, the magnolias will soon be downlisted, from critically endangered to endangered. Our conservation efforts are succeeding.

## GLOBAL POPULATION SINCE 2015



*Magnolia canandean*  
Photo credit: Álvaro Pérez

*Magnolia dixonii*  
Photo credit: Tinku Kollektiv



# LILACINE AMAZON

## PATRICIO REYES

It was very hot when Patricio Reyes left his house in the late afternoon. He was walking to a nearby forest along Ecuador's northwest coast. Although tropical, this forest is deciduous—the trees lose their leaves in the dry season to conserve water.

It's in these tropical dry forests that you'll find Jocotoco's Las Balsas Reserve, and it's in this reserve that you can find 90% of the world's Lilacine Amazons, a mid-sized colorful parrot that is critically endangered.

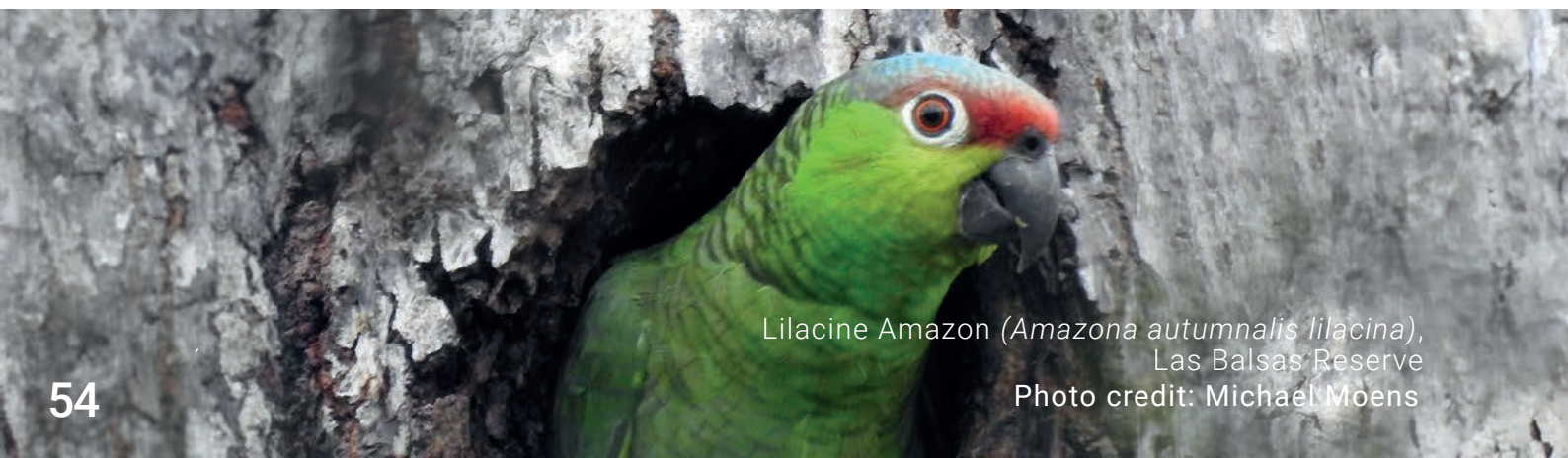
Like many parrots, Lilacine Amazons nest in tree cavities, and as old growth forests disappeared, trees that are old enough to form large cavities also disappeared. Lilacine Amazons are also prized as pets, and many have been captured in the wild and sold within and outside of Ecuador.

Patricio is a Jocotoco reserve guard at Las Balsas, a reserve we protect collaboratively with the local community. He monitors wildlife populations, including the Lilacine Amazon.

Afternoon turned to dusk. Patricio had climbed a tree for better visibility. Then it happened. A Lilacine Amazon flew in and landed in the canopy, squawking loudly. Then another, and another. Soon, the trees were full of parrots breaking the silence. He counted more than 1,000 individuals. More parrots flew into the trees later, but it was too dark to count them. Between this roost and two others in the area, Patricio has counted 1,800 to 5,200 Lilacine Amazons, totals that change seasonally.

Roosting trees like these are important to the survival of the Lilacine Amazon. The parrots congregate at a small number of communal roosts at night and fan out during the day to forage. Lilacine Amazons are very social animals—roosts provide a safe place for them to interact and communicate with each other. Like trees with nesting cavities, trees that serve as roosting sites are also increasingly rare.

This forest and this roost could have been cut. These Lilacine Amazons could have been trapped and sold as pets. Instead, Patricio and the Las Balsas community decided to protect them, for the benefit of everyone.



