

# ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2023

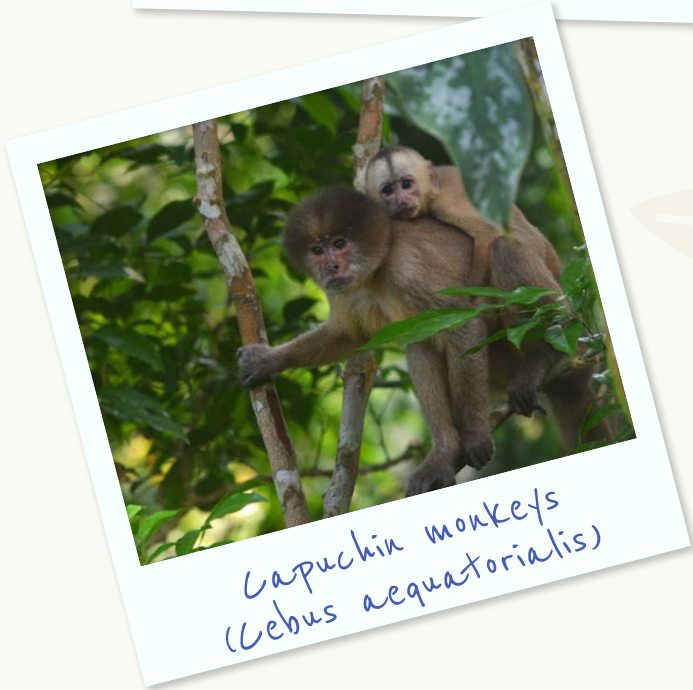
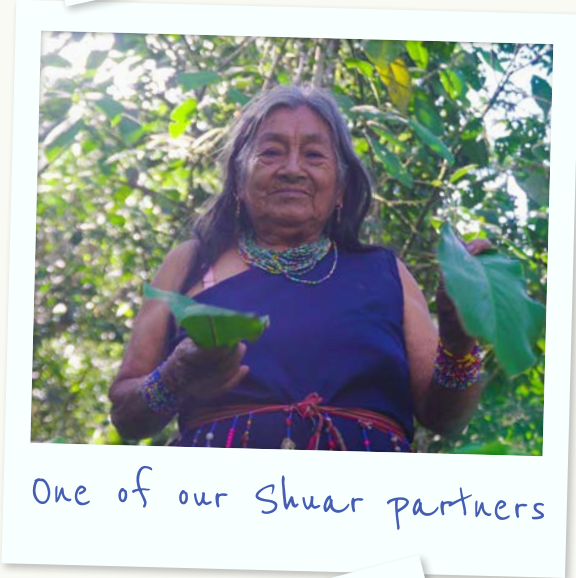


Photo: Charles Smith  
Lake Llaviuco, Biosphere Reserve Macizo  
del Cajas, Ecuador



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# OUR MISSION

Nature and Culture International works side-by-side with local cultures to protect biodiverse hotspots in Latin America for the well-being of our planet.



**26 million**  
acres protected



**3.9 billion**  
tons of avoided  
CO2 emissions



**3+ million**  
people benefiting  
from water protection



**23**  
local and Indigenous  
communities supported



A vibrant green and blue hummingbird is perched on a thin, horizontal branch. The branch is covered in light green, fuzzy moss. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a forest or garden setting. The bird is facing right, with its long, thin beak pointed forward. Its feathers are a mix of bright green and deep blue, with some iridescent sheen.

# THANK YOU!

## **Your support enabled us to achieve major milestones in 2023.**

As you read through our Impact Report, we invite you to join us in celebrating these achievements. None of this would be possible without you!

We value your support and want to send a heartfelt thank you for the lasting impact you have made and for all that you do for conservation.



# A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

At Nature and Culture, we embrace a bottom-up strategy, collaborating closely with local and Indigenous communities to safeguard vast landscapes. Through prioritizing upstream ecosystem-level conservation, we guarantee the preservation of climate stability, biodiversity, and essential water sources.

In February 2023, alongside our Indigenous and government partners, we celebrated the creation of Tarímiat Pujutáí Nunka in Ecuador’s Morona Santiago province, a testament to our commitment to safeguarding these invaluable natural resources. Tarímiat Pujutáí Nunka, a term in the Indigenous Shuar language, is difficult to translate. It roughly means, “Territory of Good Living,” but has broader connotations of authenticity, of living in harmony with plants, animals, rocks, waterfalls, even mythological beings. It carries a sense of the fullness of life.

These are beautiful concepts, even though I don’t fully grasp their nuances in Shuar. What I do know is that helping create this 3.1-million-acre provincial protected area reflects something fundamental about Nature and Culture’s ethos. What local people want matters. How they see the world matters. It matters because they deserve to have it matter. And it matters because when local people

are personally invested, it leads to better conservation. These are among the lessons embodied in Tarímiat Pujutáí Nunka.

There’s a larger story here though, one that begins long before Tarímiat Pujutáí Nunka, which is the third provincial protected area that Nature and Culture has helped create in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Pastaza, the province just north of Morona Santiago, was the first with 6.3 million acres declared in 2017. Zamora Chinchipe, to Morona Santiago’s south, was second, legally protecting 1.1 million acres in 2019.

Together, these areas make up some serious acreage, more than 10 million acres of largely contiguous protected forest. Supported by Nature and Culture, these three provinces recently formed a political alliance called the Amazonian Platform to coordinate long-term conservation of these forests across jurisdictions. And now, two provinces to the north of Pastaza are asking for Nature and Culture’s help to create their own provincial protected areas, which will add at least two million more acres to the Amazonian Platform.

It’s at this scale, connecting large landscapes across provincial, sometimes even country



Pitia River in Morona Santiago

boundaries that we need to be working. Forests don’t care about jurisdictional borders. Animals don’t care. Water and climate don’t care. From the Ecuador-Peru bi-national corridor to Colombia’s Cuchilla del San Juan, we’re weaving together ecosystems and creating connected habitats like the Machángara Tomebamba Wildlife Refuge in Ecuador that connects to two other protected areas in Ecuador. It’s at this scale that we can, must meet the massive challenges we face. It is large protected landscapes that can halt biodiversity loss, maintain crucial flows of water and energy, slow climate change.

