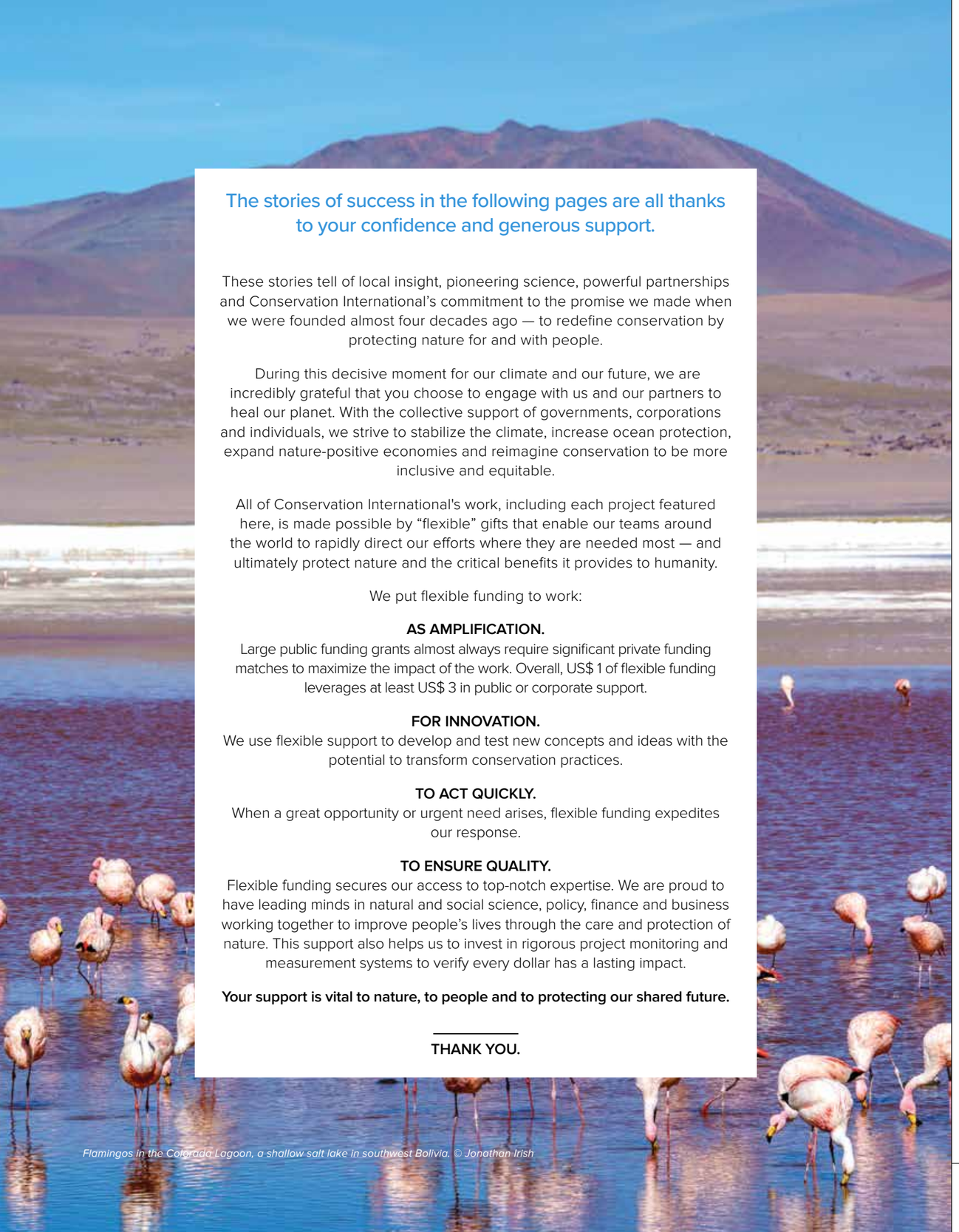

CONSERVATION
INTERNATIONAL
Impact
2023 Report



Flamingos in the Colorada Lagoon, a shallow salt lake in southwest Bolivia. © Jonathan Irish

The stories of success in the following pages are all thanks to your confidence and generous support.

These stories tell of local insight, pioneering science, powerful partnerships and Conservation International's commitment to the promise we made when we were founded almost four decades ago — to redefine conservation by protecting nature for and with people.

