



PROTECTION OF WINTERING AND STOP-OVER SITES IN GUATEMALA'S CARIBBEAN CORRIDOR

THREATS/ CHALLENGES: To ensure full-life cycle conservation for neotropical migrants, habitat throughout their migration needs to be protected. Unfortunately, activities such as cattle ranching, logging, and slash and burn agriculture have contributed to rapid loss, fragmentation and degradation of migratory bird habitat.

IMPORTANCE OF THE AREA: Guatemala's Caribbean region is one as one of the most important areas for bird conservation in Guatemala. The Izabal region of Caribbean Guatemala is home to over 150 species of neotropical migrants.

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) and Foundation for Eco-Development and Conservation (FUNDAECO) are implementing a long-term conservation strategy of preserving stopover and wintering habitats along Guatemala's Caribbean migratory funnel. Acquiring and managing a series of reserves that protect habitat for migratory birds of conservation concern creates an important migratory bird corridor. The bird corridor is comprised of acquired land at Sierra Caral, Punta Manabique, Cerro San Gil, Sarstun (Tapon Creek), and Sierra Santa Cruz. Sierra Caral is a unique mountain that hosts Alliance for Zero Extinction species of amphibians while also providing important wintering and stopover habitat for migratory birds like Kentucky Warbler and Hooded Warbler. Punta Manabique has been identified as the single most threatened lowland forest in Izabal and attracts shorebirds such as Sanderling, Buff-breasted Sandpiper and Wilson's Plover along with other migrants to mangroves, beaches and forests such as Prothonotary Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler and Wood Thrush. Cerro San Gil is a registered Important Bird Area for Guatemala, and is a key stopover and wintering site for more than 100 migratory birds. It also boasts Central America's longest running banding station, which was started with the help of Dr. Chandler Robbins. Tapon Creek, part of the Sarstun area, is a soon to be acquired rare coastal rainforest bisected by the

crystal waters of its namesake waterway. Sierra Santa Cruz is the largest remaining unprotected forested landscape in the Caribbean lowlands and confirmed as a key spring Cerulean Warbler stopover site.

PROJECT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES:

Project Goal: Maximize the amount of suitable habitat available for wintering or stopovers of migratory birds in the Caribbean Corridor through the conservation of six focal areas within the Izabal Province.

- 1. Objective:** Acquire core reserves in each of the six focal areas.
- 2. Objective:** Facilitate improved management of over 300,000 acres within the Caribbean Corridor.
- 3. Objective:** Engage locals in 100 communities to reduce their impact on wildlife habitat.
- 4. Objective:** Manage, patrol and maintain six reserves to ensure bird habitat is protected.

**OVER 9,000 ACRES OF
HABITAT HAVE BEEN
ACQUIRED FOR MIGRATORY
BIRD CONSERVATION
IN GUATEMALA**

SIERRA CARAL: The Sierra Caral Reserve (5,679 acres) is part of a unique mountain range that provides important wintering and stopover habitat for 33 species of neotropical migratory birds, fifteen of which are U.S. Watchlist species with declining populations. This includes Olive-sided Flycatcher, Worm-eating Warbler, Kentucky and Prairie Warbler and Wood Thrush. Southern Wings contributions were critical to the acquisition of this reserve.

- ♦ In May 2014, the Guatemalan government declared the entire mountain range a National Protected Water and Forest Reserve. This provides legal zoning protection that limits development rights to agroforestry, sustainable forestry and stricter protection.
- ♦ Southern Wings support for capacity building at the reserve and in neighboring communities has increased ecotourism by 60% since 2013, generating additional funding to maintain the reserve while increasing local appreciation for and awareness of the reserve and its importance.

Sierra Caral Photo source: FUNDAECO



PARTNER DESCRIPTION:

Foundation for Eco-Development and Conservation

FUNDAECO is an environmental non-governmental organization (NGO) has a history of over 20 years of environmental work in Guatemala and Central America. FUNDAECO focuses on combining sustainable community development and conservation through the creation and management of reserves and protected areas. This approach has led FUNDAECO to widen its areas of action to include land titling, agro-forestry, reproductive health and education.

CERRO SAN GIL: This area of 117,164 acres is the centerpiece, of FUNDAECO's Caribbean conservation corridor strategy with more than 400 bird species (100 species of migrants), In addition to its biological riches, Cerro San Gil streams and rivers are also the main drinking water source for more than 50,000 people in the area.