Sincerely,



**Matt Clark**  
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt Clark".





year in review

2023

Highlights



Ecoregions  
where we work:

Chocó • Chaco • Paramo • Amazon Rainforest  
Andean Cloud Forest • Dry Forest • Wetlands  
Mangroves • Coastal Scrub

**39** areas  
created

**3.7** million acres  
protected

**2,761**  
community members trained  
36% are women

worked  
with **23**  
Indigenous and  
local communities

**91%** staff  
live and work  
in Latin America

**86%**  
of funds  
to the field

**284,788**  
people that benefit from  
our protected water supplies

**690** million tons  
of avoided CO2  
emissions

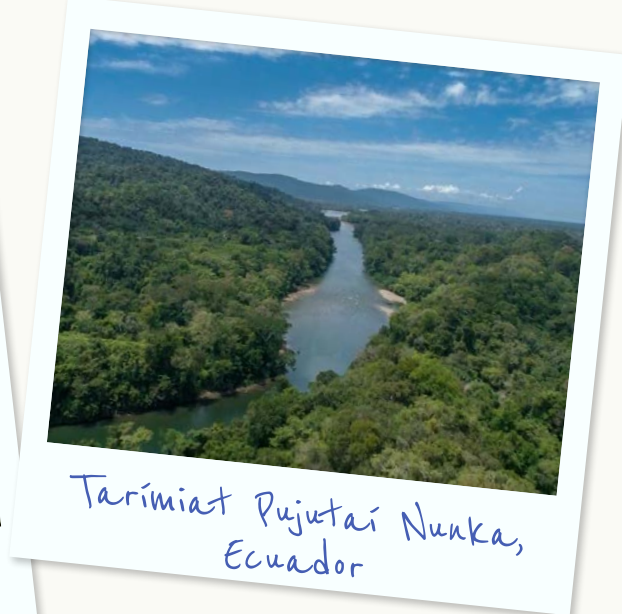




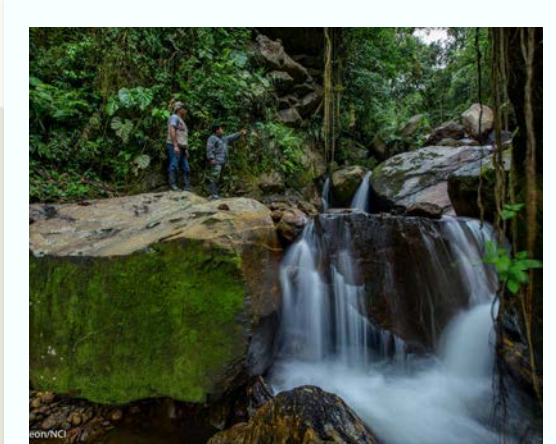
Post-wildfire reforestation project, Bolivia



Sucúa Protected Area, Ecuador



Tarimiat Pujutai Nunka, Ecuador



The Chaupe, Lunia y Chinchiquilla Reserve, Peru



Monte Mojino Reserve, Mexico

### Our Partner Offices

As we continue to grow our portfolio of protected areas, we have partnered with local conservation organizations to extend our reach in Colombia and Bolivia. We're leveraging their established community ties to advance our shared conservation goals and at the same time strengthen local conservation efforts.



# CONSERVING LARGE LANDSCAPES

At our core, we focus on safeguarding vast landscapes rich in biodiversity. Through collaboration with local communities, we establish protected areas to preserve these valuable ecosystems. Guided by an integrated conservation approach, we prioritize the benefits of healthy ecosystems for both local inhabitants and global climate stability.



## Over 3 Million Acres in the Ecuadorian Amazon Protected in Historic Declaration

📍 Ecuador

On February 1, 2023, **4 Indigenous organizations** came together with the Provincial Government of Morona Santiago, Ecuador to create the **3,057,670-acre reserve**, named Tarímiat Pujutai Nunka in Shuar, which roughly translates to “Territory of Good Living.”

With the generous support of our donors and partners, Nature and Culture has been working since 2021, to facilitate a participatory process that led to the protection of this massive connected Amazonian forest. This process involved hosting **21 community meetings**, during which **893 community members** shared their traditional ecological knowledge, worldviews, and visions for a sustainable future within their ancestral territory to **preserve natural and cultural resources for future generations**.

The declaration of this area aims to **improve the quality of life for local communities through sustainable development opportunities, while safeguarding its 744 million tons of above-ground carbon stores**.

Tarímiat Pujutai Nunka joins as the centerpiece of the Amazonian Platform, a collaborative alliance uniting 7 Indigenous nationalities and 3 Provincial Governments in protecting 11 million acres of continuous Amazonian rainforest. About the size of West Virginia, U.S. in total, this impressive biological corridor collectively sequesters an estimated 2.3 billion tons of above-ground carbon.



The creation of the reserve also led to Morona Santiago’s admittance to the Governors’ Climate and Forests Task Force (GCF), which will provide international funding to front-line Indigenous communities to support innovative conservation initiatives.

### WHAT’S NEXT?

Nature and Culture is now supporting local stakeholders in drafting a sustainability plan for the area that ensures Indigenous voices remain central in Tarímiat Pujutai Nunka’s long-term management.

With your continued support, Nature and Culture will expand the Amazonian Platform northward, partnering with the provinces of Napo and Orellana to preserve an additional 3 million acres of carbon-rich rainforest, bringing the total platform to 14 million acres of continuous rainforest.

## Machángara Tomebamba Wildlife Refuge Gains National Level of Protection

📍 Ecuador

A commitment to conservation has resulted in national-level protection for wildlife. Since 1985, the Machángara Tomebamba area has been a focal point of conservation concerns. Through collaborative endeavors, we are thrilled to announce that on September 22, 2023, Machángara Tomebamba finally attained the recognition it deserves at the national level! Located in the high Andes of Ecuador, **this 61,673-acre refuge is home to at least 522 species of flora and fauna**. Some exist nowhere else on Earth, like the endangered ‘Sange Cutín’ frog (*Pristimantis erythros*), which was first documented in 2018. It also offers connectivity between neighboring protected areas, which supports far-ranging species, such as the Andean bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*).

Protecting this expansive landscape is also vital to local water security, as it provides over **60% of the drinking water** in Cuenca, a municipality of around **450,000 people**.

### HOW DOES AN AREA GAIN NATIONAL PROTECTION?

Machángara Tomebamba was first recognized as an “Area of Forest and Vegetation Protection” close to four decades ago. This category still allowed for some exploitative activities to occur within the area. But it demonstrated the Ecuadorian government’s interest in establishing conservation measures within the Paute River basin to generate hydroelectric power.

In 1999, the Ministry of the Environment,

local governments, universities, water utility and hydroelectric companies formed the Machángara Basin Conservation Committee. Due to increased threats of mining and ecological degradation, Nature and Culture proposed elevating the area’s status. It took time and many hands, but in 2021, a portion of Machángara Tomebamba received municipal-level protections with the declaration of overlapping “Conservation and Sustainable Use Area” Cuenca. This step then made it possible to propose Machángara Tomebamba as a wildlife refuge within Ecuador’s National System of Protected Areas.