During this decisive moment for our climate and our future, we are incredibly grateful that you choose to engage with us and our partners to heal our planet. With the collective support of governments, corporations and individuals, we strive to stabilize the climate, increase ocean protection, expand nature-positive economies and reimagine conservation to be more inclusive and equitable.

All of Conservation International's work, including each project featured here, is made possible by "flexible" gifts that enable our teams around the world to rapidly direct our efforts where they are needed most — and ultimately protect nature and the critical benefits it provides to humanity.

We put flexible funding to work:

AS AMPLIFICATION.
Large public funding grants almost always require significant private funding matches to maximize the impact of the work. Overall, US$ 1 of flexible funding leverages at least US$ 3 in public or corporate support.

FOR INNOVATION.
We use flexible support to develop and test new concepts and ideas with the potential to transform conservation practices.

TO ACT QUICKLY.
When a great opportunity or urgent need arises, flexible funding expedites our response.

TO ENSURE QUALITY.
Flexible funding secures our access to top-notch expertise. We are proud to have leading minds in natural and social science, policy, finance and business working together to improve people's lives through the care and protection of nature. This support also helps us to invest in rigorous project monitoring and measurement systems to verify every dollar has a lasting impact.

Your support is vital to nature, to people and to protecting our shared future.

THANK YOU.

M. Sanjayan, Chief Executive Officer, Conservation International. © Georgina Goodwin

Dear Friends,

Curiosity — the dogged pursuit of the unknown — has always been the driving force behind our success at Conservation International. For 35 years, we have been challenging established consensus, asking difficult questions and unearthing new answers thanks to our partners and donors. Our first big breakthrough arrived in 1987, when we asked, "What if we reduced a country's sovereign debt in exchange for the creation of a new national park?" The resulting debt-for-nature swap in Bolivia heralded an entirely new tool for conservation, one that is still in use today.

This year was no exception — big questions led to major breakthroughs.

For more than 400 million years, plants have relied on underground fungal networks called mycelia. The fungi transport essential nutrients to plants, and they receive carbon-rich sugars in return. It's a beautiful example of biological interdependence — and one of our scientists wondered how that relationship contributes to global climate stability. The findings were staggering. Each year, 13.2 gigatons of carbon pass through mycorrhizal fungi, more than the annual emissions of the United States and China combined. Those are paradigm-shifting numbers, with the potential to transform how conservationists think about soil management. They remind us that no organism is too small to matter.

We also wondered how we could find unlikely allies for conservation. It led to an unexpected partnership. We teamed up with the World Surf League and Save The Waves Coalition to secure the coastal forests, mangroves and reefs responsible for world-class waves. To date, with our in-country partner Konservasi Indonesia, our Surf Conservation Program has helped create 18 surf protected areas in Indonesia, with 20 more under development — and recently, we expanded across the Pacific to Costa Rica, Peru and Brazil.

Partnerships with communities on the front lines of climate change are core to our work, and we have continued to explore how we can bring together Indigenous knowledge and conservation science to accelerate the pace of progress. In New Zealand, this line of inquiry spawned the Hinemoana Halo Ocean Initiative, one of the world's first Indigenous-led blue carbon programs. And in Brazil, we supercharged our Amazon restoration work thanks to the wisdom of our local partners. By adopting a seed-planting technique called *muvuca*, we have effectively tripled our yield, resulting in 10 million new trees.

These are just a few of the strides that you have made possible this year — you can read about them, and many more, in this impact report, a written testament to the power of curiosity. In this decisive decade, we no longer have time for incremental progress. To achieve transformative change, we must be bold. We must be willing to question every assumption, weigh every option, consider every perspective, and then act! Your continued support is what gives us the freedom to pursue courageous inquiry — to ask the questions that few are asking. We do not take it for granted. Thank you.

With gratitude,

M. Sanjayan
CEO, Conservation International

"For 35 years, we have been challenging established consensus, asking difficult questions and unearthing new answers thanks to our partners and donors...This year was no exception — big questions led to major breakthroughs."

