



WWF Colombia

# in the field

Colombia, February-April 2010 **No. 10**

## Malaga Bay: Land of promise or protection

Yaigojé Apaporis- One million hectares  
protected in the Colombian Amazon

A vote to save Colombian forests





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WWF's symbolic protest outside the COP15, Copenhagen, Denmark.

# An outstanding debt

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The first year of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century started with the planet still waiting for humanity to pay its debt – to meet its obligations and reduce the impact of climate change for future generations.

As each day passes, the interest on this debt racks up and it becomes ever more impossible to pay. Not only does the debt seem unmanageable, but there's little political will to change the way the world economy has operated over the past 50 years.

The world leaders conscious of the problems (some more than others) met at the end of 2009 to reach a binding agreement in the negotiations over climate change in Copenhagen. While for some it was frustrating, others saw it as a start of an important process in changing global habits to reduce greenhouse gases so temperatures don't rise by more than 2 degrees Celsius.

It's true that the "Copenhagen agreement" didn't match expectations of a deal that would be fair, ambi-

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tions and binding, exactly the type of accord demanded by millions of people around the world.

But it's undeniable that now, more than ever, the issue of climate change is forefront on people's minds given that it touches us all.

A number of different issues discussed at Copenhagen have a direct bearing on Latin America. In particular, the issue of adaptation; the reduction of Emissions by Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) and the need for economies to lower their carbon outputs through the use of efficient and renewable energies.

The future is uncertain; we know that the period of negotiation has been extended, but it must be remembered that the Kyoto Protocol will expire in 2012, making another agreement all the more urgent. WWF recognizes that having 192 world leaders meet in the Copenhagen conference and not come to an important agreement is a waste of a terrific opportunity.

However, the fact that the COP 16 will be in Mexico represents a great chance for WWF and other countries across the region. It's true that Latin America is only beginning to have a presence in the interna-

tional negotiations over climate change, but the COP 16 is a perfect meeting point to deepen the ongoing dialogue between civil society and governments, and so encourage more concrete proposals.

Not all is lost, there is now a social awareness with which to build a fairer model of development and so start fulfilling our obligations to the planet.

What is undeniable is that concern for the welfare of the planet will be more common in the years to come than it has been for the past 50 years.



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▲ Coastal road erosion in San Andres Island, Colombia. Beach erosion may be due to sea-level rise, a consequence of climate change.

The fact that the COP 16 will be in Mexico represents a great chance for WWF and other countries across the region.

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More than 20 years ago, the whales were the hosts of Malaga Bay. In 2020 it's possible that they will cease to be. Conditions have put this sanctuary for whales in the aim of a hurricane of business interests and politics that could lead to irreversible environmental damage.

Twenty years ago, the inhabitants of Malaga Bay didn't have to sail too far out to easily see the snorts from the whales. The song of these animals wasn't foreign to their ears; a long series of sounds that, experts say, if they could be translated would flow as easily as a Colombian folk song.

The old folks say that 20 years ago, these massive beasts swam so close to the shore that from the beach you could see them raise their tails above the water like some ancestral wave. Since time immemorial, the whales have chosen this corner of the Colombian Pacific coast as a sanctuary to preserve their species. The animals arrive every July and for four months these waters turn in to a carnival of songs, jumps, fluttering of fins and snorts, a welcome to life for the newly born whales.

About two decades ago, say the locals, there was no naval base and the rumor that the country was going to open up to the world economy using these waters was just that – a rumor. But with the construction of a military complex and the increase in the traffic of boats moving along the Colombian coast, the ancestral wave of the whales is ever more distant. And those rumors of progress grow ever more possible.

Twenty years ago, the waters of Malaga Bay belonged to the whales. In 2020, it's possible they'll no longer be welcome here. Then, the only snort to be heard will be from the boats that come from other lands, and as has been said, will bring progress to the country.

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## Malaga Bay: Land of promise or protection

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### Rumors of Progress

Since the last century, Malaga Bay has been attractive not only for its natural riches, but also for its strategic position on the Colombian Pacific. This region, in the province of Valle del Cauca, traditionally has been presented as the country's most important access to the trade routes of the world, an open door to the markets of the East and a corridor linking with neighboring countries. With these arguments, the government declared the Malaga Bay an area of public interest.





Why a port? One of the principal points in Malaga's favor is the depth of its channel, especially important given the global tendency for using ever-larger boats. At the beginning of the 1990s, a fear of future congestion at the Buenaventura port was further impetus for supporters of building a port in Malaga Bay.

And finally, the government has proposed this port with an eye to constructing a port to receive ships that have passed through the Panama Canal.

All of these factors have put this whale sanctuary in the eye of a hurricane of corporate and political interests that could bring irreversible environmental damage. From the beginning of the 1990s a to and fro between governors, environmental experts and local communities have been the hallmark of the proposed Port of Malaga Bay.

In 1992, the company Hidroestudios-TAMS considered Malaga as a possible "Plan B" due to the immediate necessity of expanding port facilities in this zone of the country. The Buenaventura port was opened in 1920 to great fanfare, but since the

1980s experts have warned that the port would one day run out of space.

To the dismay of many, the study carried out by Hidroestudios was not encouraging: the study decided that Malaga was not a good option for a possible port given the high seismic activity, how vulnerable the surrounding environment was and the high costs construction would require.

Since then and for more than a decade, government studies regarding a new port always favored other alternatives over Malaga Bay. In 1998, for example, the Preliminary Master Plan for Port Expansion in the Pacific suggested Malaga Bay as an alternative in the long-term, meaning in 2020. The report recommended expanding Buenaventura in the short term. For the medium term, it suggested the construction of the Tribuga Port in the province of Chocó.

A year after the publication of this report, the Port and Environment Plan of Colombian Seaboards emphasized Malaga Bay as a unique ecosystem home to baby whales, vulnerable swamplands and rainforests.

But history took an unexpected turn. In 2005, guidelines issued by the government (CONPES) re-examined the idea of developing the port in Malaga Bay, ignoring the recommendations of a decade's worth of studies that highlighted the bay's environmental richness. Document 3342, Plan for the Expansion of the Port System 2005-2006, stressed the need to improve the Colombian port system as the country negotiated trade agreements with other countries. Malaga quickly went from being a prized environmental treasure to something that could boost trade

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Since the 1990s, a tug of war between governors, environmentalists, and the communities that live there have marked the history of Malaga Bay port.

In 2005 the government issued guidelines, Conpes, which supported a proposed port in Malaga Bay ignoring the recommendations of the technical studies that highlighted the environmental restrictions of the area.

with other countries. The CONPES guidelines ordered more “studies for a port in the deep waters of Malaga and to urgently establish the needed investment for its development.”

The transport ministry was placed in charge of overseeing the study. In August of that same year, the Society of Supporters of the Port in Malaga Bay was created. The board of directors of this society was made up of minister of transport, the Commander of the Navy, the governor of the province of Valle del Cauca and four local businessmen.

In February 2007, the Spanish-Colombian consortium Sener-Incoplan was ordered to carry out a feasibility study after the Society of Supporters agreed to fund the report. Sener-Incoplan’s mission was to review the viability of a port in Malaga Bay in terms of finance, trade and the environment. The study was finished in July 2008 and concluded that the mega project was economically unviable in the short term.

### The Whales’ birthing ground

Those who live in Malaga Bay have learnt to read nature and the signs she sends. In the old days they used to fish for catfish; now it is in danger of extinction. They didn’t need to sail too far out to sea to catch perch.

