



BirdLife's Forests of Hope Programme

Conserving forests, combating climate change, supporting livelihoods

BirdLife International has created the Forests of Hope Programme to bring together and build on its successful forest conservation and management programmes, focusing initially on 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.

One of the main targets is the prevention of deforestation and the restoration of natural forest, covering at least 5 million hectares of tropical forest by 2020. BirdLife will also advocate the replication by others of the models used to achieve this target, so that much greater impact is achieved.

Forests of Hope concentrates on tropical forests because of their exceptional conservation importance and the threats they face, but will eventually expand to encompass all the world's forest types.

Forest conservation: a need, a challenge and an opportunity

The international community has so far failed to save the world's forests, and tropical forests are particularly at risk: as matters 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 around 15% 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 the entire European Union, which amount to about 11% of global emissions.

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. And conserved or restored forests can continue to provide the services that local communities and society world-wide need.

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Conserving biodiversity

Tropical forests are the most ecologically rich of all forest types. They are home to around 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 management, governance and financing 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), under which forested developing countries would undertake to reduce their emissions from deforestation below a historic reference level, and would be financially compensated for doing so.

Forests of Hope links forest conservation on the ground to policy and advocacy work at national and international levels, making impacts in three crucial areas: conserving tropical forest, combating climate change and supporting livelihoods.



Ecosystem services and sustainable livelihoods

Deforestation is a disaster for the many thousands of people who live in and around tropical forests and whose livelihoods depend on the goods and services they provide. For example, about 4.6 billion people worldwide depend for all or some of their water on supplies from forest systems.

Forests of Hope is helping to safeguard livelihoods and ecosystem services, while respecting, supporting and promoting the rights of local and indigenous peoples. 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.

Conserving and restoring tropical forests while capturing all three of these benefits is a very great challenge—to which BirdLife International has risen.

Global vision, local action: some achievements to date

The BirdLife Partnership has been working in tropical forest conservation for decades, and in over 50 countries. The grassroots, bottom-up nature of BirdLife enables us to deliver results and demonstrations on the ground, ensure benefit sharing from tropical forest conservation, and feed lessons upwards into national and global policy. So far, 20 forests have been put forward by BirdLife Partners as Forests of Hope (see map). Here are some of the highlights.

70,000 hectares of Africa's most threatened forests protected Gola Rainforest National Park in Sierra Leone was designated in 2011, following work since the 1980s by the BirdLife Partnership, particularly the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (BirdLife in Sierra Leone) and RSPB (BirdLife in UK). This forms part of a larger, landscape-scale initiative to create a trans-boundary 'Peace Park' including a large forest area in Liberia, also involving the Society for Conservation Nature in Liberia (BirdLife in Liberia) and Vogelbescherming Nederland (BirdLife in The Netherlands).

Innovation in the protection of forests in Indonesia Burung Indonesia (BirdLife in Indonesia), the RSPB and BirdLife International are together implementing the Harapan Rainforest initiative, which is restoring and conserving one of the last remaining areas of lowland rainforest in Sumatra, covering nearly 100,000 hectares. This is made possible by the creation, in conjunction with the Indonesian Government, of an innovative new forest management licence called an Ecosystem Restoration Concession. The first two such licences cover Harapan; three more licences have now been granted to other organisations. Additional applications, also submitted by other organisations, cover a further four million hectares nationwide; it cannot be assumed that all this area will be licensed for restoration, but the volume of applications clearly shows the interest in the approach.

Working with indigenous people in Paraguay Among a wide range of conservation activities in San Rafael National Park in the Atlantic Forest, Guyra Paraguay (BirdLife in Paraguay) has purchased a parcel of forest with title held jointly with Mbyá Guaraní indigenous people who also wish it to be conserved in perpetuity. The intention is, after a trial period to demonstrate sustainable management, to hand over the title to the Mbyá Guaraní working alongside Guyra Paraguay. This presents a new conservation strategy and a possible model for conservation in other Latin American countries

The BirdLife International Partnership and Forests of Hope site portfolio



Countries represented by national NGOs (dark blue) and BirdLife country programmes (light blue). BirdLife Forests of Hope are indicated by ●

For more information, visit:
www.birdlife.org/worldwide/programmes/forestssofhope
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Together we are BirdLife International The global Partnership for **nature** and **people**

BirdLife International is the world's largest nature conservation Partnership. Together we are 121 BirdLife Partners worldwide—one per country or territory—and growing with 13 million members and supporters, more than 7,000 local conservation groups and 7,400 staff.

BirdLife's vision is a world rich in biodiversity, where people and nature live in harmony. We are driven by our belief that local people, working for nature in their own places but connected nationally and internationally through our global Partnership, are the key to sustaining all life on this planet.

This unique local-to-global approach delivers high impact and long-term conservation for the benefit of nature and people.

BirdLife is the world leader in bird conservation. Rigorous science informed by practical feedback from projects on the ground in important sites and habitats enables us to implement successful conservation programmes for birds and all nature.