WITH YOUR SUPPORT,

We Are Stabilizing Our Climate by Protecting and Restoring Nature

One of the most ingenious solutions to climate change doesn't need to be invented — nature already provides it. By absorbing and storing carbon from the atmosphere, ecosystems such as forests, mangroves and peatlands help forestall climate change. Science shows that conserving, restoring or improving the use of these ecosystems can deliver at least a third of the emissions reductions needed by 2030 to stabilize our climate.

In the Gulf of Nicoya in Costa Rica, many mangrove seedlings planted last year have already grown more than 3.2 meters (10 feet) high. © Conservation International/ photo by Monika Naranjo

Technique Tees Up Mangrove Rebound in Costa Rica

Mangroves are critical in the race to stabilize our planet, but half the world's mangroves have been destroyed in the past half-century — and restoring them is no easy task. Last year, we reported that Conservation International's Costa Rica team and community partners rehabilitated 332 hectares (820 acres) of mangroves in the Puntarenas Estuary Wetland on the Gulf of Nicoya on the country's Pacific coast. We accomplished this by digging channels and leveling soils to help the area naturally recover to humidity and salinity levels suitable for mangrove growth.

Today, mangrove seedlings are naturally establishing along the open channels, and many trees have already grown more than 3.2 meters (10 feet) high. Our field teams have recorded sightings of numerous species of birds, fish and crabs — and even crocodiles — using the recently built channels.

The technique is scalable: We've used the same approach to rehabilitate 21 hectares (52 acres) of mangroves on nearby Chira Island — and we have worked with national authorities on identifying the national mangrove rehabilitation gap. With additional funding, we can restore a further 14,000 hectares (35,000 acres).

Between two forest restoration projects in partnership with Mastercard, communities in Colombia and Madagascar planted nearly 3 million trees this year. © Conservation International/photo by Jaime Gonzalez Canon

Community-Run Forest Restoration Also Delivers Fresh Water and Green Jobs

Madagascar's largest lake, Lake Alaotra, is shrinking, due in large part to the clearing and degrading of surrounding forests. Without forests to keep it in place, soil erodes and sediment flows from the streams into the lake. To revive the forests, and in turn the flow of water that thousands of local people and many freshwater species depend on, Conservation International is partnering with Mastercard's Priceless Planet Coalition to restore 12.5 million trees around Lake Alaotra. Cost-effective and locally led, this restoration project has already:

- restored more than 2 million trees
- established 23 community-managed tree nurseries — with 20 more planned by December 2023
- created green jobs and hired more than 400 local people

Also this year, the coalition exceeded its goal in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountains of northern Colombia, with 429 families from 14 Arhuaco Indigenous communities of the Arhuaco Indigenous peoples leading the restoration of over 700,000 trees across 1,000 hectares (2,471 acres).

With technical guidance from Conservation International, as well as tools and materials to build nurseries for seedlings, the Arhuaco people guided the project's success: They determined the areas most in need of restoration, decided which types of trees to plant and selected families to grow and plant the saplings. Built on the recognition of the Arhuaco people's knowledge of the nature around them, this partnership is a key part of Colombia's goal to plant 180 million trees and enhance resilience to climate change.

These restoration projects are two of 18 in the Priceless Planet Coalition portfolio, all working toward the goal to restore 100 million trees around the world by 2025.

400
LOCAL PEOPLE
hired to work in Madagascar tree nurseries

429
FAMILIES
grew and planted trees in the mountains of northern Colombia

To restore forests in the Brazilian Amazon, Indigenous peoples and local communities sow a large, varied mixture of seeds that yield native plants, a technique called "muvuca." © Conservation International/photo by Inaê Brandão

Have You Heard of Muvuca? It's Creating Revolutionary Success in the Brazilian Amazon

A bold initiative to regrow 73 million trees in the Brazilian Amazon is exceeding expectations due to a noteworthy seed-planting method called muvuca. Unlike typical reforestation efforts, in which tree saplings are planted one at a time, muvuca relies on spreading a varied mixture of native tree seeds. The initiative is part of the Amazon Sustainable Landscape project, a collaboration among Conservation International, the Brazilian Ministry of Environment, the Global Environment Facility, the World Bank and the Brazilian Biodiversity Fund.

