



WORLD
LAND
TRUST

The Conservation Coast

Our Carbon Balanced
project in Guatemala

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Country: Guatemala

**Partner/Organisation:
FUNDAECO and Ecosphere+**

Biome

Tropical and subtropical moist broadleaf forests

Ecoregion

Predominantly the Central American Atlantic Moist Forests but the project area also incorporates areas of mangrove (Gulf Caribbean)

Habitats

Mix of lowland forest, wetland, mangrove and lagoon areas

Red-eyed Tree Frog



Project summary

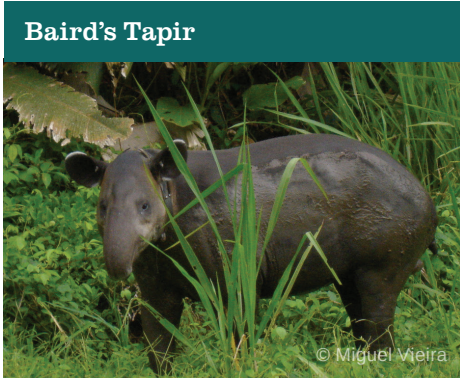
This project supports hundreds of landowners, including local communities, to register and obtain land titles to protect 133,827 acres (54,158 hectares) of threatened coastal forest. FUNDAECO are working with 3,250 families to transform local livelihoods through job creation in ecotourism and agricultural training for sustainable agroforestry systems producing cardamom, pepper, cinnamon and fruits (such as lychee and rambutan). The project has established systems for forest monitoring and surveillance, law enforcement, and conservation education to protect the forest and biodiversity, as well as improving access to healthcare, establishing 24 community-run clinics that provide family planning and reproductive health services. The project also supports young women to finish their elementary education and continue to high school. The project reduces emissions from deforestation by 728,161 tCO₂e annually.

Main threats to the area

Poverty, rapid population increase and the expansion of the agricultural frontier are the main drivers of deforestation across the region. Less than 20% of lowland forest cover remains in Guatemala due to cattle ranching, subsistence slash-and-burn agriculture and agro-industrial monocultures (banana, oil palm and rubber). In recent years, coastal and riverfront areas have been threatened by an increase in private construction led by wealthy residents of Guatemala City and Puerto Barrios. The project lies within the Río Sarstún Protected Area, but this “protection” classification doesn’t protect forest timber from being harvested and sold commercially.

Global prioritisation

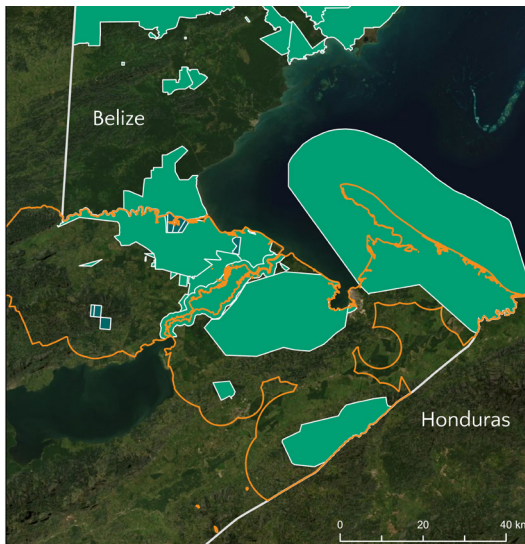
The Caribbean Guatemalan coastline forms part of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor and Mesoamerica Biodiversity Hotspot. The project is located in the Izabal region and spans the entire Caribbean coastline of Guatemala, bordering Belize to the north and Honduras to the south. Laguna Grande and Río Sarstún both lie within the Guatemalan Coastal Slope Important Bird Area (IBA). Río Sarstún is registered as a Bi-National Ramsar Site, indicating a wetland of international importance.



Key species¹

West Indian (American) Manatee (*Trichechus manatus*, VU), Jaguar (*Panthera onca*, NT), Baird's Tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*, EN), Yucatan Black Howler Monkey (*Alouatta pigra*, EN), Atlantic Tarpon (*Megalops atlanticus*, VU), Cerulean Warbler (*Setophaga cerulean*, VU).

¹ The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species includes categories of Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN), Vulnerable (VU), Near Threatened (NT) and Least Concern (LC)



REDD+ Project Area
 FUNDAECO Reserve
 Protected Area
 International_Borders



Biodiversity

The Mesoamerican Biological Corridor is vital for migratory birds making their biannual journey up and down coastal Central America. The project area contains an estimated 359 species of bird, 90 of which are Nearctic-Neotropical migrants and winter residents. The area also supports over 126 species of mammal, including 20 species endemic to Mesoamerica, along with larger species including Jaguar, Baird's Tapir, West Indian (American) Manatee and Neotropical Otter.

Local communities

The region's indigenous people are the Maya Q'eqchi', who form ~50% of Izabal's total population. They are among the poorest and most underserved communities in Guatemala. The towns of Livingston and Puerto Barrios are also inhabited by Garífunas, members of an African-American culture that developed around the Gulf of Honduras. The main livelihood in the project region is subsistence agriculture based on bean and maize cultivation, with more affluent households also practicing cattle ranching that is unavailable to most local and indigenous communities. Over 100 such communities benefit from the project, playing a pivotal role through active participation in consultation, decision-making, and implementation of project activities.

Partner/NGO

FUNDAECO is a Guatemalan NGO that aims to protect the integrity and beauty of nature through the creation and management of protected areas, the sustainable use of natural resources, and the improvement of local people's quality of life. WLT has worked since 2008 to support FUNDAECO at a number of reserves both on the Caribbean coast and in the western highlands. In addition to land purchase, FUNDAECO's work supports community developments, alternative livelihood projects, and the processes for legal protection around FUNDAECO reserves. The Guatemalan Conservation Coast Project has been financed by the Althelia Climate Fund, using the sale of carbon credits by Ecosphere+ and WLT to protect forests and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Ecosphere+ is a London-based Certified B Corp organisation selling verified carbon credits on behalf of FUNDAECO.

UN Sustainable Development Goals advanced by this project