Lilacine Amazon (*Amazona autumnalis lilacina*),  
Las Balsas Reserve  
Photo credit: Michael Moens



Patricio Reyes  
Photo credit: Byron Delgado



# REWILDING SUCCESS

## CRITICALLY ENDANGERED GREAT GREEN MACAWS

A subspecies of Great Green Macaw endemic to the dry forests of western Ecuador is nearly extinct. Between 2018-2019, Jocotoco released six captive-bred macaws into the Las Balsas Reserve to supplement the tiny population that existed in the wild. Before the release, we counted seven individuals in the reserve. Afterwards, the number went up to 15 but then dropped again to 13. It was unclear if the Great Green Macaw would survive here. Fortunately, the trends now appear to be positive. Our highest count was in 2023 when we registered 22 Great Green Macaws in Las Balsas. In 2024 we registered five active nests, up from a single nest when we began monitoring.



Great Green Macaw (*Ara ambiguus*),  
Las Balsas Reserve  
Photo credit: Juan de Dios Morales

# PROTECTING SEA TURTLE NESTS

## BEACHES OF AYAMPE

In northwest Ecuador, at our Ayampe Reserve, we collaborate with an ancestral community called Las Tunas to protect one of Ecuador's most important sea turtle nesting beaches. Our efforts are led by Byron Delgado and his daughter Naiara, residents of the Ayampe community. Each year they count the number of nests on the beach and the number of eggs that hatch. The 2023-2024 season saw success with Olive-ridley, Hawksbill, and Green Sea Turtles. In some years, massive Leatherback Sea Turtles nest on the same beach.

### SEASON 2023 - 2024



#### OLIVE RIDLEY TURTLE

*Lepidochelys olivacea*

Total number of nests: 169  
Successfully hatched eggs: 6189



#### HAWKSBILL SEA TURTLE

*Eretmochelys imbricata*

Total number of nests: 6  
Successfully hatched eggs: 504



#### GREEN SEA TURTLE

*Chelonia mydas*

Total number of nests: 13  
Successfully hatched eggs: 284



# MEASURING OUR IMPACT

Since our founding more than 25 years ago, we have continuously measured acres protected, trees planted, and population growth of species we set out to save. Now we are using advanced technology to measure our impact on a scale never before possible.

