



Couple sponsoring BirdLife are first in the world to run the entire length of South America unsupported, but supported nature throughout

Title

Imagine how it would feel to run into the Caribbean Sea... Now imagine running into the Caribbean Sea after having run a marathon whilst pulling a trailer weighing up to 100kg... Now imagine running into the Caribbean Sea after having run a marathon almost every day with a trailer for 15 months!

This is the feeling the Katharine and David Lowrie experienced yesterday when they became the **first people in the world to run the entire length of South America**, unsupported, as part of their "5000mile Project".

"There were some really tough parts when you're tired and hungry and your body is screaming in pain, but then there would be another incredible view to lift you out of the low points," Katharine remembers.

And amongst the elation of realising a dream, the record-breaking couple are also very mindful of the wildlife habitats they have run through, raising money for BirdLife International and our Partner in Bolivia, Asociacion Armonia. Their achievement received praise and admiration from HRH Prince of Wales and for running for "**such a vitally important cause.**"

"We felt it was time we paid our rent for living on this extraordinary planet," said David. "We decided to show how we all absolutely depend on the natural world and how amazing it is. That with small steps we can overcome seemingly insurmountable hurdles; that time is running out- but it's not too late protect it."

Running a marathon a day for over year is an epic task in itself. But with every step they have been thinking about the environment too, and the incredible landscapes they run through have

been inspiring them to do what they can to help it.

Running is not enough

As well as running 10,000km, pulling a trailer through thick mud, through snow, in nearly 100% Amazonian humidity and up to 45C heat, the ecologist-adventurer pair found enough energy to conduct wildlife surveys and to educate local school children on the importance of conservation.



Katharine and David have logged wildlife sightings and recorded over 450 species of bird in a “mega-transect” - a huge ecological survey along their route.

“From blizzards at the tip of Chile to the oven of northern Venezuela, we have been in the company of parrots. Watching them preening, screaming over our heads, excavating nests or apparently checking us out on fly-bys has just been amazing.”

“They never cease to brighten us up and remind us how amazing this wild planet is!”

The Lowries, both 35, have plenty of surveying experience after writing the “Seabird Breeding Atlas of the Lesser Antilles” before their run. They sailed to every island in the Lesser Antilles monitoring seabirds and discovering breeding colonies, which supported BirdLife’s [Important Bird and Biodiversity Area](#) work in the Caribbean and informs our [Seabird and Marine Programme](#).

Connecting conservation

En route, David and Katharine have been running through and the habitats that BirdLife Partners in Chile (Comité Nacional Pro Defensa de la Flora y Fauna), Argentina (Aves Argentinas), Bolivia (Asociacion Armonia) and Brazil (SAVE Brasil) are working together to conserve. For example, we are securing habitat for species like the Critically Endangered Blue-throated and Red-fronted Macaws.

“The inspiration and support you provided to BirdLife Partner organisations like Armonia in Bolivia is greatly appreciated, especially at a time when we need to really pull together all our resources to counter the dramatic challenges migratory and resident birds face in a fast changing American continent. Thank you for your commitment and support, and congratulations on your incredible adventure,” said BirdLife's Chief Executive, Marco

Lambertini.



The Lowrie's have visited local schools to inspire over 1000 children to get out there and enjoy their local nature. In Venezuela they gave presentations on five local bird species:

"We've been seeing some amazing birds and have chosen five beauties with five incredible beaks, each adapted for their specific food-type, so we can explore how adaptations work," said Katharine.

"Not only do they pull their sled along with their things, but as they run north, they are also pulling a long thread of adults and school children alike whose understanding of the importance of living in balance with nature is awakened by the arrival of David and Katharine in their neighborhoods and communities,"

said BirdLife Conservation Achievement Award Winner, Kris Tompkins, CEO of Conservación Patagonia. "Their message is urgent and clear: Man's relationship to nature, ecological health, is essential for a future thriving human society."

David says: "People clap as we pass and constantly stop to give us money in Venezuela. While in Bolivia, the poorest country in South America, people would run after us to ply us with drinks or grapefruits. We never expected this."

As Katharine and David take a well-earned dip in the Caribbean Sea, we send them our uttermost congratulations and encourage you to be inspired by their feat, and their feet.



If you are in London this Saturday 26 October, then you may want to join the couple at their celebratory run and presentation <http://www.5000mileproject.org/2013/10/join-us/>

If you can't make it, you might like to support their huge efforts (and our huge conservation efforts) by donating at: <https://www.justgiving.com/5000mileproject>