A fruitful seed-planting method in the Brazilian Amazon is yielding

3x

MORE CARBON-ABSORBING TREES

than initially estimated

"We're seeing a tree yield that is three times higher than our initial estimates. Rather than 3 million trees growing in 1,200 hectares (3,000 acres), as we would have expected, we're estimating 9.6 million trees in the same area. If we succeed, we can show that we can make an impact at the scale needed to bring the forest back from the brink."

Miguel Moraes, Senior Director, Conservation International-Brazil

FINANCE SPOTLIGHT

Carbon Revenue Replaces Philanthropy to Keep These Hills 'Green'

Chyulu Hills National Park in Kenya — the "Green Hills of Africa" made famous by Ernest Hemingway — is home to pastoral communities as well as remarkable wildlife. A Conservation International-supported initiative to protect this place, and benefit communities, has yielded millions of dollars in revenue. The idea behind these projects: Pay people to improve rangeland management and not cut down their forests through "carbon credits" — one credit represents a metric ton of carbon emissions that can be sold to compensate for emissions created elsewhere. Ten years ago, when the project started, it was mostly philanthropy and tourism that kept Chyulu's wilderness conservation funded. Now, it is carbon credits that account for much of the local conservation budget — sustaining wildlife and communities alike.

Carbon credits now account for much of the local conservation budget in Kenya's Chyulu Hills, sustaining wildlife and communities alike. © Ami Vitale

Stabilizing Our Climate by Protecting and Restoring Nature

Partnership With NASA Reveals the Power of Protected Forests

Conservation International scientists, in partnership with NASA, determined this year that protected forests keep significantly more climate-warming carbon — the equivalent of one year's worth of global fossil fuel emissions — out of the atmosphere than unprotected forests.

Why? Protected forests support healthier ecosystems with larger, more mature trees than unprotected forests; researchers have long suspected that protected forests also store much more carbon. The new study confirms that assumption.

One protected forest where Conservation International has worked with partners for over a decade is in northwestern Peru. There, Conservation International sought to halt deforestation in the Alto Mayo Protected Forest by brokering conservation agreements with local communities who agree to stop clearing forests in exchange for agricultural and financial trainings and access to specialty-grade coffee markets. As of 2020, deforestation in the forest had declined by 59 percent. To date, over 1,200 agreements have been signed — representing about 80 percent of the families living within the forest's borders.

Meet Joimer Vargas Coronel, a fourth-generation coffee farmer from Peru, on page 7.

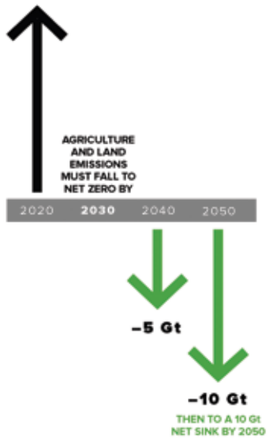
A new study confirms what researchers have long suspected: Protected forests store much more carbon than unprotected ones. © Thomas Muller

Protected forests keep

10

BILLION METRIC TONS OF CARBON

out of the atmosphere – equivalent to one year's worth of global fossil fuel emissions



The Exponential Roadmap for Natural Climate Solutions is built around a novel, straightforward yardstick called the Carbon Law for Nature — if the world's farms, ranches, forests and natural lands achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and then serve as a powerful store of carbon by 2050, our chances of maintaining a safe climate are greatly increased.

First-Of-Its-Kind Roadmap Guides the Way To Maximize Nature's Role in Climate Stability

The Exponential Roadmap for Natural Climate Solutions, introduced at the 2022 New York Climate Week, outlines the actions needed to boost nature's role in stabilizing our climate. Developed by scientists from Conservation International, the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and other partners, the roadmap lays out an actionable path for the agriculture, forestry, conservation and restoration sectors to reach net zero emissions by 2030 — which is essential for meeting the critical goal of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit).

A year later, the roadmap is now guiding our work and that of partners, such as the United Nations Climate Change High-Level Champions; in particular, the roadmap points to where resources should be invested to improve management of the world's working lands and to restore and protect the carbon-rich ecosystems — like tropical forests and mangroves — that cannot regenerate before 2050 (and are thus effectively "irrecoverable").

The roadmap is also informing Conservation International's planning and strategy in Africa, including the development of an Africa-focused roadmap to promote the uptake of natural climate solutions at the scale needed to meet the continent's climate goals.

