

MacArthur Foundation helps build a long-term future for Haitian biodiversity

The **MacArthur Foundation** is supporting the BirdLife Caribbean Program's commitment to build the capacity of **Société Audubon Haïti** (SAH) with a US\$250,000 capacity building grant. Société Audubon Haïti (SAH) is a registered foundation that has operated in Haiti since 2003. SAH has 17 (mostly part-time or project-funded contract) staff and over 100 volunteers who work together on a mission to protect and restore biological diversity in the natural ecosystems of Haiti and its satellite islands, through research, environmental education and advocacy programs and integrated conservation initiatives. Named after Jean Jacques Fougère Audubon who was born in 1785 in Le Cayes, Haiti, SAH carries out scientific expeditions in Haiti in partnership with many national and international institutions. Although SAH has managed to facilitate, coordinate and achieve significant advances in some areas of biodiversity conservation in Haiti (especially in the Massif de la Hotte), the conservation need in Haiti is huge and increasing rapidly as a consequence of the January 2010 earthquake. Inside Port-au-Prince, the environmental community was hit hard, and the country's already limited conservation capacity has been set back significantly. The ability of SAH to rise to this challenge is constrained by insufficient institutional capacity – a constraint that will be addressed through this project, in particular through building a solid foundation of staff (which are currently only part-funded through projects) to lead on creating a sustainable NGO future and, in turn, a better future for the country's biodiversity. The BirdLife Caribbean Program has been working closely with SAH since 2007. Projects funded by the Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation, Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, The Canadian International Development Agency (through Nature Canada – BirdLife in Canada) and most recently the **Darwin Initiative** have helped, and continue to help deliver conservation actions and specific training, but the MacArthur Foundation's support over the next 3 years will provide essential resources to strengthen SAH's institutional capacity in order to deliver long-term sustainable conservation in Haiti. With less than 2% of its forest remaining, and this being lost at a rate of 10% every five years, Haiti's incredible diversity of restricted-range and highly threatened species are in urgent need of a strong and vibrant national NGO sector. The MacArthur Foundation's investment in one of Haiti's leading conservation NGOs has come not a moment too soon.