

Helping local communities to influence decision makers in Northwestern Pichincha, Ecuador

Title The montane forests of Northwestern Pichincha, Ecuador are threatened by several factors including forest loss, decreasing water quality and quantity, expected mining activity in the near future, unregulated ecotourism and poor local planning owing to limited environmental decision-making management capacity. Aves y Conservación, the BirdLife Partner in Ecuador, has identified three Important Bird Areas (IBAs) and formed Local Conservation Groups with communities in the region. Recent work with LCGs has aimed to improve their capacity to influence local and provincial decision-makers and the public in general about the importance of biodiversity conservation in the area. The project has helped create the conditions for the conservation of these globally important forests, as well as for sustainable development in the area. For example:

- Civil society's capacity has been strengthened for influencing decision makers responsible for land use planning, sustainable development and local environmental management.
- Outreach on the importance of birds and IBAs to the local authorities has promoted their inclusion in policies, strategies and actions, as per the new constitutional provisions.
- Conservation plans for the IBAs were produced and publicized. The plans include conservation priorities, a threats analysis and conservation objectives and actions for each area.
- Birding tourism and other nature-based tourism activities were promoted. These activities have become recognized as a sustainable economic alternative for the area and different actors are interested in supporting the development of birding tourism initiatives managed by local people.
- Concern has grown with regards to deforestation, protection of species at risk, control of trade in species, illegal hunting and fishing, and control of resource extraction, particularly metal mining. Some actions to self-regulate these issues have been taken at the local level.

A&C believe that the experience from this project has relevance at the national level: ?

Although the country has outstanding experiences on local biodiversity conservation, the potential of the LCGs may undoubtedly contribute to land use processes opened up through the new constitutional provisions, and by incorporating the IBA concept within the criteria for land use planning and sustainable development. This experience may also be used to influence the implementation of the Plan and Strategy for the National System of Protected Areas as well as the National Strategy for Local Participation in Biodiversity Conservation being prepared by the Environmental

? (Eugenia Endara Osejo, Project Manager). **Biodiversity in Northwestern Pichincha** The montane forests of this region are very rich in biodiversity with 1000s of species recorded. The work is centred on three IBAs: Mindo y Estribaciones Occidentales del volcán Pichincha ? [see factsheet](#) Los Bancos-Milpe ? [see factsheet](#) Río Caoní? [see factsheet](#) **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. The BirdLife Partnership is working to conserve global biodiversity, by working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources. 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.