SCIENCE SPOTLIGHT

New Study Shows Fungi's Role in Climate Stability

Beneath the soil, fungi and plants work together to absorb massive amounts of carbon — equivalent to more than a third of the world's annual fossil fuel emissions, according to a recent study by a Conservation International researcher and colleagues.

The study was the first to quantify the amount of carbon that plants pull out of the atmosphere and send to certain types of fungi that thrive at their roots, known as mycorrhizal fungi. These findings, published in the journal Current Biology, could spur conservation efforts that account for what's happening underground.

"The potential for these fungi to keep climate-warming carbon out of the atmosphere and in the soil is huge — and may play a bigger role in the carbon cycle than we anticipated."

Heidi Hawkins, Ph.D., the study's lead author, scientist with Conservation South Africa (an affiliate of Conservation International) and a 2023 Ann and Tom Friedman Science Fellow

The European Union passed legislation that Conservation International's team in Europe worked on for a decade. The new rules will help stop a significant share of global deforestation, in turn reducing greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity loss. © Benjamin Drummond

European Union Cracks Down on "Unseen" Deforestation

Did you know that deforestation can be imported? "Imported deforestation" is the environmental footprint of products consumed in one region but produced elsewhere. This year, the European Union (EU) enacted new regulation that requires that key products placed on the EU market — including palm oil, beef, timber, coffee, cocoa, rubber and soy — not contribute to the clearing or degrading of forests. Companies must also verify that the rights of affected Indigenous peoples have been respected.

Conservation International's team in Europe began calling for legislation to tackle imported deforestation a decade ago. Our team worked to get the topic on the EU agenda, provided input during the drafting phases and advised on the regulation's measures throughout the legislative process.

The regulation will help stop a significant share of global deforestation and forest degradation, in turn reducing greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity loss. The new rules also help secure the livelihoods of millions of people, including Indigenous peoples and local communities who rely heavily on forests.

When the legislation comes up for review in 2024, Conservation International will press for the regulations to cover more ecosystems, such as savannas, as well as more sectors, such as finance.

Stabilizing Our Climate by Protecting and Restoring Nature

Joimer Vargas Coronel and his family grow coffee near Peru's Alto Mayo Protected Forest. © ECOAN/Mirian Neira

"I would not like coffee cultivation to contribute to climate destruction."

JOIMER VARGAS CORONEL

In the northwest corner of Peru, a fourth-generation coffee farmer is playing his part in stabilizing our climate.

Joimer Vargas Coronel, 24, lives on La Fortaleza coffee farm just outside Peru's Alto Mayo Protected Forest. After learning the ins and outs of coffee from the three generations before him, Joimer now oversees all steps of coffee production on the family land.

Since 2011, Conservation International has sought to halt deforestation in Alto Mayo by brokering conservation agreements with local communities who agree to stop clearing forests in exchange for agricultural training, financial literacy classes and access to specialty-grade coffee markets. To date, 1,134 agreements have been signed — representing about 80 percent of the families living within the forest's borders.

Before the Vargases learned about the conservation agreements in 2011, the family migrated from plot to plot every growing season looking for suitable soil. For decades, inhabitants of the Alto Mayo practiced slash-and-burn agriculture (cutting and burning of trees and underbrush to clear the way for small coffee plantations) that causes the soil to degrade — forcing them to cut down more trees to clear more land.

Conservation International and partners provided training and direct assistance so the Vargas family and others could adopt new, sustainable coffee growing methods on already cleared land. We helped them manage their use of water, manure and fertilizers, as well as plan for disease management, prevent erosion and learn new pruning techniques to keep plants producing yearly.

To help the coffee growers fetch higher prices for their product, Conservation International and partners started a coffee cooperative — of which Vargas' father served as the first president — that has enabled members to certify their coffee as fair trade and organic, and to export to specialty markets around the world, from the United States to Australia. With the increased profits, the cooperative members can invest in projects to improve their livelihoods and communities, such as installing satellite antennas so that remote settlements can access live online classes to improve their education.

Recently, the cooperative started offering coffee tasting training to members to help them compete in the artisanal coffee industry. This year, after taking part in the taster classes and passing a series of rigorous tests, Vargas became a licensed professional with certifications and an "international coffee taster" endorsement from the Coffee Quality Institute, an international nonprofit working to improve the quality of coffee and the lives of those who produce it.