Often, national declarations are built upon years of painstaking work on a subnational level. Thankfully, that’s where Nature and Culture excels! We hope you will join us in celebrating this win for local biodiversity and people.

Andean bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*)





# Preserving a Biodiversity Hotspot in Colombia: Cuchilla del San Juan

Colombia

In west-central Colombia, where the Chocó meets the western Andes, lies a sanctuary of incredible biodiversity - Cuchilla del San Juan. In 2023, **45,994 acres were added to the area, now totaling 73,274 acres of protected Andean and sub-Andean forests.** This expansion not only bolsters the level of protection but also underscores the unwavering commitment of the communities to preserve their ancestral lands.

The initiative to safeguard Cuchilla del San Juan dates back to the early 1990s and at the heart of this endeavor are the residents of Cuchilla del San Juan, whose livelihoods are intricately intertwined with the land. In 2000,

Cuchilla del San Juan was officially declared an Integrated Management Regional District protected area. This marked the beginning of a journey towards sustainable stewardship of the land.

The significance of Cuchilla del San Juan transcends its borders. It serves as a crucial link in Colombia's ecosystem connectivity, bridging the Chocó and the western Andes. **This confluence is a hotspot for biodiversity, boasting over 1,600 species, including 116 that are endemic to the region.** Biological expeditions conducted within the area unveiled a treasure trove of flora and fauna, from the majestic Puma (*Puma concolor*) to birds of interest for ecological tourism such as the aurinegra tanager (*Bangsia melanochlamys*) and the Tatamá bangsia (*Bangsia aureocincta*).

Yet, perhaps the most vital aspect of Cuchilla del San Juan lies in its role as the birthplace of "El Rio San Juan" - the most abundant river (96,091 ft3/sec) that empties into the Pacific Ocean in America and the lifeblood of countless Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities. **This mighty river sustains not only their livelihoods but also supplies potable water to around 8,000 individuals across 68 villages.**

This sanctuary stands as a testament to the power of collective action in preserving our planet's most precious treasures.

Puma (*Puma concolor*)  
Photo: Humboldt Institute



# Our Community-Led Conservation Approach

Latin America

At Nature and Culture, one of the ways we protect and connect large eco-regions is by approaching conservation at a grassroots level. **We advocate for the creation of subnational protected areas, led by provincial and municipal governments** in partnership with local communities. These areas are dedicated to preserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable practices, ensuring the continual delivery of ecosystem services that contribute to human well-being.

This community-led approach to conservation leverages the adaptability and responsiveness of local governments in meeting the specific needs of their areas. Unlike protected areas regulated by national authorities, subnational

areas have inherent flexibility, enabling them to adjust to the conditions and characteristics of the territory they aim to safeguard. This method naturally promotes long-term protection because it not only improves the quality of life for local communities but also ensures local buy-in.

These subnational areas are known as Conservation and Sustainable Use Areas in Ecuador. At the end of 2023, there were 99 of these subnational areas, totaling 15 million acres across Ecuador. To date, **Nature and Culture has played a significant role in the creation of 85% of these areas**, with many more ahead.



Shuar Community members, Ecuador



Andwa woman, Ecuador



Community members in El Pitayal, Mexico



# CONSERVING LARGE LANDSCAPES WITH LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

At Nature and Culture, we prioritize local solutions. We partner closely with local and Indigenous communities, supporting them in pursuing their own conservation goals. Our approach emphasizes inclusive engagement, ensuring stakeholder participation, informed consent, and robust action plans for enduring sustainability.





## Guardians of the Forest: Amplifying Indigenous Voices on a Global Scale

📍 Global

The opportunity for Nature and Culture to attend the international climate conference, COP27, in 2022, and amplify Indigenous voices in climate action was a significant milestone for the organization. **In 2023, we continued to build on the momentum and champion the presence of Indigenous leaders in pivotal international forums.**

In March 2023, Josefina Tunki, former President of the Shuar Arutam Nationality, journeyed to the United Nations Water Conference in New York alongside Nature and Culture, Executive Director, Matt Clark. Josefina delivered a compelling presentation on the **critical issue of water resources in the Amazon. Josefina's perspective was enriched by her deep connection to the land**, stemming from her leadership in safeguarding the 3-million-acre protected area, Tarímiat Pujutáí Nunka. She is fighting to keep her ancestral territory free of mining activities that have devastated her community.

Later in the year, our esteemed partners, **Governor of Morona Santiago, Tiyua Uyunkar and Pastaza Governor André Granda, took the stage at COP28, proudly representing the Amazonian Platform—a testament to the collaborative efforts between Nature and Culture, subnational governments, and local Indigenous communities.** They shared the remarkable successes achieved in protecting the Ecuadorian Amazon. Together, we're safeguarding an astonishing 11 million acres of pristine forest, forming the largest biological corridor in Ecuador.

At the heart of our mission lies a commitment to working alongside Indigenous Peoples. Despite historically being sidelined in critical conversations, Indigenous territories hold the key to 80% of the world's biodiversity. Their unparalleled stewardship, as evidenced by lower average deforestation rates in Indigenous territories compared even to protected areas, underscores their role as nature's greatest guardians.

By facilitating the participation of Indigenous leaders in global dialogues, we are supporting them in reshaping the narrative on conservation and climate action. Their invaluable insights, rooted in millennia of lived experience, are indispensable in shaping policies and solutions. **As we forge ahead, Nature and Culture remains steadfast in our resolve to amplify Indigenous voices**, ensuring that their rightful place at the forefront of the environmental movement is acknowledged and respected on a global scale.



Governors Tiyua Uyunkar and André Granda at COP28

## Working with Indigenous Communities to Protect El Pitayal

📍 Mexico

Since 2017, our team in Mexico has been dedicated to establishing a **Protected Area in El Pitayal, a coastal scrubland in Sonora, Mexico, home to the world's largest population of organ pipe cactus (*Stenocereus thurberi*)**. This unique ecosystem not only shelters various flora and fauna, including the Sinaloa thornscrub tortoise (*Gopherus evgoodei*), lesser long-nosed bat (*Leptonycteris yerbabuenae*), and roseate spoonbill (*Platalea ajaja*), but also holds deep cultural significance as part of the Indigenous Yoreme Mayo territory. Their worldview and customs are deeply intertwined with the organ pipe cactus and the ecosystem it sustains, adding a rich layer of cultural importance to our conservation efforts.

Throughout 2023, **we engaged with the Yoreme-Mayo communities to exchange insights on El Pitayal's significance** and the importance of its protection. Our goal is for these communities to take ownership of the project, becoming its primary advocates due to their profound connection and love for their land, ecosystems, and the diverse flora and fauna dependent on El Pitayal. As we continue our work alongside these communities, we remain hopeful that El Pitayal will be declared a protected area in 2024, ensuring the long-term preservation of this extraordinary natural and cultural treasure.