Absalon Valencia sits in his chair on his porch and remembers a time when “not everything was all about money.”

Absalon is 57 years old and lives in La Plata, a hamlet of around 53 wooden houses that relies on an electric generator but lacks running water. Luis Carlos Hinojosa is on La Plata’s communal council (this council was one of the first in the

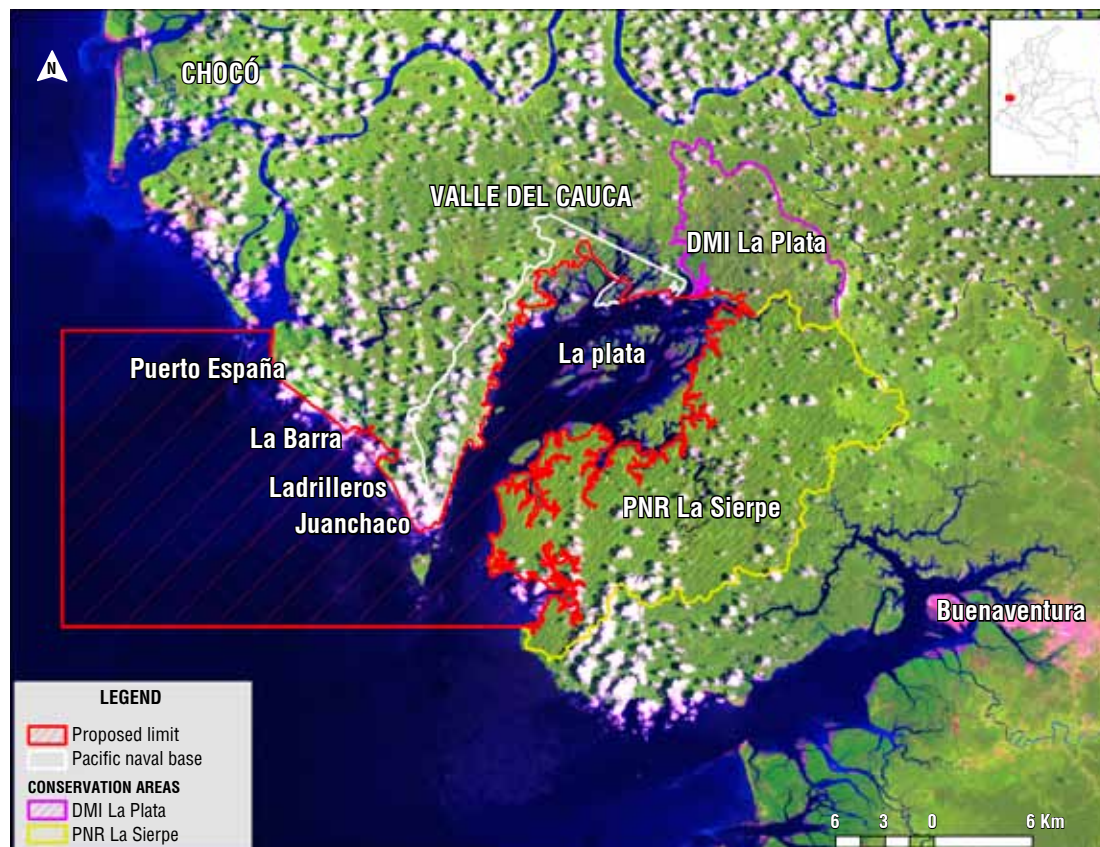
zone to create a Plan for Ethnic and Territorial Welfare establishing areas of sustainable use and the protection and conservation of natural resources). This was one of the first steps in the long crusade of the inhabitants of this region has started to defend their natural paradise.

According to Hinojosa: “Malaga Bay is a place that has integrated ecosystems, seven types of swamplands and beaches that are white, grey and black.” But this region that the whales choose as their birthing grounds – it has the highest birth rate of humpback whales in the world – has a tremendous environmental value. In natural riches, it has 60 amphibious species, 148 species of saltwater and freshwater fish, 25 species of sea and beach birds, 141 species of mollusks and 99 species of crustacean. There are also swamps, 400 species of trees and a great variety of flora.

All these elements combine to make the views of Malaga Bay breathtaking. Here live more than 3,500 Afro-Colombian and indigenous inhabitants who add an additional element – cultural richness. There are various different councils to represent the different towns, including La Plata, Espana-Miramar, Juanchaco, La Barra and Ladrilleros.

These councils have been crucial in the process of trying to make Malaga Bay a national park, the best chance of protecting this **zone** from the business interests that seek to make the zone a marine port. The communal councils, supported by the Colombian National Parks office and civil society groups like WWF, started a long process to get the territory declared a park. Over the years, a plan of action has evolved, including

The environmental richness of Malaga Bay is reason enough to oppose the construction of a port there, the proposed project itself is not coherent; it's not feasible and it's not necessary.



arguments for why the land should be preserved and what the limits of the protected land should be (a task which has been carried out with the support of local fisherman who know this coastline like the back of their hands).

It was after they finalized their most concise proposal for their territory in 2009 that the inhabitants of Malaga Bay decided to establish a strategy to conserve their territory. Twenty years had passed since 1989 when the Institute for the Development of Renewable Natural Resources (Inderena) and the Office of Planning of the Province of Valle del Cauca first proposed the creation of a national park to be called Wounaan.

### Lost Battles

The story appeared to be heading for a happy end until the first half

of last year when the governor of Valle del Cauca, Juan Carlos Abadía, ordered the new director of the Autonomous Regional Corporation of Valle del Cauca to reverse previous rulings that could have restricted the construction of a port in the area.

The governor's order caused concern among environmental experts.

On June 10, the director of the regional office of the National Association of Industrialists (ANDI), Rodrigo Velasco Lloreda, sent a letter to the minister of environment detailing business' interests in a deepwater port in Malaga Bay. In an effort to convince the minister, Velasco cited a study that said "that Malaga Bay Port should be opened at the latest by 2020 because it is estimated by 2025 Buenaventura Port will be unable to cope with the projected traffic."



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The reflections about this issue conclude that more than building a new port; the investment should be used to expand the port of Buenaventura.

Following on, the letter went on to state in strong terms: “For all the above reasons we ask you not to declare Malaga Bay a protected area and wildlife reserve and we invite you to work with the Ministry of Transport, the governor of the province of Valle del Cauca and private businessmen to push this project forward which is so vital for the future of Colombia.”

It was a strange that Velasco should invoke the minister of transport’s support for the proposed port. In August 2008, the minister of transport sent a letter to Julia Miranda, director of National Parks in Colombia. In the letter, Andres Uriel Gallego sought to assure her that the ministry considered: “Malaga Bay is a treasure in terms of bio-diversity and for this reason it is unlikely that any port will be built in this area.”

Velasco’s letter wasn’t the only one the Minister of Environment received. In September, Julian Dominguez Rivera, president of the Cali Chamber of Commerce, also requested the suspension of any declaration of Malaga Bay as a national park. During a business meeting organized by the ministry of trade in Cali over August 24 and 25, Dominguez warned of the urgent need to “approve the creation of a Malaga Bay port that meets all environmental requirements”. Dominguez reminded his audience that the port would create jobs, thereby helping the national policies of President Alvaro Uribe.

### The fallacies of Progress

The environmental richness of Malaga Bay should be enough to prevent the massive infrastructure a port would need. Analyses on the proposed port conclude that instead of building a new port, the invest-



© Luca Zanetti

ment should be used to expand the port of Buenaventura. In 2007, the ministry of transport updated its studies – ratifying that the port should stay in Buenaventura and underscoring the environmental guidelines in Malaga Bay.

Recent government guidelines prioritize specific investments for Buenaventura aimed at improving the port’s efficiency and competitiveness. The report suggests investment in dredging the access canal, the construction of a two-lane highway connecting Bogota and Buenaventura, the outer harbor of Buenaventura. An international cargo airport is also being considered, something that would greatly amplify Buenaventura’s infrastructure and capacity.

Ports in Colombia’s neighbors of Peru, Panama and Ecuador are being expanded. Any port in Malaga would have to compete with these other ports that have been operating for decades, said Juan Carlos Espinosa, Sector Policy Officer for WWF in Colombia.

The idea of the Malaga Bay port would push to one side all the massive investment – and environmental damage - that for years has occurred in Buenaventura. On the other hand, if the project in Malaga goes ahead, they will need to build a new



highway between Buenaventura and Malaga Bay to transport heavy cargo, said Espinosa.

Given the large amounts of investment already made in Buenaventura over the decades, it makes little sense to spend scarce resources on the construction of a completely new port.

In spite of the advances made by those interested in turning Malaga Bay in to a port, the work of the National Parks Office, Yubarta Foundation and WWF have managed to slow down this initiative. Colombia's national ombudsman gave his complete support for this work in a statement sent to the ministry of environment last October.

In the letter, the ombudsman invoked Colombia's political constitution, in particular articles 63 and 79, as the basis for declaring Malaga Bay as a national park. The letter also emphasized the need for a general debate about the need to establish a model for global compensation for protected areas and environmental services. The final decision is now in the hands of the ministry of environment.

The ministry must understand that sustainable development requires a balance between the conservation of protected land, social equality and the development of economically productive activities. For that reason, it is important to analyze the

proposal for the development of the port in Malaga Bay within the framework of the Environmental Unit for the Oceans and Coast of the Malaga Bay-Buenaventura Complex. Inside this unit is found the strategic zone of the port's development in Buenaventura but also it's proposed an area of conservation and sustainable productive activity in Malaga Bay, important for the Afro-Colombian communities and for the sustainable development for the region.

The ombudsman's statement was clear: article 63 of the constitution establishes that "the natural parks are inalienable. The zones that are declared inside the system should have exceptional values for the national patrimony, that is, it should be in the national interest to preserve the area." This same argument was made by the communal councils in their unanimous decision to support turning the zone in to a natural park.

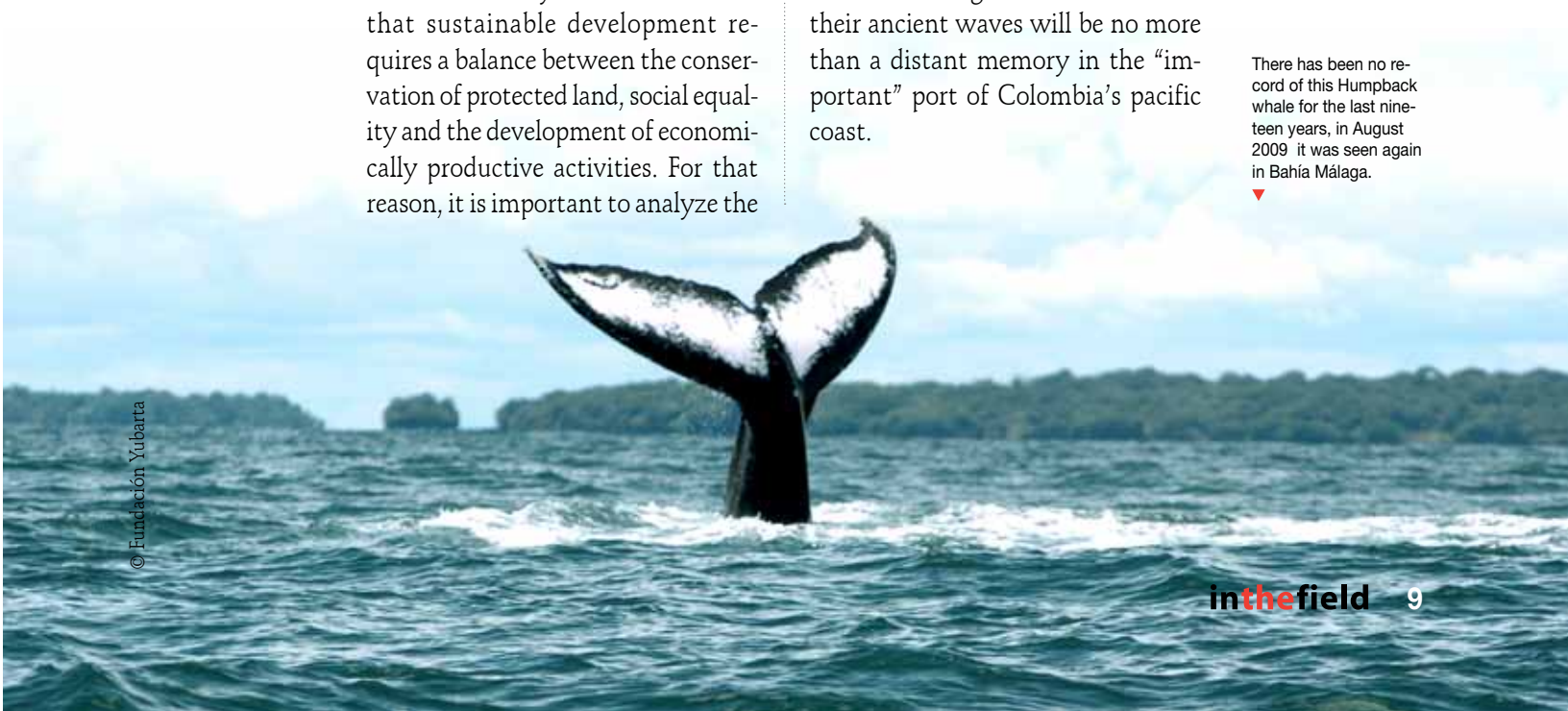
They know that if these "rumors of progress" become concrete realities, many things will change: "the traditional practices will be in danger", warns Absalon, sitting in the corridor of his house. And without doubt the song of the whales and their ancient waves will be no more than a distant memory in the "important" port of Colombia's pacific coast.

**Article 63 of the constitution establishes that the "natural parks are inalienable."**

There has been no record of this Humpback whale for the last nineteen years, in August 2009 it was seen again in Bahía Málaga.



**The communal councils, the National Parks office of Colombia and the WWF started a long process to get the area declared a natural park.**





▲  
The newly-protected area shelters and preserves the customs of 8 indigenous communities (around 5,000 people), the Macuna, Tanimuka, Letuama, Cabiari, Barazano, Yujup Maku and Yuana.

# Yaigojé Apaporis - One million hectares protected in the Colombian Amazon

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On the border of Colombia and Brazil, in the province of Vaupes, the indigenous communities are believers in the Yurupary – a mythical being with the power to take on the form and the essence of everything. For the people who live in these jungles, every element in nature is a sacred site that can be used in rituals to cure the planet. It's here “in the center of the universe” where the indigenous people of Apaporis have declared the National Natural Park of Yaigojé-Apaporis, which spans a million hectares.

In these million hectares - almost 2 percent of the whole Colombian Amazon – are protected forests, plants, animals, rivers and ravines. As well as the immense natural riches, this park also preserves the cultural origins of these indigenous communities. The park is a guide to their history, these present and more importantly their future.

It is not the first time Colombia has tried to harmonize social development with the land and nature. But in this case, the limits of the park were defined according to both natural characteristics and social and cultural values of the 1,500 people who live here. The Amazon indigenous communities that inhabit this region are the Macuna, Tanimuka, Letuama, Cabiari, Barazano, Yujup Maku and the Yauna.



The boundaries of such a park can bring positive consequences by strengthening the indigenous management of their own land, integrating the ancestral indigenous knowledge with the environment. With the land protected, the indigenous communities can avoid the pressures of mining and unsustainable exploitation of resources and guarantee the needed space for their cultural and productive practices that form part of their vision of the world.

### **Apaporis: medicine and knowledge for the whole.**

This new area will significantly contribute to the preservation of the region's biological diversity. Scientists of the Natural Science Institute and the Institute for Amazon Studies in Colombia have studied the fauna and flora, revealing a wildlife and fauna that is rare and of high value to the world's natural heritage.

Among the seven different types of ecosystems in the Amazon rainforest are at least 1683 species of plants and similar number of animal species, including birds (362), fishes (201), butterflies (400) and amphibians and

reptiles (152), many of which are in danger of extinction.

The study and classification of these species leads to a better understanding of the ecosystem, generating benefits for the local communities, such as guaranteeing food security.

Yaigoje-Apaporis is an ambitious project that aims to foster a harmonious relationship between these societies and the Amazon rainforests where they live.

### **Treasures beneath the earth; for some a fortune, for others only misery**

In these vast and stunning lands, commercial interests have appeared that challenge nature's order. Some mining projects have been proposed which potentially could cause massive environmental damage and endanger local indigenous communities. Luckily, the people of Yurupary detected these serious threats in time.

A conservation effort of this size poses a big challenge and requires extensive planning. In the case of Yaigoje-Apaporis this planning is being developed jointly between the indigenous authorities and the

**Yaigoje Apaporis is Colombia's 55th national park. It is also the country's second-largest park.**

For many indigenous communities that live in the Andes and the Amazon the coca leaf is sacred.



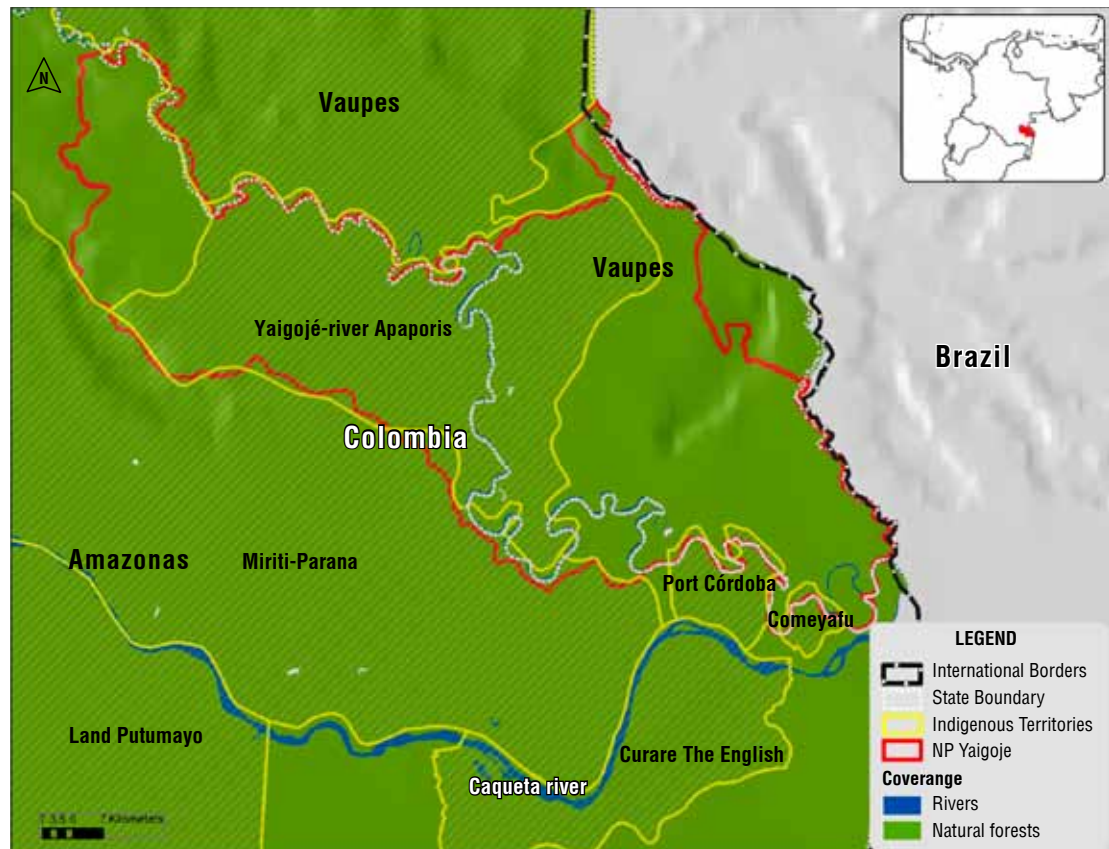
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Yaigoje is the beginning of the path of the Anacondas that runs through the Amazon basin.

In the area there have been reported almost 1,700 species of plants and more than 700 species of fauna, of which 12 are new to science.



National Parks Office of Colombia. The strategy is based on three clear objectives: the continuance of the indigenous' own values of preserving the environment and their own traditional use and management of the protected area; helping connect the ecosystems of the basins of the rivers Caqueta and Negro; and strengthening the "System of Sacred Sites" and rituals associated with the management and use of the territory.

"Meeting these objectives will mean for the indigenous peoples and their governors a chance to protect their ancestral territory. For the institutions and organizations such as WWF this is a chance to shape concepts around the issues of conservation and biological diversity. In both cases, there is clear need for joint work," said Luis German Na-

ranjo, Director of Conservation for WWF in Colombia.

"Traditional doctors say that the Yaigoge-Apaporis land is filled with the knowledge and the medicine needed to save the world. The unsustainable exploitation of resources in the Amazona, exploitation that tramples over indigenous cultural traditions, must be stopped. We knew that it was necessary to protect this territory and it wasn't going to be possible to do it alone, so for this reason we asked the Natural Park office to make this declaration. Our immediate challenge is to develop a joint protection strategy for the park," said Gerardo Macuna Mirna, Secretary of the Environment and Territory for the ACIYA (Indigenous Chiefs' Association in Yaigoge-Apaporis).





Even though it's been 22 years, Tiberio Giraldo clearly remembers that morning. The wind still carried the chill from the night before but despite the cold, Tiberio left the warmth of his bed. The previous day, he and his neighbors were witness to a pioneering experiment in this settlement: the bio-digester.

For hours, experts and curious spectators inflated a plastic tube and put in all their organic waste on the promise that in 40 days, a flame of gas would arrive to Giraldo's kitchen.

It was three in the morning when Tiberio walked over to the new machine. "I was very sad when I saw it completely deflated," he remembers. In those days, there were no cellphones and the experts hadn't left any way to contact them in case their help was needed. "I'm not well-educated, but I'm a good observer. So I went and bought a tube and I sealed the bio-digester where it was leaking air and inflated it again." When the

## Sharing the experiences of sustainable farming along the Andes

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experts returned, the bio-digester was working fine.

That morning was a milestone in the life of Tiberio marking as it did the origin of El Cipres Natural Reserve, near the town of El Dovio in the province of Valle del Cauca. There arrived 37 small farmers and community leaders of the Cordillera





© WWF Colombia

Real Oriental (Royal Eastern Mountain) range to learn and share their experiences of conservation, sustainable agriculture and livestock rearing and community organizing.

The Cipres was one of the first stops on this tour through the coffee-growing region (Armenia and Cordoba) and the northern part of the province of Valle Del Cauca (Versalles, El Dovio, El Cairo, Cartago and Alcala) between July 13<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of 2009. Taking part in the tour were Colombians, Ecuadorians, Peruvians, community leaders and organizations of those who live along the eastern mountain range and belong to the project Landscape Alive, led by WWF in Colombia and Peru, Natura Foundation in Ecuador and financed by the European Union.

### Legacy

Camilo Giraldo Giraldo has a calf, a brood of suckling pigs and a forest with his name. This young man, still in the ninth grade, is the son of Tiberio and even though he doesn't speak as fluently as his father, he has inherited the commitment to look after the region where he spent his child-

hood. He is one of the 28 Inheritors of the Planet - a program promoting conservation lead by young people - of the Bellavista settlement, and he says that in ten years he'd like to be active in the conservation programs his father started two decades ago. So his inheritance is not only to look after the El Cipres Reserve but also to continue the teachings of his master.

Camilo's story was eagerly listened to by those on the tour, keen to learn the locals' experiences and try them out back home.

The mountain range starts in Colombia and runs down to Huanacabamba in northern Peru, spanning more than nine million hectares and running alongside the Amazon basin.

The constant tussle of the dense fog and the strong winds of hot air that come from the Amazon plain produces water that feeds the mountain range's snowcaps of Cotopaxi, Cayambe and Chimborazo. From here flow the massive rivers of the Caqueta, Putumayo, Pastaza, Napo, Ucayali, Santiago and Chinchipe. At least 140 species of amphibians, 1,145 birds, 7,000 vascular plants, and more than 250 mammals live along the

Thirty-seven small farmers and leaders from the Cordillera Real Oriental range passed through the Coffee Region for one week to learn about local experiences in conservation, sustainable agricultural production and community leadership.

South American ►  
Infrastructure  
Integration map





**The Cordillera Real Oriental stretches from Colombia to northern Peru. Contained within it are more than 21 bio-geographic regions and 30 types of eco-systems.**

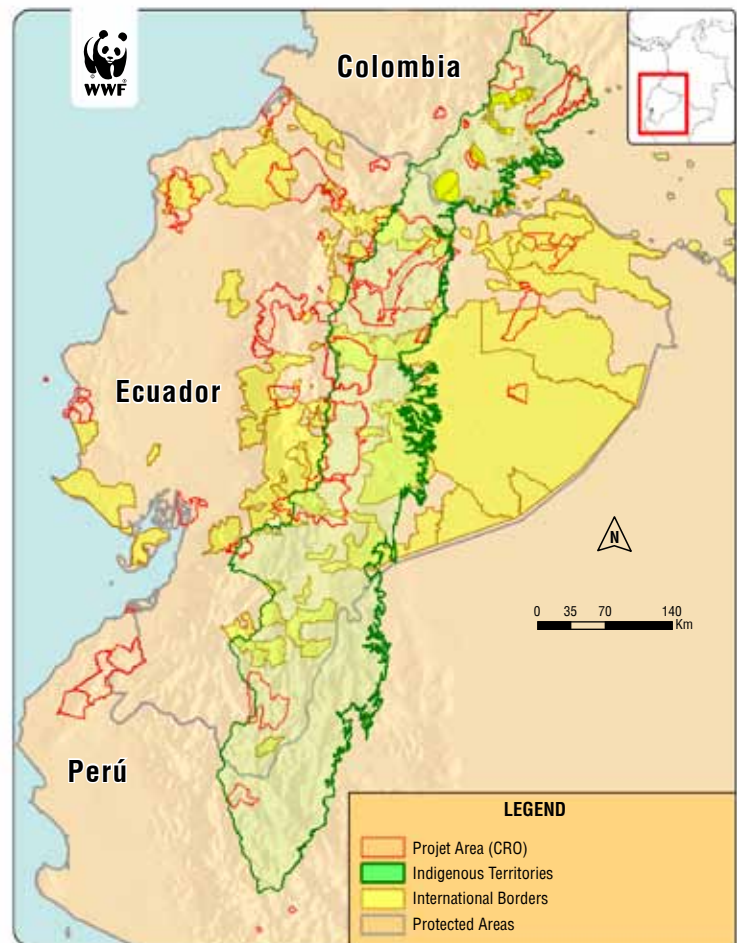
mountain range where these biological elements coincide along the flat lands of the Pacific Coast, the Andean mountains and the Amazon flat lands.

Various infrastructure projects have been drafted for different points along this mountain range. Twelve South American Presidents came together in Brasilia in 2000 and discussed the Regional Integration of South American Infrastructure (IIRSA), including the Andean Axis which will connect the Pan-American Highway with the Marginal Forest highway that runs through the mountain range, joining Ecuador, Colombia and Peru.

The other proposed highway will pass through a part of the Amazon, connecting the three ports of Tumaco in Colombia, Esmeraldas in Ecuador and Peru's Paita – from each of these three ports, there is access to dozens of other smaller ports that dot the 6,000 kilometers of rivers in this region.

### Conservation Route

In the Cordillera Real Oriental range there are 21 biogeographic regions and 30 different types of ecosystems. While indigenous communities have made this territory their home for the past 3,000 years, about 60 years ago colonizers from other parts of the country arrived seeing potential in these lands and climate. It was at that moment that began the advance of the agricultural and cattle industries that continues to threaten deforestation.



According to Ilvia Niño, officer of the Amazon Piedmont program for WWF in Colombia, the coffee region is a good example of conservation, while in the Andean Amazon Piedmont the process is just beginning. One of the strategies to slow the annihilation of natural and cultural riches in the Cordillera Real Oriental range – product of the colonization and expansion of the agricultural border – is the capacity building of 74 leaders of the region, members of the school for conservation of the Andean Amazon Piedmont where they have learned about politics, communication, pressures and threats to their territory as well as sustainable alternative farming.

The tour along the coffee region offered a unique opportunity for



**The boom in organic coffee proved it was not only environmentally sound but also a profitable business.**

participants from the three countries to meet and share experiences, a key component of this strategy.

Dignori Soto, owner of the Oasis Reserve, told her history. Dignori's land, now covered with coffee bushes and their red berries, was shaken ten years ago by the earthquake in the coffee region.

This woman has proved herself an important local figure, bringing her neighbors together to preserve the traditional coffee industry. By opposing the use of certain chemicals and refusing to plant only the type of seeds demanded by the National Coffee Federation, these coffee-farmers received no help. However, the boom in organic coffee showed that their decision was not only a benefit to the environment, but also a lucrative business.

Today, they are certified and possess 64 hectares of forests, coffee, plantain, and various other products that feed their own families.

The Association of Educational Centers of Garrapatas River (Acerg) was another experience shared during the tour. Since 1995, various education institutions of the municipality of El Dovio have run a network of rural schools. Since then, its Environmental Project has been a plan of action to encourage students in sustainable agricultural production. In its classrooms, the discussions and teachings revolve around traditional methods of agriculture and the improvement of farming techniques that don't harm the surrounding environment.

The teachers also have another challenge: to make sure the children don't fall in to the claws of the war or in to the cocaine business.

These small farmers tell their



stories in simple language, but when they talk they are listened to attentively. They have the same power to explain that Tiberio does, who told his tale of that fateful morning and the bio-digester's success, the morning when he finally understood: "if you want it, you can do it".

With this certainty, he turned 12 of his hectares in to a natural reserve, a model of environmental care and sustainable agricultural production.

The words of Tiberio and the others are now lessons learnt by the leaders of the Cordillera Real Oriental range. Even though the conditions back home are different from those discussed in the tour, the participants now have a base from which "to investigate and adjust to fit the teachings for each community", said one of the listeners. Finally, the participants agreed on the importance of leadership, the support of outside institutions and the environmental education of children for these projects' future.

It's in these summits in the mountains where the hope and experience remain that can save one of the planet's vital arteries.

Almost 13 million hectares of natural forests are lost each year across the world as a result of the illegal traffic in wood. In the Bolivia and the Brazilian Amazon, 80% of the exploitation of the forests is carried out illegally. In Colombia, it is around 40%.

**T**he Colombian Government together with 24 public and private sector organizations, civil society representatives and consumers, signed a Pact For Legal timber in Colombia.

Colombia is a land dominated by forest ecosystems. Colombia's tremendous biological diversity, its strategic location and its variety of different climates make the country a strong potential in the market of forest-derived products.

Colombia still retains a significant portion of its original forest cover; approximately 50% (55 million hectares) of the national territory (114 million hectares) is covered by natural forest, half of which is found within ethnic territories primarily in the Chocó-Darién Ecoregion and the Amazon basin. It is in these territories where the problems of illegal timber trade are concentrated. Illegal timber exploitation and trade generates negative environmental and socio-economic impacts, affecting both the performance of the sector and its contribution to national GDP, as well as security, well-being and livelihoods of local communities.

The signing of *A Pact for Legal Timber in Colombia* on August 21st in Bogota will enhance forest management and conservation in Colombia, home to 6% of the world's forests.

WWF estimates that between 16% and 19% (or between 26.5 million square meters and 31 million square meters) of the wood imported by the European Union comes from illegal logging.



## A vote to save Colombian forests

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In a joint effort led by the Colombian Ministry of Environment, the Regional Environmental Authority of the Province of Risaralda (CARDER), the National Timber Industry Federation (Fedemaderas) and WWF Colombia, twenty-four organizations made an unprecedented commitment to put an end to illegal timber trade, implement a national policy to promote legal timber and improve forest governance in Colombia.

Globally, illegal logging represents between 20-40% of timber production and trade; similar numbers apply in Colombia. A study published by the World Bank in 2006 estimated that illegal logging in Colombia ac-





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Deforestation is one of the causes of greenhouse gases in Colombia and across the planet. (~20%).

Forest cover, indigenous territories and national parks in Colombia



counted for 42% of the country's total production of wood. Given that it requires little investment, illegal logging and trafficking is carried out on both a small and large scale. Some analysts estimate that illegal logging in Colombia could reach as high as 75% of all timber production and trade in this South American country.

Precise numbers on the extent of the illegal trade are difficult to estimate given the tough conditions in forest regions of armed conflict and illicit crops, corruption and organized crime. Further complicating attempts to quantify the figures; different actors along the chain of custody are not formally connected, with producers lacking linkages with buyers, and numerous intermediaries. This complexity calls for a collective effort to tackle the irregularities in the forest sector.

For these reasons, the Pact convenes all actors along the production process involved in timber extraction to commercialization (including buyers, transporters, transformation and consumers) will guarantee the legal origin of timber in Colombia. More than simply an instrument of control and social pressure to guarantee the law's enforcement, this vote represents the different ethical responsibilities of diverse sectors united in opposition to a practice that, according to official estimates, causes the devastation of at least 48,000 hectares of forests each year and carries the risk of over exploitation of 21 species, including cedar, much desired for its commercial value in national and international markets.



▶ Extensive logging in the Amazon without a sustainable management plan.

### The Colombian Forest: a source of life and income for the country

The business of foresting has so far played a minor role in the national economy, meaning there is the potential for the country to develop this sector to a large scale. However, the exploitation of wood has become a major support for important parts of the economy such as construction, furniture, wood pulp, paper and cardboard. In countries such as Chile and Brazil, the foresting industry is one of the economy's principal sectors, in Colombia the industry is just 0.2% of the economy or 1.8% if wood pulp, paper, cardboard, treated wood and furniture are included.

The Colombian foresting industry continues to focus primarily on the domestic market and is considered uncompetitive among international producers; in 2002 only 0.1% of production was exported. According to recent information released by

the FAO, over the five years between 2000 and 2004, the country's exports of wood reached \$163.1 million; with Venezuela and the United States the largest buyers.

Colombia's natural forests provide nearly 80% of the wood used in the country. Additionally, the forests provide important products aside from wood, such as medicinal plants and raw material for crafted goods. These forests are still cut down at an alarming rate.

According to the World Bank, between \$10 billion and \$15 billion is lost each year due to illegal logging, reducing money destined for educational, health, environmental and social programs.

For example, the Chocó -Darien region is the source of 80% of wood used and sold in Colombia. In this zone, the forests as resources are undervalued. The lack of an institu-



tional policy, the armed conflict, the prevalence of illegal crops, development policies that favor agriculture strategies over the forests, and the limited control local communities have over their own land, have been the main causes of illegal logging in the region.

### **Forest Management: A priority**

For WWF, the implementation of this Pact will transform the sector and make sustainable forest management and trade a common practice in local, national and global forest product markets. The Colombian Ministry of Environment's commitment to exclusively use wood or bamboo from legal sources for public housing projects is a step forward towards achieving this goal.

*The Agreement for Legal Timber in Colombia* is even more relevant given its relation with the global forest governance project of the European Union FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade), which seeks to reduce purchase of illegal tropical timber by EU members States.

"Effective governance of forest resources must be a priority for the sector and the country," said Mary Lou Higgins, Director of WWF Colombia. "This Pact demonstrates a pledge and shared responsibility to search for effective mechanisms of control, transparency, and responsible purchasing with the aim of eliminating illegality, improving forest based livelihoods and strengthening sustainable development processes", said Higgins.



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## Venezuela and Colombia, ten years of sharing information and resources to save the Orinoco

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The Orinoco now has 19 different special areas for the preservation of the basin. More than 30 Venezuelan and Colombian scientific institutions and environmental organizations met on August 21st in Bogota to identify the most important areas for conservation and the sustainable use of the environment in the Orinoco Basin. After four days of discussion in this international workshop, both countries came to an agreement about the 19 most important areas for South America's second most voluminous river.

This meeting was possible thanks to the initiative of Venezuela's La Salle Natural Sciences Foundation, the Von Humboldt Institute, WWF, the Natural Sciences Institute of the National University of Colombia, the Omacha Foundation and the Palmarito Foundation. Representatives from the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Venezuela's National Agricultural Investigation Institute were invited but unfortunately were not able to attend.



◀ The Orinoco Basin is vital for the economic and social development of Colombia and Venezuela, serving as a source of water for the large cities of Bogotá, Caracas and Tachira. These water resources are an important source of electrical energy in Colombia and Venezuela.

The 19 areas were chosen according to biological criteria, such as the richness and vulnerability of the species (some of which are only found in the Orinoco basin), others because of their importance to local communities (including fishing, sports, health, hunting, cultural). Areas were also chosen given their ecological importance; such as how central they are to certain species' migration, reproduction, and continued survival. Another factor that was taken in to account was the absence of said areas inside the National Protected Areas Systems that can be used as corridors of conservation.

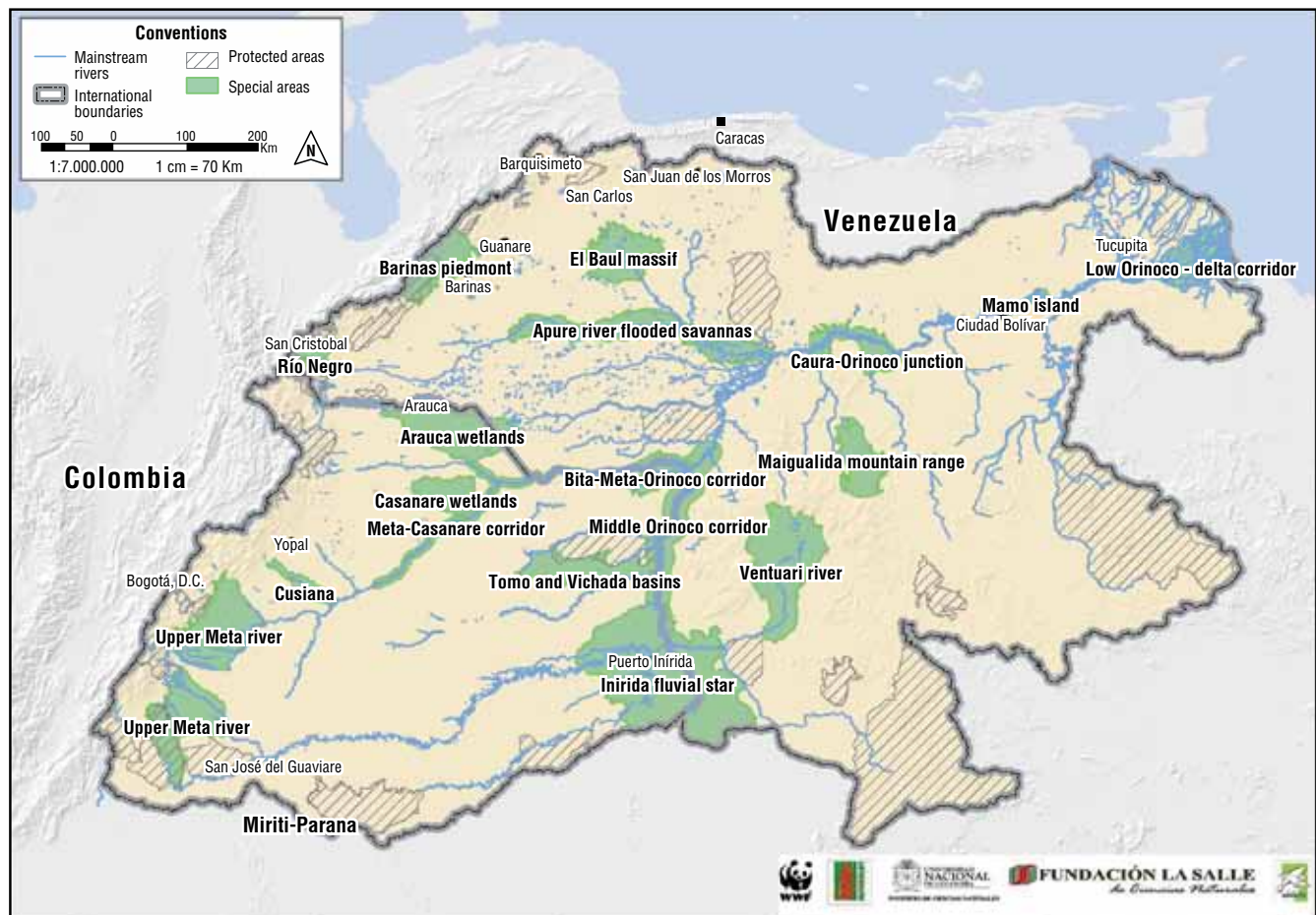
One of the workshop's biggest achievements was the creation of

82 themed-maps on the region's eco-system with an average of 13 maps per group (vegetation, insects, fish and crustacean, amphibious and reptiles, birds and mammals).

Also analyzed were the threats posed to the 19 different areas, including: deforestation, population density, oil and coal concession blocks, mining, dams dykes, infrastructure such as roads, over-exploitation of natural resources, contamination of the water, (mercury, agricultural chemicals), climate change, illegal crops, uncontrolled tourism and catastrophic natural occurrences.

The conclusions of the workshop have been shared among decision takers. Now the information about

## 19 different special areas for conservation and the sustainable use of the environment in the Orinoco Basin





© Ana María ROLDAN / WWF Colombia

The Orinoco River and its tributaries are home to thousands of different animals; more than 1,000 species of fish, 1,300 species of birds and 250 mammals. A number of these species are in danger, such as the Orinoco Caiman, the Arrau turtle, the jaguar, the pink dolphin and the giant otter.

the proposed areas is in the hands of all the participants so they can share it with their organizations and in the future they can pursue joint research, conservation and fund-raising efforts based on the discussions and recom-

mendations from the workshop, said Carlos Lasso, director of Conservation and Biology for the Humboldt Institute.

“All of this information that makes up the Conservation Portfolio will allow an effective use of financial resources, an articulation of goals and projects, a consolidation of interinstitutional alliances and cut out much of the duplication of conservation efforts.” said Saulo Usma, Fresh Water Coordinator of WWF in Colombia.



July 16

## Colombia Steps up Commitment to Sustainable Tuna Fisheries in the Eastern Pacific

Colombia sends a clear message of collaboration joining Spain, France, the United States, Japan and 11 other Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) member states to promote regional management measures for commercial tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

In the eightieth meeting of the IATTC, which took place last June in La Jolla, California, fifteen of the sixteen member countries agreed to a series of conservation measures based on IATTC scientific studies to address progressive deterioration of tuna stocks. After the summit and through out the whole month, Colombia discussed the adoption of these measures for Colombia flag fishery vessels, one month later the government announced the good news; a demonstration of environmental leadership by making the IATTC resolutions a unanimous agreement of all 16 member countries.



© Brian J. Skerry / National Geographic Stock / WWF

Specific fishing closure periods have been agreed for tuna fishing in the Eastern Pacific during 59 days in 2009, 62 days in 2010 and 73 days in 2011. These measures agreed upon by the IATTC aim to reduce fishing effort especially for big-eye tuna and yellow-fin tuna, whose population are currently below levels that would produce maximum sustainable yield.

Colombia had proposed a gradual fishery closure, meaning, different closure dates in turn for individual vessels. The downside of this approach is that it does not lead to a reduction in fishing effort nor to a decreased mortality rate and fish population recovery. A collaborative regional fisheries' management approach is essential for species like tuna that are highly migratory and are not exclusive to the jurisdictional waters of any single country.

December 15

## A 19-year-old Colombian student won last year's connect2earth grandprize

A 19-year-old Colombian student, pursuing second year of economics, was 2009 grand prize winner of an international youth competition running on connect2earth, the green online and mobile community.

**connect2earth.org** links young people with the world's top environmental experts to talk about headline-grabbing topics that they

care about. The community was launched two years ago by IUCN and WWF, and it is supported by Nokia.

The winner, Gustavo Nicolás Páez Salamanca, was distinguished by the quality and diversity of his contributions, as well as his high level of engagement in the community.

As part of his award, the winner traveled to the Danish capital and got hands-on experience at the 15th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15).



© WWF

August 3

## Colombia, One step closer to IWC

In 2008 Colombia began all the legal proceedings required to become a member of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), aiming to vote against whale hunting and trade issues. In 2009 the Colombian Whale Alliance was created, an advocacy group led by WWF Colombia and supported by local and international NGOs including IFAW, Conservation International, Greenpeace and the foundations Yubarta, Malpelo, Omacha, MarViva and Natibo.

After being ratified by the Senate Law and Chair, the process is reaching its final stage and is expected to be completed in the next three months. The pending step for the statute to be approved by Colombian Government is the review by the Supreme Court.

The entry of Colombia to the IWC strengthens the *Bloque Latinoamericano Conservacionista* or *Buenos Aires Group*, which along with Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Chile,



© Alianza Colombiana por las Ballenas

Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay, is one of the most important bodies within the Commission for actions such as: maintaining the moratorium on commercial hunting, strengthening conservation efforts and promoting research through non-lethal methods.

September 2

## Conservation Alliance for the Andean-Amazon Piedmont

On September 2nd, at a public event in the Sibundoy Valley, a place with special religious significance to indigenous communities in the Andean-Amazon Piedmont, the heads of WWF Colombia and the Regional Environmental Authority for the Colombian Amazon (CorpoAmazonia), signed a one-year agreement to develop and implement a joint environmental services' strategy for the Colombian Amazon.

First efforts will involve creating incentives to reduce deforestation and land conversion for cattle ranching as well as improving connectivity of Protected Areas and a management plan for the main watershed of the Putumayo River.



© Luz Eliana BOSSA / WWF Colombia

▲ In the Andes, the expansion of the agricultural frontier and cattle ranching are the main causes of deforestation and biodiversity loss.

With this new agreement with CorpoAmazonia, the Colombian Government will provide up to US\$500,000 to WWF as co-funding for our work in Putumayo.



October 14

## Colombia, home to more than 500 migratory species, launches conservation plan to keep their routes and habitats

Bocachico, primary source of income for communities along the Magdalena, Sinú and Atrato basin, is now listed on the National Red Book as an endangered species due to over-exploitation. A drop of 90% in the catch of this migratory species in the last 25 years has put one of the most important food resources of the country in jeopardy.

*Phoebastria irrorata*  
 © James FRANKHAM / WWF-Colombia



For this and many other reasons, Colombia, recognized among the five most bio-diverse countries on the planet, is ready to take key actions to preserve the Bocachico and 500 other species identified and catalogued within the National Migratory Species Plan, a publication launched on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October in Bogota.

The document, titled *National migratory species plan: Diagnosis and identification of actions for conservation and sustainable management of Colombian biodiversity migratory species*, is the outcome of hard work of more than 34 institutions and 64 people, including researchers and environmental lobbyists, that got involved in this project pursuing a common goal: protecting the national natural wealth. Amongst them the Ministry

of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development (MAVDT) and WWF Colombia, who led the process.

Putting together this Plan included the construction of a systematic baseline as an attempt to define more precisely the list of species that can be considered migratory in this South American nation.

The result: 549 species identified as migratory. However, the Plan is not focused only on safeguarding these species, their itineraries and habitats, but also on compiling existing knowledge about the basic ecological aspects of these animals, the threats confronting their populations, and the means of conservation that have been taken or are required to prevent and mitigate such tendencies.



## Plants and Wild Animals Used by the Tio Silirio Community

Choco, Colombia

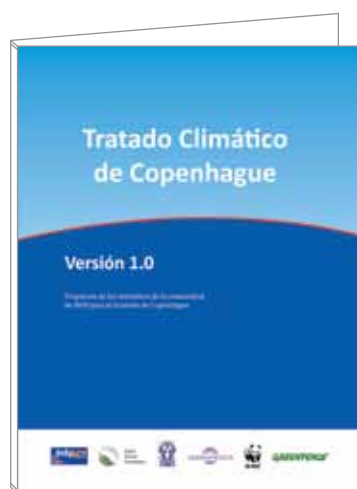
Produced by:  
Ecofondo working with  
the Dutch government, the  
indigenous community of  
Tio Silirio and WWF  
ISBN: 978-958-8353-13-5  
**94 pages.** (21,5 x 28 cms)

This book shows the results of the study “Analysis of the species of wildlife and plants used by the Tio Silirio community in the lower San Juan, the Colombian Pacific, aiming towards the formulation and practice of standards of use.”

This document presents a synthesis of the formulation of the Plan for Management for the delta in this river as an instrument for its sustainable use. In this process participated the councils of the Siviru, Usaraga and Pizarro communities.

## Plan for the management of the Ramsar site Delta of the Baudó River

Produced by:  
The ministry of  
environment, housing and  
local development, the  
Ecosystems Directory and  
WWF  
ISBN: 978-958-8353-12-8  
**24 pages** (21,5 x 28 cms)

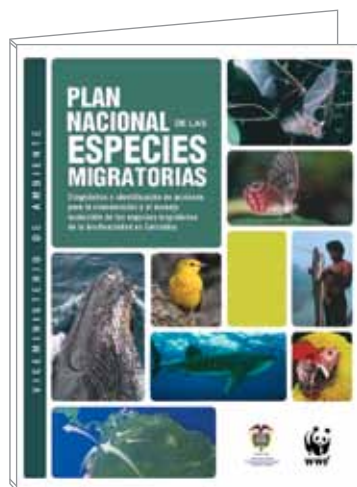


## Climate Treaty of Copenhagen

Produced by:  
David Susuki Foundation,  
Germanwach e. V.,  
Greenpeace International,  
IndyACT, the League of  
Independent, National  
Ecological Center of  
Ukraine and  
WWF International  
**64 pages** (21,5 x 28 cms)

This document outlines a proposal and vision for the Copenhagen Agreement, and further aims to begin an international debate. The information and the analysis collected in this document comes from the positions and ideas developed by the participants and observers.





## National Plan for Migratory Species

Diagnosis and Identification of the actions for the conservation and the sustainable management of the migratory species in Colombia

Produced by:  
The Ministry of  
Environment, Housing and  
Local Development, the  
Ecosystems Directory and  
WWF

ISBN: 978-958-8353-11-1

214 pages (21,5 x 28 cms)

This document defines the different lines of action, goals and activities that should be undertaken with the active participation of all those involved in the management of the natural resources in the country.



## School for the Conservation of the Andean Amazonian Piedmont

MODULO 1: Political Formation and Citizenship (52 pages)

MODULO 2: Territorial Planning (74 pages)

MODULO 3: Communications (50 pages)

MODULO 4: Pressures and Threats (105 pages)

MODULO 5: Systems of sustainable production (96 pages)

Produced by:  
National Parks of Colombian  
Office, Natura Foundation  
(Ecuador), European Union,  
British Ministry for International  
Development and WWF  
ISBN: 978-958-8353-07-4  
(21,5 x 28 cms)

This school has been a collective exercise to generate tools and knowledge for the social leaders, Indigenous territories and communities in making decisions.



Tribute to Tony Hare,  
communications  
advisor for WWF. His  
work, dedication  
and creativity  
inspired many in the  
organization.

This picture was  
taken during his field  
trip to Bahia Malaga,  
Colombia.



Julio C. Herrera / Fundación Yubarta



**WWF** *for a living planet*

WWF is one of the world's largest and most experienced independent conservation organizations, with almost 5 million supporters and a global network active in more than 100 countries.

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- Conserving the world's biological diversity
- Ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- Promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

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