

SUSTAINABLE PROTECTION OF NATURAL FOREST LANDSCAPE

Our aim in Paraguay is to halt uncontrolled deforestation and to preserve remarkable species. We can only do this by bringing together the interests of governments, major land owners and local indigenous communities, within the boundaries of nature.

ILLEGAL LOGGING

In Paraguay, IUCN NL supports NGO partners working in the Chaco, one of the largest forest areas of South America. Our focus is on the landscape in Bahia Negra, a district the size of the Netherlands, consisting of both wetlands and dry forest. Over the last few years, huge areas have been cleared for large-scale cattle farming and soy cultivation recently also started. Land owners are required by law to leave at least one quarter of their land forested, but the Ministry of the Environment has insufficient capacity to effectively monitor compliance with the environmental laws. Illegal logging is commonplace. The remaining forest is highly fragmented and as a result of shrinking value for biodiversity.

FOREST AS A CLIMATE BUFFER

The extensive dry forests of Bahia Negra form a vital buffer to climate change: the forests retain water during wet periods and release it slowly during the dry season. They also play a key role in temperature regulation, but due to deforestation, these climate functions are under growing pressure. The people of Bahia Negra are increasingly confronted with severe drought, forest fires and flooding. The bare, dry landscape left behind after logging is more vulnerable to erosion, salinisation and desertification.

PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

IUCN NL encourages sustainable land use in Bahia Negra. We have activated, advised and financed the local partner organisations Guyra, IDEA and WWF Paraguay to map out land use in Bahia Negra. These partners brought together as many parties as possible with an interest in the landscape, such as local governments and Ministries, nature conservation organisations, organisations of indigenous communities and land owners in the cattle sector. In 2019, they drew up a futureproof landscape plan that offers sufficient space for nature, while enjoying support from all parties.



Pantanal reserve © Cindy Galeano

INTERESTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

The rapid land use change in Bahia Negra also affects indigenous communities. The land available to them is constantly shrinking, thereby threatening their very existence. IUCN NL has been collaborating closely with local NGOs in Paraguay for around 10 years. Through these contacts, we understand the interests of indigenous communities and their ideas on problem solving, such as reinforcing their land rights and improving their local organisations. Against that background, we supported indigenous community organisations that with their input ensured that the joint landscape plan specifies which areas of land must remain available to the indigenous communities.

LEGAL COMPLIANCE

At a political level our partners are also advocating better laws, more transparency in the issuing of permits and better compliance with the laws and permits. Their calls for public access to information about the permits to allow comparison with satellite images have already been successful. Thanks to the information obtained, there is now a greater overview and more control over the development of the region. On several occasions, our partners have successfully halted illegal logging plans. In 2020, for the first time, a cattle company was held liable for illegal logging.

COLLABORATING WITH IUCN NL

Do you want to join IUCN NL in using nature to mitigate the consequences of climate change in Paraguay? Visit our [website](#) for detailed information and more example projects or contact our expert **Sander van Andel**.

Example of our work

Corridors link patches of nature

Bahia Negra is home to many species including anteaters, tapirs, jaguars and giant armadillos. The survival of large mammals depends on their ability to migrate from one wilderness area to another. However, as the forest becomes increasingly fragmented, it becomes more difficult for these vulnerable animal species to migrate, leading to isolated sub-populations. Together with farmers, our partner organisations are attempting to link the various patches of forest, to create corridors that enable the animals to migrate between the protected areas.

Example of our work

Conservation areas

One crucial area in Bahia Negra is the 'natural monument' Chovoreca, which is important for the continued existence of nature and the diversity of species in the landscape. On paper this is a conservation area, but the process of protection was never made legally watertight. Land owners were still able to purchase and exploit the land. The boundaries of the conservation area have now been redefined, and the protected status is far more secure.

"Three Interests come together in Bahia Negra: nature, indigenous cultures and international economic pressure from land speculation and the demand for meat. We must ensure that instead of being in continuous conflict, these ecological, social and economic interests are better in balance with one another."

Sander van Andel, expert Paraguay at IUCN NL