Our team participates in the Pitaya Festival



Pitaya fruit on the rare organ pipe cactus

Sinaloa thornscrub tortoise





# Indigenous Women Fight Deforestation with their Ancestral Knowledge

📍 Ecuador

Using their ancestral knowledge, Indigenous women from the Waorani and Kichwa nationalities in the Ecuadorian Amazon are **leading the charge against deforestation!**

Through a study of the natural resources available in their territories, women from Pastaza have selected native species with exceptional healing and culinary properties. From vanilla, to achiote, these natural ingredients are transformed into high-quality facial and body creams (by the Waorani women) and spices (by the Kichwa women).

With our support, these women have enhanced their production processes. They have acquired new equipment and received training in maceration, packaging, labeling, and marketing.

The result? “Daipare: essence from the forest” and “Manduru” are now nationally renowned brands of sustainable products from the Amazon. These initiatives **generate profits for their communities but provide an alternative to extractive activities** that contribute to deforestation.

**This thriving bioeconomy supports 61 families and is proudly 100% led by Indigenous women**, showcasing the incredible impact of combining traditional knowledge with modern support systems.



Gladys Simbaña, a Waorani woman selling creams



Daipare: essence from the forest



Achiote, a natural ingredient

# Environmental Stewardship is Brewing in Huánuco, Peru

📍 Peru

Karen Rojas’s leadership in producing **100% organic coffee** not only empowers women and **fosters community pride** but illustrates the power of collective action and dedication to nature.

Five years ago, in addition to caring for her home and family, Karen was tasked with preparing food for the men in charge of washing and drying the coffee harvested in Alto Catarata. Today, she leads local women in hand-harvesting coffee beans in a manner that allows them to **protect the surrounding environment while also benefiting their communities economically.**

In collaboration with Karen and fellow farmers, and the Regional Government of Huánuco,

Nature and Culture is in the process of creating a 131,930-acre conservation area to safeguard the region’s forests and the vital water they provide.

**Stay informed about the creation of protected areas like these by signing up to [receive our latest news from the field!](#)**



Taking a break mid-harvest



Harvesting forest-grown coffee beans



Karen Rojas with the final product



# CONSERVING LARGE LANDSCAPES FOR CLIMATE

Nature and Culture helps to address climate change through nature-based solutions. Preventing deforestation in our planet’s tropical forests is critical to maintaining a livable planet.



## UN’s 28th Climate Change Conference of the Parties

Nature and Culture facilitated the participation of Ecuador’s provincial leadership in the United Nations 28th Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP28) in Dubai, emphasizing the crucial role of local and Indigenous perspectives in shaping global climate policies.

Tiyua Uyunkar, Governor of Morona Santiago, and André Granda, Governor of Pastaza, presented the successes of the Amazonian Platform, underscoring the importance of sharing local knowledge to protect and preserve vital ecosystems amid the climate crisis.

COP28 Dubai



## Helping Communities Adapt to Climate Change Locally

In 2019, we celebrated the declaration of the Ñembi Guasu protected area, safeguarding 3 million acres in the Bolivian Gran Chaco. That same year, wildfires ravaged the country’s southern region of Santa Cruz

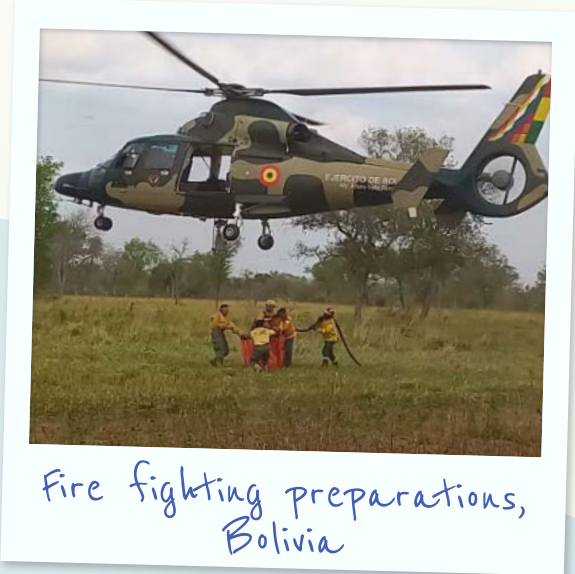
Since then, Nature and Culture and our local implementation partner, NATIVA Foundation, have been working to ensure the long-term health of the protected area. We’re doing this in several ways, including the creation of a management framework and sustainable finance mechanism, development of a firefighting patrol, and post-wildfire reforestation projects. Recognizing the growing risk of fire in Bolivia’s precious dry forests, we have provided fire fighting tools, conducted fire safety awareness campaigns, and devised emergency firefighting strategies to mitigate future disasters.

Helping communities adapt to climate change is crucial because, despite efforts to mitigate

its causes, the impacts of climate change are already being felt globally. These impacts often disproportionately affect vulnerable communities. By supporting adaptation measures, such as building resilience, enhancing infrastructure, and implementing early warning systems, communities can better withstand the effects of climate change and minimize associated risks to livelihoods, health, and well-being.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The Gran Chaco is South America’s second largest forest, after the Amazon. Despite its natural richness and tremendous socio-cultural diversity, it is one of the most neglected areas in South America. The Gran Chaco is increasingly threatened by climate change and an expanding agricultural frontier.





# The Amazonian Platform: Regional Collaboration for Connectivity at Scale

## THE AMAZONIAN PLATFORM

The Amazonian Platform, an instrumental project for Nature and Culture since 2017, represents a groundbreaking initiative led by provincial governments, in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and nationalities in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Its overarching aim is to preserve the largest continuous forest corridor in the Ecuadorian Amazon while ensuring sustainable livelihoods for the Indigenous communities that live within the region. This collaborative initiative is driven by the six provinces of the Ecuadorian Amazon and the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Amazon of Ecuador (CONFENIAE, which consists of 11 Indigenous Nationalities).

**A groundbreaking initiative led by provincial governments, in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and nationalities in the Ecuadorian Amazon.**

In the initial stage, three provinces - Pastaza, Zamora Chinchipe, and Morona Santiago - have committed to managing and safeguarding 11 million acres of land, which is estimated to sequester 2.3 billion tons of carbon.

