Title The forests of the Santa Maria Chimalapas region, Oaxaca, Mexico are one of the most important areas for biodiversity in Mexico. Pronatura, the BirdLife Partner for Mexico, is working with local people to improve livelihoods while conserving biodiversity. By working with two indigenous communities with rights to the lands (San Miguel and Santa Maria Chimalapas) the project established a ?community conserved area? for the forests. Through negotiations with the communities a consensus was reached to conserve 2,500 ha of tropical forest in Arroyo Pato, which is part of the Santa Maria Chimalapas community. The Arroyo Pato community was provided with advice and technical assistance on sustainable forest management activities in a further 25,000 ha. This provides a sound basis for the conservation of the globally important biodiversity in this area. A Sustainable Forest Management Plan will avoid the deforestation and gradual and consistent over-extraction of natural resources that has characterised previous patterns of use. Residents of Arroyo Pato were very active in the design of the management plan for their forest areas and will be the main stakeholders in their use and future management and decision-making. The forest contributes directly to the economy of local communities, and the conservation and management plans produced provide a basis for sustainable development, through harvesting of forest products (timber and non-timber) in the long term. This is significant since the area is classified nationally within Mexico as highly marginal in terms of its development status. This plan promotes sustainable use while maintaining the forest cover in the long term, with all the benefits inherent to biodiversity and environmental services. Most significant among these is water provision: ?***Water inflitration in the forest feeds the hydrological system that provides water not only to the communities of the whole Zoque Forest region for their own consumption, agriculture, cattle raising, forestry, etc., but also contributes greatly to the recharge of aquifers due to its location at the head of the hydrological basin. This water is used by communities, towns and cities in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, Oaxaca and the Valley of Uxpanapa, Veracruz***? (Claudia Macias Caballero, Project Manager). The project and the processes it has initiated is helping to address the lack of participation in decision-making that people in the area have suffered for many years - a result of centralised decision-making and the communities? relative isolation and distance from the regional capital of Santa Maria Chimalapas where the local authorities and decision-makers are located. **Biodiversity at Santa Maria Chimalapas** The forests of the Santa Maria Chimalapas region, Oaxaca, Mexico are one of the most important areas for biodiversity protection in Mexico. To date 3,500 species of vascular plants, and 609 species of terrestrial vertebrates (99 mammals, 220 birds, 37 reptiles, 8 amphibians and 51 fish) have been recorded. The forest plays an important role as a stop-over and wintering site for neotropical birds that breed in North America, and it hosts several species deemed to be of ?extreme importance? at the continental level, such as Wood Thrush, Kentucky and Worm-eating Warblers. **22 May 2010 - International Day for Biological Diversity** This year?s International Day for Biological Diversity theme of ?Biodiversity for Development and Poverty Alleviation? is a reminder of the unique contribution of biodiversity to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. This is one of a series of projects showcasing the BirdLife Partnerships work around the world to improve livelihoods while conserving biodiversity. This project is part of a small grant programme managed by the BirdLife Secretariat with generous support from the Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation.