



American redstart

SUCCESS STORY

A CRITICAL LINK: CONSERVING HABITAT FOR PRIORITY MIGRATORY BIRDS IN EL SALVADOR

El Salvador's dry tropical forests are a vital refuge for Neotropical Migratory Birds (NMBs) on the Pacific Flyway, including 38 Species of Greatest Conservation Need from 12 western U.S. states, like the Willow Flycatcher and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. This small country also harbors an exceptional biological diversity, with 585 bird species recorded, and 364 in the tropical dry forest alone. Notable examples include the Blue-tailed Hummingbird, White-bellied Chachalaca, Bell's Vireo, Summer Tanager and the endangered Yellow-naped Amazon. However, this critical habitat is also one of the most endangered ecosystems in the region, with less than 2% of its original forest remaining. Habitat loss due to agricultural expansion is a primary driver, as secondary forest areas are increasingly converted into monocultures. Timber extraction and degradation from wildfires further diminish habitat quality, while unregulated hunting adds additional pressure on wildlife.

This project addresses these threats head-on, focusing on three key strategies: restoring and protecting habitats, filling knowledge gaps through research, and building local capacity. Our goal is to conserve and restore overwintering and migratory habitats for both NMBs and resident birds.

SPECIES IMPACTED: WILLOW FLYCATCHER, YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO, SWAINSON'S HAWK, MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER, BELL'S VIREO, SUMMER TANAGER, BROWN-CRESTED FLYCATCHER, ELEGANT TROGON.



yellow-billed cuckoo

PARTNERSHIPS

STATE FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCY PARTNERS

- Arizona Game and Fish Department
- Pacific Flyway Council

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

- Sierra Research Station (SSRS)
- Boise Zoo
- Save the Waves Coalition
- Water Engineers for the Americas (WEFTA)

ON THE GROUND PARTNERS

- Paso Pacifico
- Zoological Foundation of El Salvador (FUNZEL)
- Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (MARN)
- Fundación Naturaleza
- Asociación de Desarrollo Turístico de la Costa Oriental De El Salvador (ADETCO)
- Compañía Azucarera Salvadoreña (CASSA)
- Mujeres y Naturaleza (MUNAT)

CONSERVATION SUCCESSES

Working with our partners and local communities, we have achieved significant milestones:

- **Habitat Restoration & Protection:**
 - On a 62-acre reserve, community-based rangers planted over 500 trees for restoration, prevented wildfires, and removed more than 2,600 pounds of plastic from local waterways.
 - We helped establish the Oriente Salvaje World Surfing Reserve, a voluntary conservation area spanning 9,803 terrestrial acres that links surfing with forest protection.
 - We improved water quality near the critical Olomega Lagoon RAMSAR site.
- **Research & Monitoring:**
 - We launched non-breeding season bird monitoring at three sites targeting Willow Flycatchers. The surveys identified 19 bird species of conservation concern, including the Brown-crested Flycatcher and Painted Redstart.
 - We hosted a Willow Flycatcher identification workshop for Salvadoran biologists to build local expertise.
- **Community Engagement & Capacity Building:**
 - We promoted the use of community science platforms, including organizing an iNaturalist Biodiversity Challenge in the Oriente Salvaje World Surfing Reserve to expand local knowledge and appreciation for birds.
 - We partnered with local water associations and the international nonprofit organization WEFTA to assess water quality and sanitation near the RAMSAR site Olomega Lagoon, which provides critical habitat for the Willow Flycatcher.



Lesson's motmot



willow flycatcher

MOVING FORWARD: HOW YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Funding is urgently needed to expand our conservation efforts and build on our recent successes. Your support will help us achieve the following goals:

- **Protect and Restore Critical Habitats:** We will restore wetlands and dry tropical forests near the Olomega Lagoon, a vital habitat for the Willow Flycatcher. This includes engaging landowners to promote bird-friendly management practices and partnering with a water organization to restore riparian habitats and establish a community water well. We also plan to conduct vegetation mapping and landowner engagement at other key dry tropical forest sites.
- **Strengthen Research and Monitoring:** We will conduct non-breeding season bird surveys at four dry tropical forest sites to better understand the populations of the Willow Flycatcher and other migratory birds. We will also support vegetation mapping and university research and field trips focused on birds to build a new generation of conservationists.
- **Empower Local Communities and Partners:** We will expand our bird-friendly practices with over 6,000 farmers through our collaboration with agribusiness. Additionally, we will promote birding events like Global Big Day and an iNaturalist challenge to expand knowledge and appreciation for birds. The project will also impart bird education to 350 children from six schools and organize a national workshop to strengthen the skills of local conservation stakeholders.

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scissor-tailed flycatcher