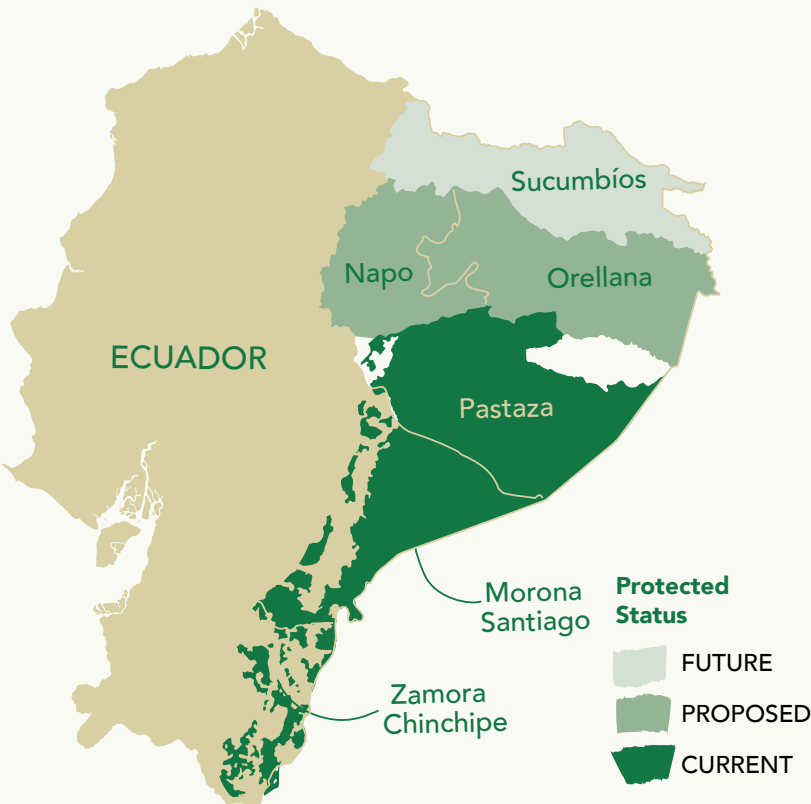
Thanks to the collaborative approach of the Amazonian Platform, there are now opportunities to extend its reach into at least two more provinces to the north, namely Napo and Orellana. This year, Nature and Culture is extending the Amazonian Platform northward, teaming up with Napo and Orellana provinces to conserve an additional 3 million acres of carbon-rich rainforest. This expansion will bring the total protected area of the platform to 14

million acres of continuous rainforest.

**This initiative stands out for its inclusive and participatory nature, fostering collaboration among various stakeholders.**

Historically, Indigenous-led organizations have faced marginalization, limited leadership roles, and inadequate access to conservation funding for their ancestral territories. The Amazonian Platform is actively working to address this historical imbalance. For example, in the Protected Area Management Consortium in Pastaza, full voting rights are granted to all participating Indigenous Nationalities, reflecting the commitment to inclusivity.

Moreover, Indigenous communities and



An Achuar community member



Yapui River, Ecuador



Community members in Morona Santiago

provincial governments are utilizing Free Prior and Informed Consent protocols to develop Conservation Agreements. These agreements offer tangible benefits to communities in exchange for conserving parts of their territories, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the platform.

A sustainable trust fund mechanism (currently under construction and pending ratification) will allow future conservation funds to be distributed among the participating provinces. Involving the provincial governments, NGOs, and Indigenous representatives as voting members will facilitate transparency, equity, and accountability in resource allocation.

The significance of this grassroots movement extends beyond its local impact, holding considerable implications for conservation efforts globally. The success of this locally driven initiative demonstrates its potential for replication in other Amazonian regions. Furthermore, the expansion opportunities this year indicate its scalability and potential for broader application.

*"This is a critical moment in the history of Ecuador and of the planet, as we at Nature and Culture see it: the provincial governments of Zamora Chinchipe, Morona Santiago, and Pastaza, the Peoples and Nationalities, and the International Cooperation of the Amazonian Platform are paving a path that can be emulated throughout the region. The subnational governments of other Amazonian countries can replicate this path, and now is the time to do it."*

-Felipe Serrano, Ecuador Country Director



# CONSERVING LARGE LANDSCAPES TO SAFEGUARD BIODIVERSITY

Global wildlife populations have dropped by 69% in the last 50 years. Tropical forests are home to over 80% of terrestrial species, and healthy ecosystems are critical for global biodiversity survival. Nature and Culture participates in research and species monitoring, protecting endangered species like jaguars, condors, and spectacled bears by preserving and connecting ecosystems.



## Newly described species in southern Ecuador

📍 Ecuador

### Three New-to-Science Rain Frogs

The cloud forests of southern Ecuador in the Tropical Andes, are unparalleled in their breathtaking biodiversity. The persistent mist or cloud cover that blankets the forests here creates a cool and moist environment conducive to a diverse array of plant and animal life, especially amphibians.

In 2023, Sage Dunne's Rain Frog (*Pristimantis sagedunneae*), the Numbala Rain Frog (*Pristimantis numbala*), and the Paladines Rain Frog (*Pristimantis paladines*) joined Ecuador's extensive list of endemic frogs. These species were first scientifically documented by Paúl Székely, Diana Székely, Diego Armijos-Ojeda, Santiago Hualpa-Vega, and Judit Vörös in Nature and Culture's Sangay-Podocarpus Connectivity Corridor.

Read their paper, recently published in Herpetological Monographs journal, [here](#), which reveals that at least **57% of amphibian species are under threat** due to habitat loss, the expansion of the agricultural/cattle-raising frontier, and climate change.

Nature and Culture's technical team and partnering organizations and universities have been working to establish the **1.4-million-acre Sangay-Podocarpus Connectivity Corridor** since 2010. In 2020, it made history as Ecuador's first national connectivity corridor. Preserving habitat connectivity allows wildlife to move and migrate, boosts biodiversity and resilience in degraded ecosystems, safeguards genetic flow between populations, and ensures species are better able to adapt to the changing climate.

Biologists continue to learn more about cloud forest species and their response to climate change through research conducted out of Nature and Culture's San Francisco Research Station in Ecuador's Zamora Chinchipe province. This research station is where our work first began in 1996. Since its establishment, over 80 research projects have been conducted here, resulting in hundreds of important scientific publications.

#### DID THIS ONE SLITHER BY YOU?

Check out the [five stunning snakes](#) that are raising awareness about the impacts of mining in the rainforest.

Among them is **the newly described Dipsas welborni snail-eating snake**, investigated by Ecuadorian biologists Alejandro Arteaga and Amanda Queza. Found along the Nangaritza River in Nature and Culture's private Maycú Reserve, this arboreal snake is particularly prone to the effects of gold and copper mining, as the snails and slugs it relies on appear to be strongly affected by water pollution.

*Dipsas welborni* was named in celebration of David Welborn, a former board member of Nature and Culture, who has passionately dedicated much of his life to preserving irreplaceable ecosystems like these.

Paladines Rain Frog  
(*Pristimantis paladines*):



## Threatened Species Mobilize Laderas Norte Community to Create Municipal Protected Area

📍 Bolivia

With fewer than 1,500 individuals estimated to remain in Bolivia, **the rapid population decline of the once widespread Andean condor** (*Vultur gryphus*) is a major cause for local concern. When the community of Laderas Norte of Tarija **discovered that 34 condors had died after eating a poisoned carcass** intended for a puma that was eating local livestock, they knew they had to act.

The community immediately sought support to create a reserve to protect this emblematic scavenger from local extinction. In August 2023, their vision was realized with **the declaration of the 8,144-acre Quebracho and Condor Nature Reserve**. In addition to safeguarding vital nesting habitat for the Andean condor, the area also protects important tree species like the white quebracho (*Aspidosperma quebracho-blanco*), and red quina (*Myroxylon peruiferum*), from illegal timber harvesting.

Nature and Culture is now working with one of our implementation partners in Bolivia, NATIVA Foundation, to promote ecotourism and other sustainable development activities in the area.



Andean Condor, Bolivia



Quebracho and Condor Nature Reserve, Bolivia



Overlooking the reserve



Bird Conservation in Peru's Tropical Andes

📍 Peru

In the last eight years, Nature and Culture has documented **more than 450 species of birds in areas we protect** in the northern Tropical Andes of Peru, 24 percent of the country's recognized avian species. Our work here spans a 3,763,481-acre ecoregion of high-altitude grasslands and cloud forests.

**Two new subnational areas are in the works which will join to surrounding protected areas between the departments of Huánuco and San Martín, Peru.** This ecoregion provides critical habitat connectivity and food resources to birds and other wildlife in the region.

Monitoring wildlife within the areas we protect is just one way we gauge the efficacy of our work. It also allows us to prioritize new areas for conservation as species' ranges shift in response to climate change.



House wren  
(Troglodytes aedon)



Andean guanin  
(Penelope montagnii)



Tricolored brushfinch  
(Atlapetes tricolor)

Monitoring Wildlife in the Northern Andes

📍 Peru

Nature and Culture helped develop a **special project devoted to learning more about how wildlife utilizes our protected areas** in Piura, Peru.

Through camera traps and biological sampling, we identified **14 mammalian species in Chicuate-Chinjuelas Private Conservation Area** (established in 2016) and Páramos Andinos-Huaringas, a Regional Conservation Area we are currently working to establish.

To our excitement, the mountain tapir (*Tapirus pinchaque*) was the most frequently observed species. Given their timid and nomadic nature, mountain tapirs are challenging to study in the wild. These monitoring efforts shed light on their behavior and habitat preferences, offering insights into their movements between páramo and forest habitats and strengthening our case to expand protections in the area.



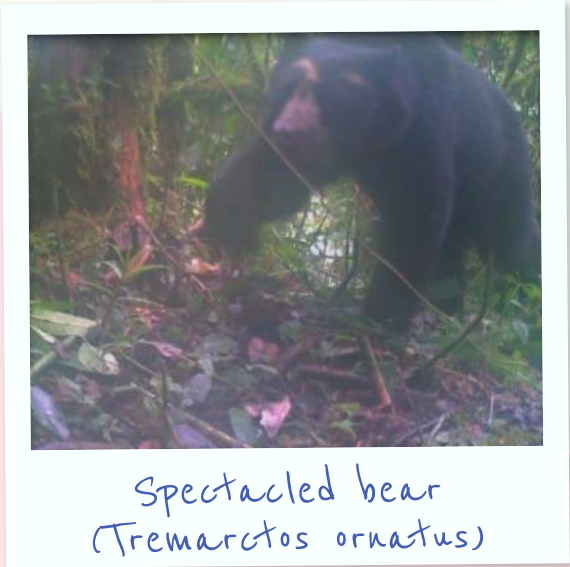
Paca  
(Cuniculus paca)



Tapir  
(Tapirus pinchaque)



Northern pudu  
(Pudu mephistophiles)



Spectacled bear  
(Tremarctos ornatus)



# CONSERVING LARGE LANDSCAPES TO PRESERVE KEY WATER SOURCES

We drive local conservation by prioritizing clean water. Through initiatives like Water Protection Areas, we collaborate with governments and communities to shield vital water sources from harmful practices like mining and deforestation, ensuring ecosystem preservation.



## Water Protection Areas

Water is essential to life. That’s why we link water to forest conservation.

Access to clean water is a basic human necessity and safeguarding crucial water sources serves as a potent means to promote the overall health of ecosystems.

Nature and Culture leverages local enthusiasm for preserving clean and plentiful water access to propel conservation initiatives. Ultimately, this approach contributes to the preservation of local biodiversity, nearby forests and ecosystems, and ensures food security for local populations.

### Nature and Culture’s role in establishing water protection areas in Ecuador.

In Ecuador, Water Protection Areas (WPAs) are a unique conservation measure aimed at safeguarding water resources for local populations and protecting key watersheds and their surrounding ecosystems. These areas legally shield forests and natural ecosystems from harmful activities like mining, ensuring a clean water supply and food security for local communities. From 2019 to 2022, **our team in Ecuador spearheaded a comprehensive national-level hydrological study.** This effort culminated in the creation of a Priority Map of Hydric Zones covering approximately 17.3 million acres. The study was instrumental in aiding the Ecuadorian government in prioritizing its watershed conservation projects, called Water Protection Areas.

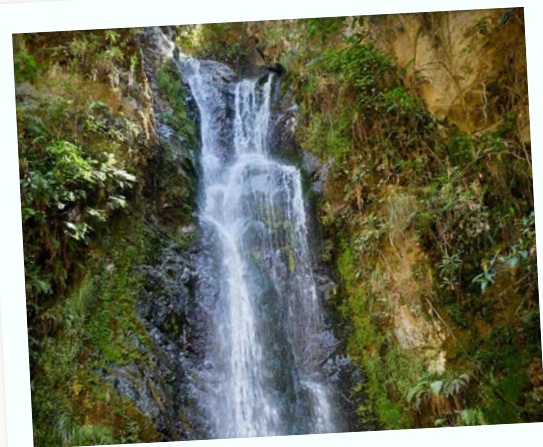
Since the inception of this conservation mechanism, 32 Water Protection Areas have been established, 20 with Nature and

Culture’s support. In 2023 alone, **12 areas were established, protecting 150,000 acres, and bringing positive change to the lives of 85,000 local residents.**

This innovative conservation approach has the potential to become a model for other regions, safeguarding their exceptional biological and cultural diversity.