## USING BIOACOUSTICS AND AI TO MEASURE BIODIVERSITY AND DETECT THREATS

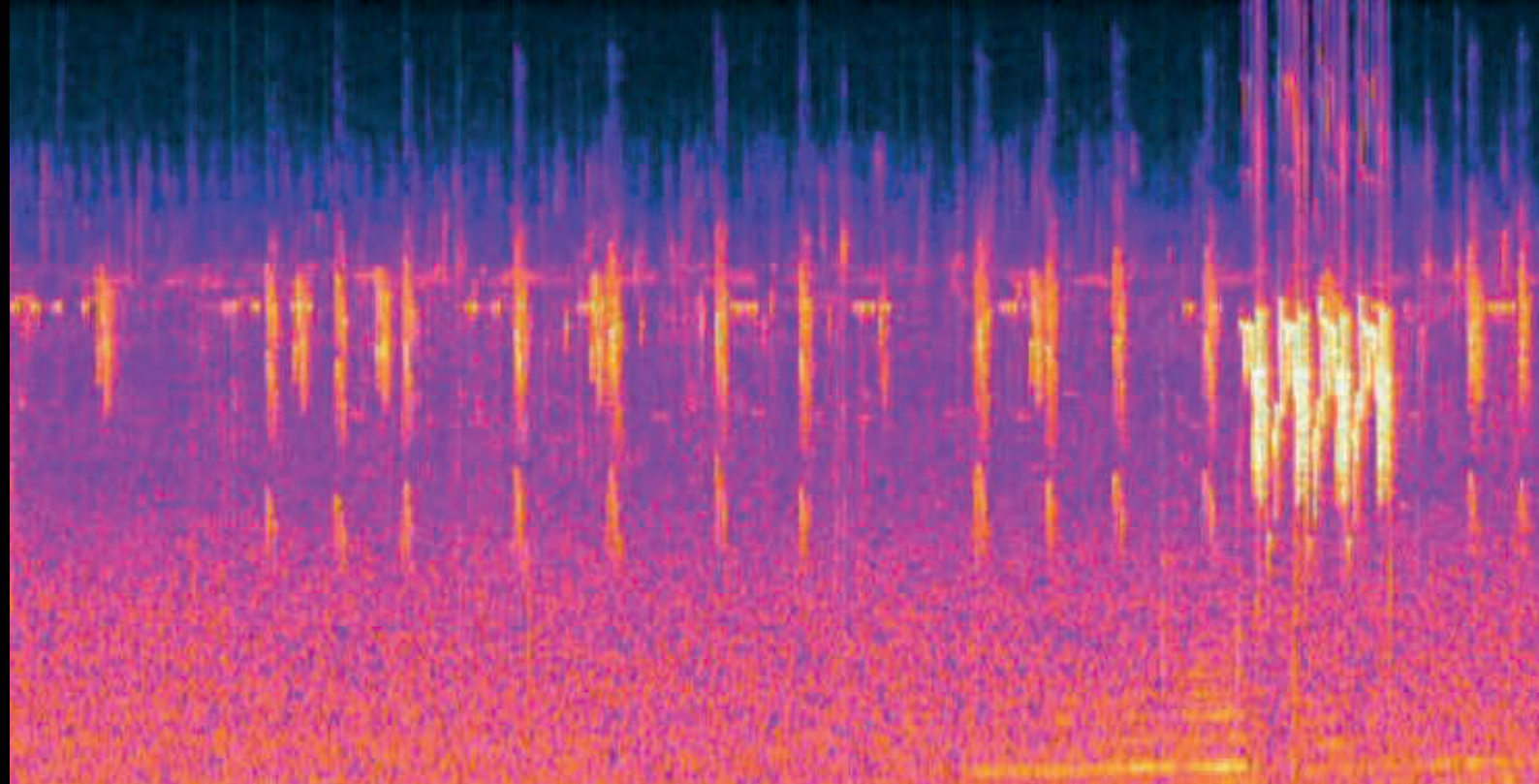
We are at the cutting edge of a revolutionary process to measure our conservation outcomes. We deploy audio recorders coupled with AI for the automated identification of biodiversity—songs of birds and amphibians. With this technology, we can quickly learn which species are present. We can also learn how biodiversity varies by land use—within protected areas, agricultural areas, buffer zones—by type of protected area—governmental, community, indigenous, private—and over time.

This information will allow us to adapt our conservation strategies and plan more effectively across entire landscapes. Since 2023, we have gathered over 730,000 audio recordings from devices strategically placed at more than 270 sampling points across four priority regions (Chocó, Andes-Amazon, Chocó-Tumbes, and Podocarpus-El Cóndor), covering more than 2,200,000 acres (900,000 ha).