"We must make coffee in a better way, a way that cares for wildlife, vegetation and water," Vargas says. "I would not like coffee cultivation to contribute to climate destruction. It is our income, but we must do it in a way that contributes to the conservation of the environment."

THANKS TO YOU,

We Are on the Way to Doubling Ocean Protection

The ocean feeds us, regulates our climate and supports much of the world's economy. By the end of the century, however, more of the world's ocean could be hot, acidic and lifeless — with catastrophic implications for marine life, Earth's climate and the food security of billions of people. The science is clear: Setting aside large areas where human activities are carefully managed can help marine ecosystems recover. That's why Conservation International engages with governments, corporations and other partners to meet the global goal of conserving 30 percent of the ocean by 2030 and ensuring that production systems in the other 70 percent are sustainable.

Conservation International partnered with the Miloli'i community to improve fisheries and preserve Indigenous fishing practices. © iStock.com/imv

Largest Protected Area in Hawai'i Combines Traditional Fishing Practices With Modern Conservation Approaches

Decades of efforts to conserve key areas for fishing and support Indigenous practices in the Hawaiian Islands culminated in an important piece of legislation this year — one that demonstrates successful co-management of nature by Indigenous peoples and governments. Hawai'i Governor David Ige signed into law the Miloli'i Community-Based Subsistence Fishing Area, for which Conservation International served as a key proponent and partner. The law resulted in improved protections for nearly 31 kilometers (19 miles) of coastline along the South Kona coast, making it the largest such protected area in the state, and combines traditional Hawaiian fishing practices with modern approaches to conservation to protect and conserve fish populations, their habitats and the communities that depend on them.

31
KILOMETERS
(19 miles) of Hawai'i's South Kona coast are protected

In Indonesia, Protecting and Reintroducing Sharks Benefits Local People, Too

A global effort known as ReShark, a multinational partnership of nearly 80 aquariums, universities and environmental organizations — including Conservation International and its in-country partner, Konservasi Indonesia — launched a first-of-its-kind captive breeding program to recover the population of threatened sharks into the wild (an idea first conceived by a Conservation International scientist a decade ago). With four zebra shark pups hatched, raised and released into the wild in eastern Indonesia, the team has proof of concept. Egg cases from an aquarium in Australia continue to arrive at the hatcheries and are being prepared for release. Over the next decade, ReShark plans to release at least 500 zebra shark pups into the waters of Raja Ampat, Indonesia. The team has already begun to explore new locations and is building hatcheries that will function well for other endangered shark species.

Meanwhile, the Indonesian government granted six species of "walking sharks" the highest level of protection across all national waters — a move experts hope will lead to the conservation of other sharks, whose numbers have plummeted due largely to the shark fin trade. Scientists at Konservasi Indonesia worked with the government for several years to show that the protections, which ban all fishing and collecting of walking sharks, support the survival of a species that's important to Indonesia's biodiversity — and benefit local communities because of the ecotourism the walking sharks attract.

Multiple partners, including local nonprofits, communities and dive resorts, worked together to build special hatcheries for the zebra shark pups. © Blue Carbon Media

Young local scientists known as "shark nannies" monitor the growth of the zebra shark pups; when they reach roughly a meter (about 3 feet) in length, it's time to head into the wild. © Blue Carbon Media

At roughly three months old, zebra shark embryos in their casings are shipped — by land, air and sea — from an aquarium in Australia to the protected waters of Raja Ampat, Indonesia, where they are cared for until hatching and their ultimate release into the wild. © Blue Carbon Media

FINANCE SPOTLIGHT

Through a sponsorship funding model, individuals, organizations, governments and corporations can protect a portion of Niue's ocean. © Richard Sidey/Galaxiid