- ♦ With Southern Wings funding FUNDAECO has assumed possession and management responsibilities for the 3,202 acre Finca Alejandra property to expand the Cerro San Gil Reserve.
- ♦ Support of FUNDAECO's community outreach has resulted in community engagement on non-timber forest products and agroforestry.
- ♦ Funds have also improved reserve protection through strategic patrolling with the national police, environmental law enforcement, and members of the local military.

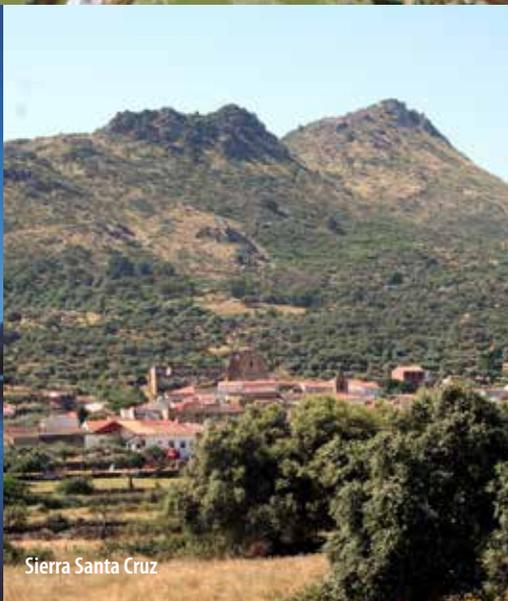


PUNTA MANABIQUE: In 2013, with Southern Wings support, ABC and FUNDAECO successfully completed the purchase of the 1,668-acre Finca Santa Isabel creating the Manabique Reserve. In 2014, it was officially registered with the Guatemalan government as a protected area. This remote peninsula is inhabited by manatees and jaguars, and more than 300 bird species, including large numbers of shorebirds and passerine migrants. The Manabique Peninsula is highly threatened and has lost 40% of its forest cover in the last 20 years.

SIERRA SANTA CRUZ: An area comprised of 158,147 acres is the last unprotected large-scale natural area in FUNDAECO's proposed Corridor. This small isolated mountain range has been identified by ABC funded researchers as one of the most important spring stopover sites for North American bound Cerulean Warblers and a host of other neotropical migrants like Wood Thrush and Kentucky Warbler. The creation of a new core protected area here is needed.



Cerro San Gil Photo Source: FUNDAECO



Sierra Santa Cruz



Punta Manabique Photo CONAP

SPECIES OF CONSERVATION CONCERN:

Broad-winged Hawk

Wood Thrush

Blue-winged Warbler

Prothonotary Warbler

Kentucky Warbler

Prairie Warbler

Cerulean Warbler

Canada Warbler

Yellow-throated Warbler

Northern Waterthrush

Worm-eating Warbler

Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Olive-sided Flycatcher

Wilson's Plover

American Oystercatcher

Red Knot

Sanderling

Western Sandpiper

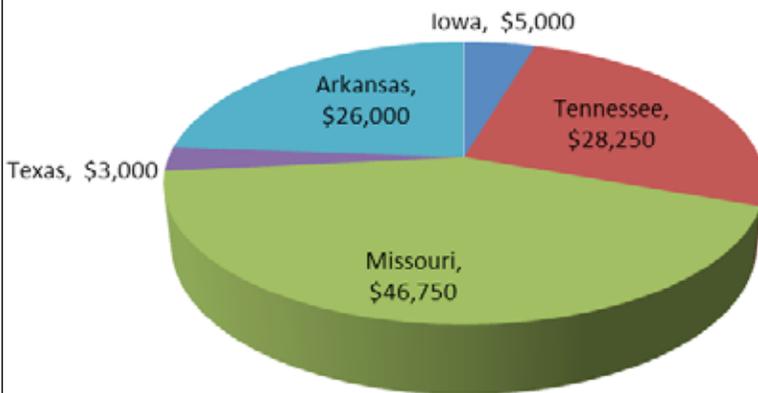
White-rumped Sandpiper

Buff-breasted Sandpiper

Bold = priority



Funds Contributed: \$109,000



SUMMARY: With Southern Wings support ABC and FUNDAECO have successfully protected three biologically relevant properties, totaling more than 9,000 acres, in the Izabal province of Guatemala that provide significant benefit to priority migratory birds. These acquisitions have thwarted efforts to log the Sierra Caral, colonize areas around Cerro San Gil, and expand agriculture in Punta Manabique. Without the support of Southern Wings, these activities would have further chipped away at dwindling supply of wintering habitat for American's threatened migratory birds. ABC and FUNDAECO are working towards securing a fourth reserve and soon hope to celebrate the protection of the last unprotected, large-scale natural area in the proposed Caribbean Corridor.