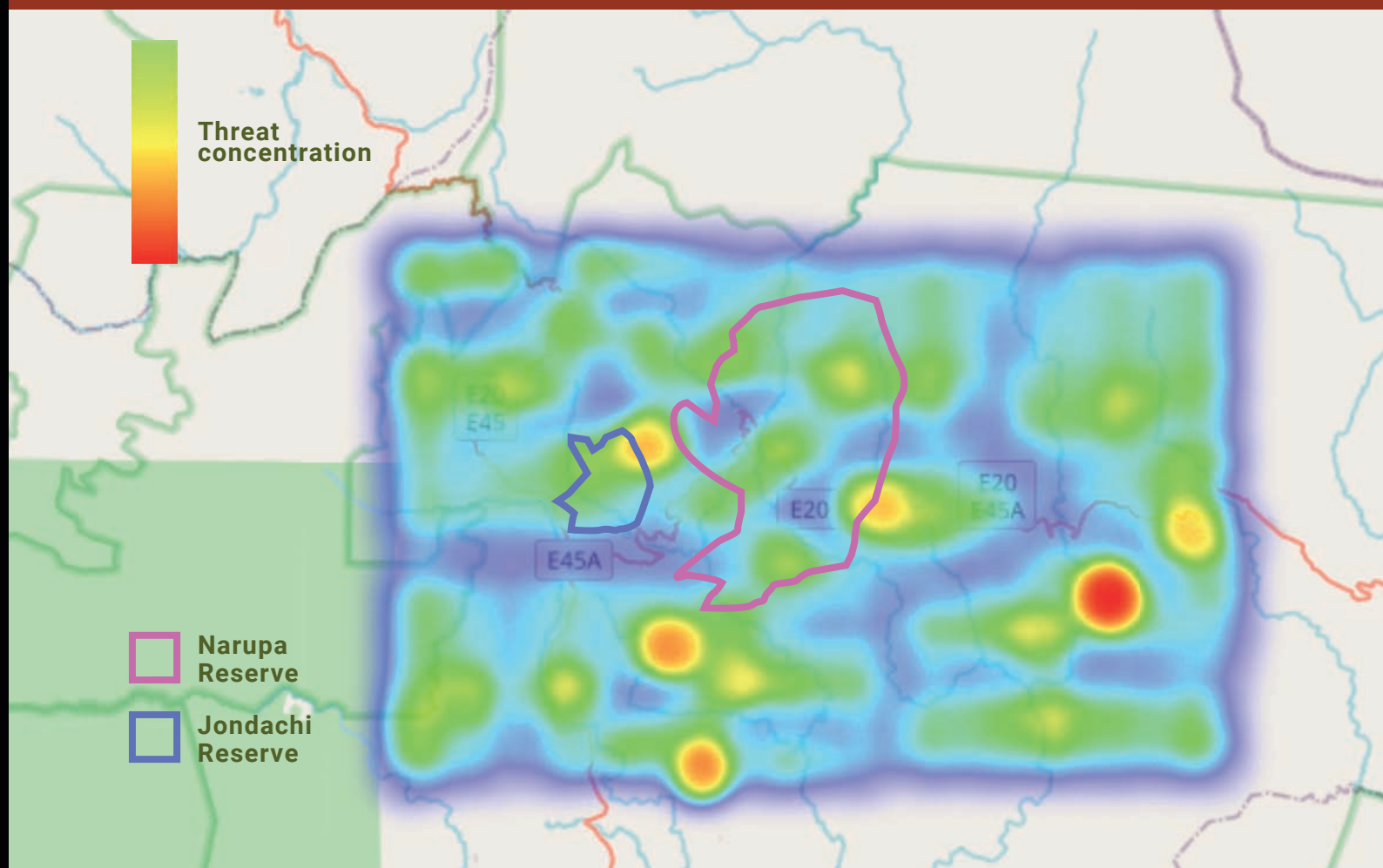
By the end of 2024, we had trained the AI models to identify 550 species—520 birds and 30 amphibians—an incredible advance in a short amount of time.

The same tools allow us to detect threats to the forest. The technology can identify the sound of chainsaws, an indication of illegal logging activity. The data we have collected so far have allowed us to develop regional maps of the most threatened areas. This makes it possible to better plan land purchases and better plan patrol routes in protected areas.

This low cost, easy to use, and highly scalable technology allows us to achieve results quickly, results that would take an army of people many years to accomplish on their own. This is the future of conservation.



The spectrograph above shows a visual representation of the Bay Wren (*Cantorchilus nigricapillus*), Lesser Greenlet (*Pachysylvia decurtata*) and White-throated Spadebill (*Platyrinchus mystaceus*), birds that we recorded in the Buenaventura Reserve in 2024.



Using initial data, we created a preliminary threat map for the Narupa Reserve region. The map shows the most likely places where deforestation may occur.