A Pioneering Way To Pay for a Tiny Island Nation's Big Ocean Conservation Plan

In 2022, we shared that the small island nation of Niue (located about 2,400 kilometers/1,500 miles northeast of New Zealand) ensured legal protection for 100 percent of its waters — an ambitious commitment that now requires financing to support monitoring, patrolling and management activities. This year, the government of Niue and a local nonprofit partner worked with the Blue Nature Alliance — which Conservation International co-leads — and McKinsey & Company to develop a sponsorship funding model called "Ocean Conservation Commitments." Each commitment pays for the protection of 1 square kilometer (0.39 square mile) of Niue's waters for 20 years, enabling individuals, organizations, governments and corporations to directly contribute to ocean conservation in a way that is shared, sustainable and transparent. This innovative financing approach will not only support Niue's ocean conservation efforts and help strengthen the country's climate resilience; it could also establish a precedent for other small island developing states. Conservation International and the Blue Nature Alliance committed to sponsor 15,000 square kilometers (nearly 6,000 square miles, about the size of Connecticut) of Niue's ocean.

"Niue isn't just a mosaic of ancient corals and a vibrant island community — we are a leader. It's no coincidence that Niue is once again at the forefront of finding creative ways to protect our ocean."

Coral Pasisi, a native Niuean and president of the nonprofit organization Tofia Niue

Blue Nature Alliance: By the Numbers

The Blue Nature Alliance is working with partners in countries around the world toward shared conservation goals. In some places, we are advancing the designation of new or expanded ocean conservation areas. In others, we are improving the effectiveness, durability and equitability of existing ones. While it may take years to achieve each individual goal, the work is well underway. Here's a snapshot of our work in progress.

We support conservation in

29 sites
around the world

covering

18.6 million
square kilometers
(7.2 million square miles) of ocean

an area larger than the
U.S. and Canada

combined

Projected new and expanded protections:

8.2 million
square kilometers
(3.2 million square miles)

Projected improved and upgraded protections:

10.4 million
square kilometers
(4 million square miles)

By fishing sustainably, fishers in five communities in Costa Rica increased their incomes between 37 percent and 95 percent. © Chris Goldberg/Flickr Creative Commons

Thriving Fish Stocks and Higher Incomes for Costa Rica's Coastal Communities

In 2019, Conservation International's Costa Rica program launched the organization's first community-based fishery improvement project, an innovative model that integrates social, economic and environmental approaches. Since then, our team in Costa Rica has worked with five coastal communities and over 100 fishers on the country's Pacific coast. Working with the communities and other local stakeholders, and with funding from the government of Norway, Conservation International developed fishery improvement plans that combine science, governance and market incentives. This included establishing the EcoGourmet program — a model first piloted in Colombia — that connects fishers who fish sustainably and responsibly directly with markets, from which they receive higher prices for their sustainable catch. Through this approach, fishers in the five communities increased their incomes between 37 percent and 95 percent, compared with prices they previously fetched from intermediaries. In total, five tons of traceable and sustainably sourced fish from these five coastal communities were sold to local restaurants and consumers. Now, the program aims to scale and replicate these remarkable results to more fishing communities across Costa Rica and beyond.

Meet Fabiola Sequeira Morales, a Costa Rican fisher, on page 13.

Fishers increased their incomes between

37%
AND
95%

SCIENCE SPOTLIGHT

A Ray of Hope for Mantas

Why are reef mantas in one protected area thriving compared to other spots around the world? © Shawn Heinrichs

Targeted for their gill plates and trapped accidentally in fishing nets, reef manta rays are in trouble. Their populations around the world are plummeting, but in one protected area off the coast of Indonesia, a new study shows the rays are not only bucking worldwide trends — they're thriving. For over a decade, researchers in the Raja Ampat islands monitored the threatened species, watching its population soar — more than double in one location — even as others struggled. What's behind the ray's success? Holistic conservation efforts. That includes establishing large-scale marine protected areas, coupled with creating Southeast Asia's first shark and ray sanctuary in 2012, and developing fisheries and tourism regulations, according to the study published in Frontiers of Marine Science.

"This is a big win for conservation and Raja Ampat's local communities," said Mark Erdmann, who leads Conservation International's Asia-Pacific marine programs and was a co-author of the study. "The findings clearly demonstrate the positive impact of a comprehensive set of long-term conservation measures to ensure the survival of this globally threatened species."