Pucara Waterfall,  
Ecuador



Verdun Waterfall, Ecuador



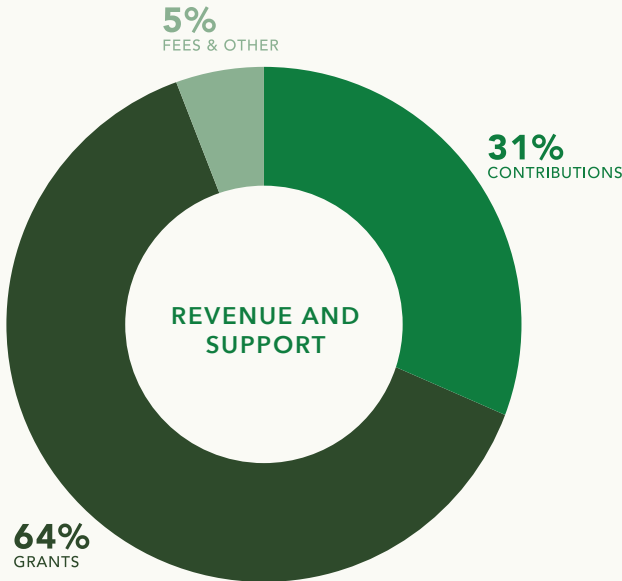
Pucara Waterfall



# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

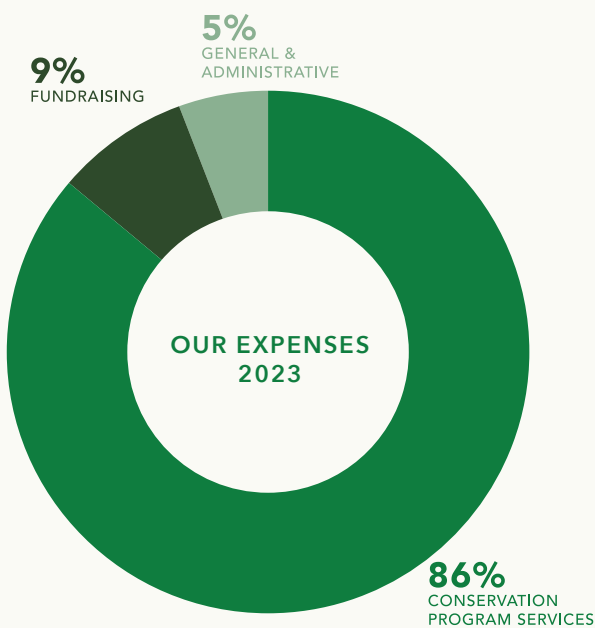
## Statement of Financial Position

ASSETS 2023	
Cash & Cash Equivalents	7,271,701
Pledges & Grants Receivable	1,096,805
Prepaid expenses and deposits	9,498
Property and Equipment	
- Land (Conservation)	3,323,721
- Buildings & improvements (Net of Depreciation)	159,506
- Vehicles (Net of Depreciation)	265,033
- Furniture & equipment (Net of Depreciation)	4,908
Operating lease right-of-use asset	24,309
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$12,155,481</b>
LIABILITIES	
Accounts Payable	197,055
Payroll Related Liabilities	514,251
Deferred Revenues	2,237,343
Operating Lease Liabilities	24,313
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$2,972,962</b>
NET ASSETS	
Without Donor Restrictions	6,215,880
With Donor Restrictions	2,966,639
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$9,182,519</b>
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>\$12,155,481</b>



## Statement of Activities

REVENUE & SUPPORT 2023	
Grants & Contributions	
- Contributions	2,408,061
- Grants	4,934,740
Fees & other	399,912
<b>Total Revenue &amp; Support</b>	<b>\$7,742,713</b>
EXPENSES	
Conservation Program Services:	
Ecuador	2,950,247
Peru	2,901,686
Mexico	324,620
Bolivia	162,500
Colombia	329,240
USA	173,737
Fundraising	691,286
General & Administrative	448,008
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$7,981,324</b>
NET CHANGE	
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$(238,611)</b>
Net Assets Beginning of Year	9,421,130
Net Assets End of Year	9,182,519



# EFFICIENCY & TRANSPARENCY

## Collaborating Efficiently

As trusted neighbors and dedicated partners, Nature and Culture’s staff work strategically with local communities to ensure the longevity of the protected areas we create together.

## Working Locally



86% of your dollars are going directly to programmatic costs and the other 14% are funding the tools, time, talent, and tenacity needed to make our strongest impact.

## Advancing Conservation Sustainably

Nature and Culture is immensely grateful for the generous support provided by both our individual and institutional donors. Ethical, transparent, and efficient stewardship of the financial resources they entrust to us is paramount. This commitment enables us to remain agile as an organization and amplify our impact amidst the challenges posed by a rapidly changing climate.

## Reporting Transparently

Nature and Culture International is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization EIN: 33-0773524 and is proudly featured as a top Highly Rated Environmental Nonprofit and 4-star charity by Charity Navigator. Nature and Culture is also a Platinum Level organization according to Candid® (formerly Guidestar), a top-rated nonprofit with Great Nonprofits, and is registered nationwide as a licensed United States charitable solicitor.

As part of our commitment to transparency, an Executive Director compensation review was completed in 2023 by financial consultant Iyin Battle. Thank you, Iyin for sharing your insights and expertise.

Nature and Culture International’s financial records are audited annually by an independent CPA. Financials for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2023 were unaudited at the time of this report. Past years’ full and audited financials are available at natureandculture.org. To receive Nature and Culture’s audited financials when they become available, contact hello@natureandculture.org.



# A LETTER FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

Since 1996, NCI has worked with legacy-minded donors to preserve nature’s most valuable landscapes. These extensive tracts of biodiverse lands teem with life, and their preservation is vital to the natural functioning of Earth’s ecosystem and climate system.

Our proven approach leverages boots-on-the-ground community organization, scientific expertise, legal acumen, and policy know-how to create broad governmental will, which leads to protected areas the size of some US states – all in the heart of the world’s greatest biodiversity – the countries of the Andes and the Amazon.

As caring stewards of our planet’s precious ecosystems, you hold a unique and vital role in shaping the future of our world. Your commitment to conservation reflects a profound understanding of the interconnectedness of all living things and the delicate balance that sustains our planet. You are not just a donor. You are a champion of biodiversity, defender of endangered species, and architect of a sustainable future.

By investing in NCI’s conservation initiatives at ecosystem scale, you wield the power to make a lasting impact on nature. That impact can last for millions of years. And that’s because your contributions enable the preservation of critical habitats and the protection of species



Sangay Nat. Park,  
Ecuador

on the brink of extinction. Your investment is not merely a monetary transaction; it is a lifeline. Through your generosity, you become a catalyst for change, pivotal in ensuring that future generations inherit a world teeming with diverse and thriving life.