# PEDRO GALINDO

## DATA SCIENTIST

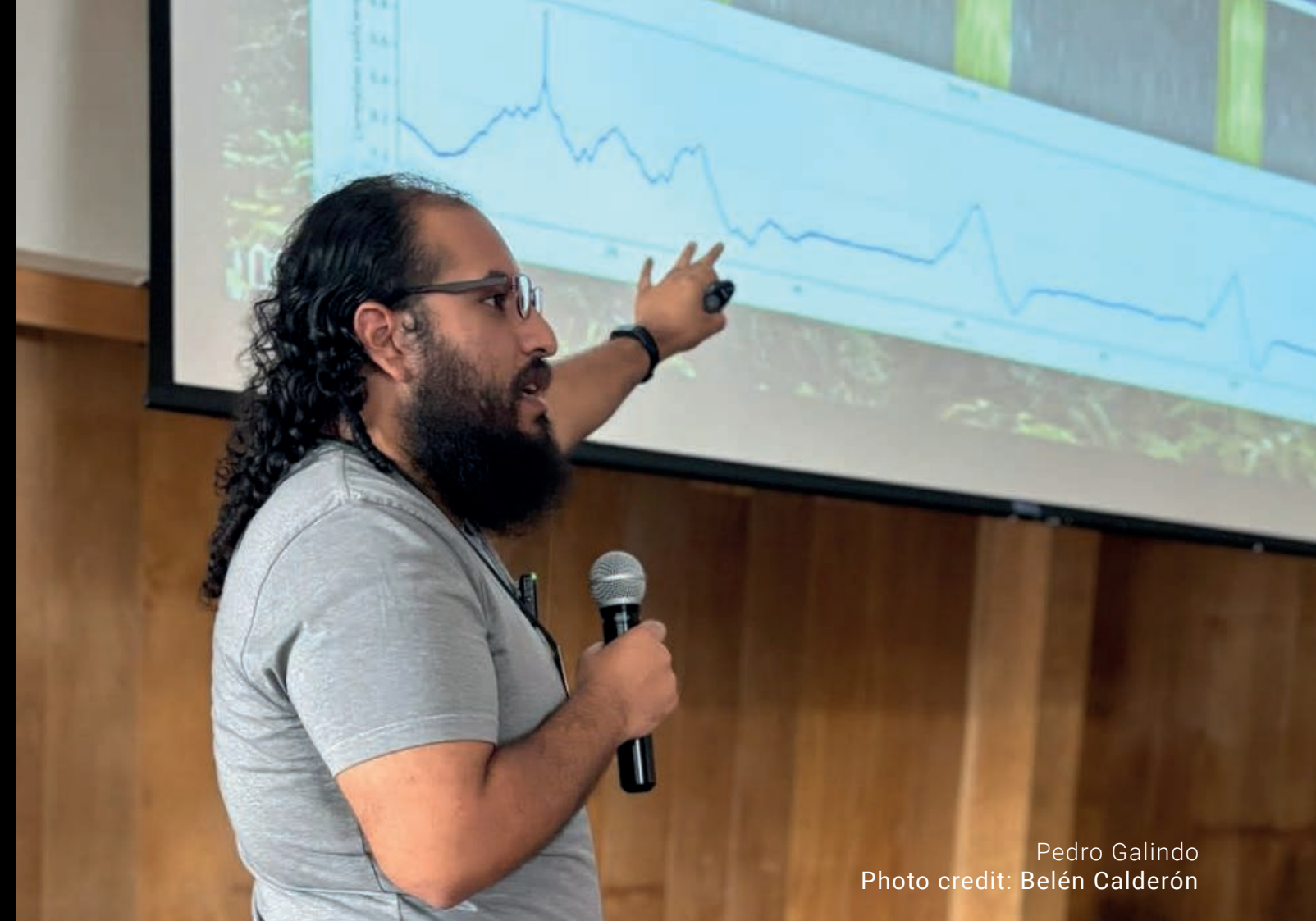
Modern conservation requires a multidisciplinary approach. Since early 2024, Pedro Galindo, a mathematician, has led the analysis for Jocotoco's bioacoustics monitoring and AI identification program.

Pedro's work includes selecting the best recordings of birds and amphibians to send to biologists for identification. We then use those recordings to train AI identification models. Rather than listening to the thousands of hours of recordings himself, Pedro creates predictive models that automatically select the recordings most likely to contain high quality sounds of birds and amphibians. This speeds up the process exponentially. When he started with Jocotoco, our AI models could identify less than 100 species. Now they can identify 550 species, a more than five-fold increase in only a single year.

**These AI models have already led to important findings. Using light traps, researchers from the Reassembly project in the Canandé Reserve identified 4,800 species of nocturnal insects in a single night. Insect diversity is an indicator of forest health. Their data showed a strong correlation between insect diversity and bird diversity. Bioacoustic monitoring can accurately measure overall biodiversity, beyond just vocal species like birds and frogs. We can use this technology to quickly learn which conservation strategies are working, and which are not.**

Jocotoco's reserves are also embedded in vibrant communities. To be successful, we must collaborate closely with farmers, ranchers, and towns of people. Over the last year, Pedro trained our AI models to differentiate between actual threats to nature, like the sounds of chainsaws and hunting rifles, from everyday sounds that represent harmless activities, like motorcycles and roosters. This allows us to better understand how communities interact with our reserves and the land around them.

Although he is a mathematician, Pedro could be mistaken for a poet. He says that he is simply a single grain of sand, part of a mix of sand formed by many people each playing their own role. But Pedro is much more than that. His talents bridge the gap between biologists, park guards, and the general public, and between wildlife and advanced technology. Pedro's own unique song brings the orchestra of the natural world together, so that it can be understood, appreciated, and protected.



Pedro Galindo  
Photo credit: Belén Calderón



Ecuadorian Tapaculo (*Scytalopus robbinsi*), an endangered and endemic bird in the Buenaventura Reserve that the AI can now identify thanks to Pedro.

