

Forests of Hope



Conserving and restoring tropical forest and combating climate change

The international community has so far failed to save the world's tropical forests. As things now stand, few tropical forests will survive to the end of the 21st century. Tropical deforestation is one of the most acute ecological tragedies of our modern age, yet it continues at a frightening rate, driven by global demand for timber, paper and land for crops and biofuels. As forests are destroyed, their values as stores of biological diversity, providers of livelihoods and ecosystem services to local and global communities, and stabilisers of the global climate, are lost.

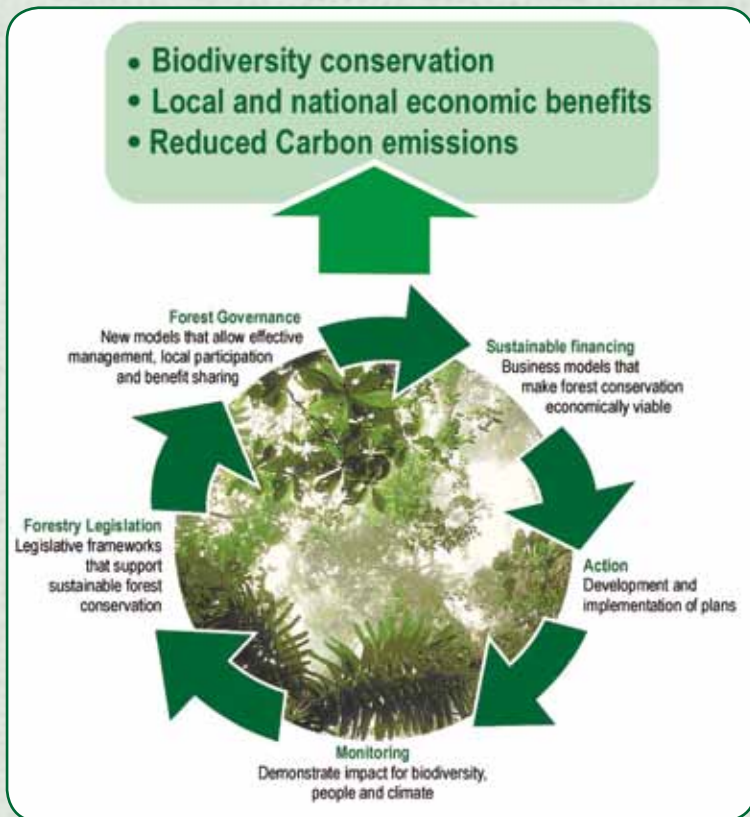
Tropical deforestation has serious impacts on the world's climate. Globally, deforestation and forest degradation account for 15–20% of all human-induced carbon emissions, and a large proportion of this takes place in the tropics. This is therefore one of the major causes of global warming. These emissions are greater than those of all cars, trucks, planes, ships and trains worldwide.

Climate change leads to biodiversity loss over and above that caused directly by habitat destruction. One global study estimates that 15–37% of species could be committed to extinction by 2050 as a consequence of climate change.

To prevent irreversible damage to ecosystems, with devastating consequences for people and biodiversity, it is essential to restrict global warming to less than 2°C above pre-industrial levels. If current rates of deforestation are not slowed, this is impossible.

However, it is not too late to turn the tide.

Threatened biodiversity is not lost and can be saved, and degraded forests can be restored. Conserved or restored forests can continue to provide the services that local communities and society world-wide need.





The BirdLife Forests of Hope Programme

BirdLife International has created the Forests of Hope programme to bring together and build on its successful forest conservation and management programmes throughout the tropics.

BirdLife is working in tropical countries around the world, to identify and pilot innovative management, financing and governance systems for forest and biodiversity conservation and restoration, generating local and national economic benefits for sustainable development, and combating climate change.

The aim is the prevention of deforestation and the restoration of natural forest at up to 20 sites covering at least 5 million hectares of tropical forest by 2015.

The Forests of Hope programme links forest conservation on the ground to its policy and advocacy work at national and international levels, making impacts in three crucial areas.

Conserving biodiversity

Tropical forests are the most ecologically rich of all forest types. They are home to 70% of the world's plants and animals—more than 13 million

species—and contain 70% of the world's vascular plants, 30% of all bird species, and 90% of invertebrates. Forests of Hope is helping to develop and implement forest governance and management systems that will conserve this biodiversity in perpetuity.

Combating climate change

Conservation of natural forest is an essential means to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Restoration of natural forest can assist in helping restore stocks with the highest carbon content. Forest conservation and restoration plans developed by Forests of Hope, and the threatened nature of the forests selected, ensure the prevention of emissions of large volumes of greenhouse gases.

Forests of Hope contributes to the development of effective mechanisms under discussion to maintain and restore these carbon stocks. These include REDD—Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation—where forested developing countries would undertake to reduce their emissions from deforestation below a historic reference level, and would be financially compensated for doing so.



Ecosystem services and sustainable livelihoods for local people

Deforestation is a disaster for the many thousands of people who live in and around tropical forests and whose livelihoods depend on the forests. For example, about 4.6 billion people depend for all or some of their water on supplies from forest systems; a large proportion of these live in the tropics. Forests of Hope is helping to safeguard livelihoods and ecosystem services, while respecting, supporting and promoting the rights of local and indigenous peoples, under the principles of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other applicable instruments. In particular, it promotes the improvement of forest governance systems that can secure the rights of local people, as they relate to conservation and the ecologically sustainable use of natural resources.

Global vision, local action

BirdLife International is the world's largest conservation alliance, with a membership of over 100 national non-governmental conservation organisations, and with a combined public membership of over 10 million supporters.

The BirdLife Partnership has been working in tropical forest conservation for decades, and in over 50 countries. The grassroots, bottom-up nature of BirdLife positions us well to deliver results and demonstrations on the ground, ensure benefit sharing from tropical forest conservation, and feed lessons upwards into national and global policy.



The BirdLife Network – and some flagship forest conservation sites.

Find out more about BirdLife's Forests of Hope

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