The results speak for themselves: 23 traditional and Indigenous populations oversee 26 million acres with 3.9 billion tons of avoided CO2 emissions. This is NCI’s network of preserved lands, now larger than Massachusetts, Delaware, Vermont, New Hampshire, and New Jersey combined. Now that’s a legacy!

With Gratitude,



*Charles J. Smith*  
**Charles J. Smith**  
Board Chairman

# LOOKING FORWARD

As critical forest ecosystems are threatened more every day, Nature and Culture is committed to protecting large landscapes alongside our local and Indigenous partners. Our mission to preserve both nature and culture is more important than ever, and your support ensures these connected ecosystems are conserved for the long term. Explore more [on our site!](#)

## Bolivia

Alongside our conservation partners Nativa, we are expanding the recently declared Laderas del Norte municipal protected area to preserve even more critical condor and white quebracho ecosystems. Continue to fund our work as we protect threatened species.

## Amazonian Platform Expansion

Our teams are hard at work to expand the Amazonian Platform project into two additional Ecuadorian provinces, taking the total Platform from 11-million-acres to 14-million-acres of continuous, pristine Amazonian rainforest. Give today to preserve even more of “the lungs of the Earth.”

## Andean Corridor

Spanning 236 miles and two countries, the Andean Corridor project will protect a global hotspot that contains about one-sixth of all plant life in the world and an enormous diversity of amphibian, bird, and mammal species, including the Spectacled bear. Be a part of the historic, bi-national corridor that supports millions of critical species.



Majuna river-front house,  
Peruvian Amazon

## Water Protection Areas

Nature and Culture is committed to protecting nature’s most precious resource at the source, ensuring communities have access to clean drinking water and are benefitting from their conservation efforts. Support Nature and Culture and protect potable water for all.

## Colombia 2024 Biodiversity Conference

We hope to continue to share the knowledge of local and Indigenous voices on a global scale by supporting our partners’ participation in this global event – especially in relation to the global UN goals of 30x30. Your gift ensures Indigenous conservationists are included in these global conferences.



# WAYS TO GIVE

## CASH GIFTS

Make a one-time or recurring gift online, or mail a check to Nature and Culture International's U.S. office at 1400 Maiden Lane, Del Mar, CA 92014.

## RETIREMENT PLAN GIFTS

Make a gift from your required minimum distributions (RMD) and reduce your taxable income.

## PLANNED GIFTS

Name Nature and Culture International as a beneficiary of your will or trust. You can also name Nature and Culture as a beneficiary of your Qualified Retirement Plan, life insurance policy, donor-advised fund, or brokerage account. By making a planned or estate gift, you will create a lasting legacy while helping to ensure the conservation of threatened ecosystems and Indigenous cultures for generations to come. If you are planning to include Nature and Culture in your estate plans, please let our Director of Individual Giving know so we can celebrate your legacy gift in life. If you are in the process of writing your will, please feel free to use the sample bequest language provided below.

### Suggested Bequest Language

"I give and bequeath to Nature and Culture International (EIN: 33-077324), a non-profit corporation based in California and focused on tropical ecosystem conservation, the sum of \$\_\_\_ to be used to support the general needs of the organization."

## STOCK GIFTS

One of the best ways to both support Nature and Culture and eliminate capital gains tax is through gifts of appreciated securities.

A gift of stock allows you to make a big impact while employing prudent tax strategies by both receiving a charitable tax deduction and reducing your taxable income. [Please contact us for DTC instructions.](#)

## DONOR ADVISED FUND OR CHARITABLE TRUST GIFTS

You can provide for yourself or a loved one during your lifetime, creating significant tax deductions, all while providing critical resources to Nature and Culture. [Please contact us for wire transfer information.](#)

Deciding what vehicle to use will depend on your personal needs and financial objectives. These include charitable remainder unitrusts and charitable remainder annuity trusts as well as charitable lead trusts and charitable gift annuities. Please consult your financial adviser about the appropriateness of these planning tools.



For more information on giving opportunities, contact Laura Meagher, Director of Individual Giving, at (858) 259-0374 or lmeagher@natureandculture.org.

# OUR CORE CONTRIBUTORS

## INSTITUTIONAL DONORS + PARTNERS

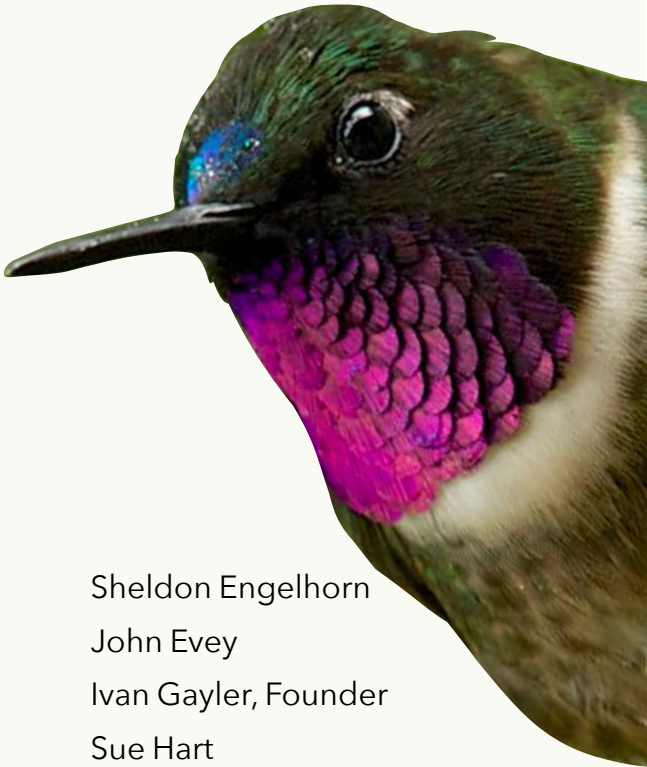
Acting for Life  
Agence Francaise de Developpment (AFD)  
Andes Amazon Fund  
Bos+  
Condesan  
Conservation International  
Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund  
DFG, German Research Foundation  
Earth Innovation Institute  
Fondo Italo Ecuatoriano  
Foundation Franklinia  
Fundación Ecociencia  
Futures Unbound  
Gaia Amazonas  
Global Greengrants Fund  
Join for Water  
Natura International  
Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative

Norwegian Agency for Development Corporation (NORAD)  
Partnership for Forests  
Plan Binacional  
Protos  
Rainforest Trust  
Re:wild  
Rotary Foundation  
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Weeden Foundation  
World Land Trust

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[www.natureandculture.org](http://www.natureandculture.org)