Photo credit: Leovigildo Cabrera



Crimson-rumped Toucanet (*Aulacorhynchus haematopygus*),  
Tandayapa Reserve  
Photo credit: James Muchmore



FUNDACIÓN  
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Club de Surf isla Santa Cruz Galápagos  
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Comuna Las Balsas  
Comuna Las Tunas  
Comunidad Ávila Viejo  
Comunidad Hoja Blanca  
Comunidad La Yuca  
Comunidad Payamino  
Comunidad Wamani  
Consejo de Gobierno de Régimen Especial de Galápagos  
Corporación Toisán  
Dirección del Parque Nacional Galápagos  
Earthkeeper  
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Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado Municipal de Loreto  
Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado Municipal de Palanda  
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Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado Parroquial de Cotundo  
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Galápagos Tortoise (*Chelonoidis niger*)  
Photo credit: Joshua Vela



# LEGACY SOCIETY

You can join The Condors, Jocotoco's Legacy Society, by including Jocotoco in your planned giving. Planned giving is a fantastic way to ensure future generations will always be able to experience the wonders of the natural world. Planned giving is also easy. Many people have made bequests to Jocotoco through their will or trust, or by listing Jocotoco as a beneficiary on a life insurance or retirement plan. Each year we will host unique events for the Legacy Society. Joining the Legacy Society is a great way to meet more people who care deeply about conservation.

**Benjamin Olewine** is one of the first members of The Condors, Jocotoco's Legacy Society. Ben has been part of the Jocotoco family since our early days. He first met Bob Ridgely, one of our founders, shortly after the discovery of the Jocotoco Antpitta. Ben's passion is conserving globally threatened birds, especially in the Americas. Having traveled throughout the world, Ecuador is his favorite place to go birding, and our Buenaventura Reserve is his favorite place to visit. Ben listed Jocotoco as a beneficiary in his IRA, one of his retirement funds, so that Jocotoco can continue protecting the world's most threatened birds far into the future.

Photo credit: Luke Franke



Thank you to all of our Legacy Society members for caring so deeply about Jocotoco:

- David Agro
- Roy and Laurie Averill-Murray
- Frank and Susan Gilliland
- John Guarnaccia
- Bert Harris
- Heather Hodges
- John Moore
- Benjamin Olewine
- Robert Ridgely
- Jajeane Rose-Burney

# DONATE TO JOCOTOCO

**THERE ARE MANY WAYS THAT YOU CAN GIVE TO JOCOTOCO.**

**GO TO OUR WEBSITE AND CLICK DONATE**

Fundación Jocotoco: [jocotoco.org.ec](http://jocotoco.org.ec)

Jocotoco US: [jocotoco.org](http://jocotoco.org) or [jocotococonservation.org](http://jocotococonservation.org)

We accept gifts of stock, donor advised funds, qualified charitable distributions from your IRA, and Bitcoin. You can also give to Jocotoco in your will or through other forms of planned giving.

Please contact Jajeane Rose-Burney, the Director of Jocotoco US, at 1 (716) 247-1255 or [jajeane.rose@jocotoco.org](mailto:jajeane.rose@jocotoco.org) if you have any questions about how to donate. Jocotoco Conservation Foundation is a US tax-exempt non-profit organization, under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All charitable donations are deductible to the full extent allowed by law. EIN: 83-2027203

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Spectacled bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*)  
Chakana Reserve  
Photo credits: Santiago Salazar



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Gino Ellison

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# MISSION AND VALUES

Our mission is to conserve biodiversity, especially threatened species and ecosystems, guided by scientific evidence and local leadership.

Jocotoco strongly believes that nature has an intrinsic value, that wildlife has a right to exist with us. We act on our belief by creating protected areas and by supporting the conservation efforts of communities. Every year we discover new species, rediscover species thought to be lost forever, and bring species back from the brink.

We also believe in people. It is our incredible community of people who inspire us and who achieve conservation successes.

We strive to provide opportunities for personal growth for everyone who works with us, and for the next generation of conservation heroes.

Our work is guided by treating others honestly, transparently, and fairly. We always strive for effectiveness and excellence.



Yellow Blunt-headed Snake (*Imantodes inornatus*),  
Canandé Reserve  
Photo credit: Javier Aznar





White-spotted Cochran Frog (*Sachatamia albomaculata*),  
Canandé Reserve  
Photo credit: Alex Roessner