



Protecting Colombia's wax palm forests

Home of the yellow-eared parrot



Photo by: Juan Carlos Noreña

The upper basin of the Quindío River has more than 327 fauna and flora species, including the wax palm tree, one of the Colombian national symbols and the tallest recorded palm tree in the world. This strategic ecosystem provides a great supply of water resources, but it has been constantly altered by productive activities such as extensive livestock, high-impact tourism and other land uses that affect its environmental benefits.

The Context

According to the IUCN's classification, the wax palm tree and the yellow-eared parrot are in the vulnerable (VU) and endangered (EN) categories, respectively. Likewise, they cohabit the area with the Andean condor (*Vultur gryphus*), the national bird of Colombia that is considered critically endangered (CR). The Quindío River is one of the region's main water sources, supplying water to 55% of the Quindian population in four municipalities: Armenia, Circasia, La Tebaida and Salento. The conservation project area is located in the hydrographic subzone of the La Vieja River spanning 1,000 ha. Conservation actions, based on their ecological value, will be translated into Biodiversity Credits, which will monetize the measurable results obtained in the natural habitat.

The Project

The project involves the communities of the Vereda Cocora Medio through the implementation of protection, restoration and productive sustainable activities, e.g. ecotourism. In the remaining forests, 52 bird and 9 mammal species have been established. Some of them are the little red brocket (*Mazama rufina*), tapir (*Tapirus sp*), cougar (*Puma concolor*), nine-banded armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*), forest fox (*Cerdocyon thous*), gray-bellied night monkey (*Aotus lemurinus*), tayra (*Eira barbara*), pacarana (*Dinomys branickii*) and red-tailed squirrel (*Sciurus granatensis*). Transitional ecosystems such as the lower montane wet forest (bmh-MB) and very humid forest (bmh-PM) can be found. The vegetation cover is composed of pastures, grasslands, natural forests and secondary forests.

Sustainable activities to be implemented

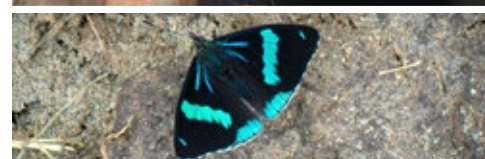
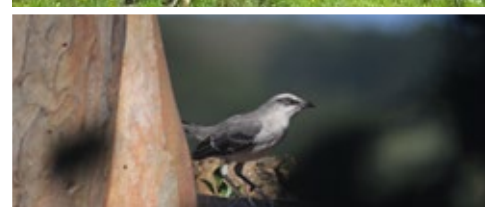
Due to an integral biodiversity and water conservation strategy (Quindío's water star) currently in place, environmental, social and economic benefits will be generated, and the natural potential of the region will be maximized. The conservation agreements set out with the landowners guarantee the viability of the actions planned, such as restoration, agroforestry systems, sustainable livestock, and ecotourism. To ensure their success, experts from the area have been involved.

The Benefits

- Preservation and ecological restoration of 60% of the project area.
- Preservation of water resources.
- Contribution to the economic, social and environmental development of the area through the implementation of sustainable productive activities.
- Environmental education with local communities and landowners.

The project area has species of great importance such as the yellow-eared parrot (*Ognorhynchus icterotis*), a key inhabitant of the wax palm tree (*Ceroxylon quindiuense*) ecosystem. The wax palm tree, besides being an endemic species, is a national symbol of Colombia.

The area is home to rural communities who are committed to sustainable development and are engaged in initiatives that contribute to the conservation of the surrounding ecosystems.



Photos by: Ricardo Jiménez y José Luis González



25 streams protected

and approximately 300,000 inhabitants benefited from water supply



Alignment of conservation actions

with community and productive activities, such as ecotourism



1,000 ha

of land intended for ecological preservation



52 bird,

101 plant and 9 mammal species protected

For more information on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, please visit: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/> | Figures correct August 2020