As a member of the High Seas Alliance, Conservation International used our flexible funding to support advocacy, political outreach and technical policy advice to the treaty process. © National Geographic Pristine Seas & National Geographic Exploration Technology Lab

Treaty provides the framework for protected areas in the high seas, which cover

50%

OF THE PLANET

Years of Negotiation Pay Off: A Treaty Sets the Stage To Protect the High Seas

Roughly two-thirds of the world's oceans lie beyond national boundaries in an area known as the "high seas" — yet only about 1 percent of that vast and largely unexplored expanse has been protected. Now, after two decades of planning and intense negotiations, countries agreed on the first-ever United Nations treaty to protect biodiversity on the high seas. The treaty provides the legal framework for countries to create marine protected areas and other area-based management in the high seas. As a member of the High Seas Alliance, Conservation International used our flexible funding to pay for the team that contributed to the years-long efforts to provide advocacy, political outreach and technical policy advice to the treaty process. The investment paid off many, many times over. The treaty is a game-changer for the high seas, which cover half the planet and until now were essentially the "Wild West," with little oversight or regulation for biodiversity. That left a huge expanse of ocean vulnerable to overfishing, pollution and the impacts of climate change. The treaty is also a crucial step toward achieving the global goal of protecting at least 30 percent of our oceans by 2030 — a commitment known as "30 by 30," which is seen as critical to confronting the biodiversity crisis.

In her role keeping operations running smoothly at a Costa Rica fishers' association, Fabiola Sequeira experiences the impact of a program that supports responsible fishing. © Conservation International Costa Rica

In Costa Rica, fishers who prioritize a healthy ocean and use sustainable practices are earning higher prices for their catch.

An ocean lover who enjoys spending time with her family, Fabiola Sequeira Morales dreams of one day teaching physical education to the children in her community.

"We are doing better now."

FABIOLA SEQUEIRA

For now, Sequeira, 28, works in administration and accounting at the San Juanillo Fishers' Association, located on the northwestern coast of Costa Rica's Nicoya peninsula. Composed of around 30 members, the association catches and processes snapper and grouper from the warm Pacific waters nearby.

Since 2021, the association has worked with Conservation International to learn sustainable fishing techniques, such as harvesting only certain species at certain size, and proper handling and storage throughout the distribution process. Through a program called EcoGourmet, Conservation International links the San Juanillo fishers directly to restaurants and other buyers who pay higher prices for the responsibly caught fish.

In her role keeping operations running smoothly at the fishers' association, Sequeira sees firsthand the impact of the program. "The EcoGourmet program has allowed fishers and the association to obtain a better value for the fish. Before, a fisher had to extract a lot of fish to have a fair income. Now, with a smaller quantity of higher-quality fish, one does better," Sequeira says.

Sequeira and her co-workers start their day early in the morning to prepare the fish for delivery to the association's commercial partners. "It is a big effort. We must work very hard, but it is worth it. Thanks to EcoGourmet, we are doing better now."

BECAUSE OF YOUR GENEROSITY,

We Are Expanding Nature-Positive Economies

Conservation International is spurring investments from companies and donors that build sustainable supply chains for global commodities, including coffee and palm oil, and reward local fishers, herders and small-scale farmers for producing their goods and services in a way that does not degrade forests and rangelands or pollute freshwater sources. With partners, we aim to transform 40 million hectares (99 million acres) of globally important lands and waters to a planet-positive model that produces lasting conservation results and improved livelihoods.

Through the Yes4Youth program, Conservation South Africa provides jobs in rangelands management to women between the ages of 18 and 34. © Conservation International/photo by Ronald Newman

Building Women's Leadership in Conservation

Employment opportunities in South Africa's vast, semiarid Namaqualand are hard to come by. And though most people depend on the natural environment and raising livestock to support themselves, overgrazing, soil erosion and freshwater scarcity threaten this way of life.

To address these challenges, South Africa's Yes4Youth program provides a year of paid apprenticeships to people between the ages of 18 and 34. Through this program, Conservation South Africa provided jobs in rangelands management to women who then gained skills and experiences in fire and erosion control, fence management, water security and invasive plant removal.

Some have graduated to permanent positions with farming cooperatives that have signed conservation agreements with Conservation South Africa. As coordinators, the women work to ensure the cooperatives meet their commitments to sustainable livestock grazing methods and water management, in return for infrastructure such as water pumps; better access to livestock markets; and trainings in wetland management, restoration methods and wildlife-friendly predator control.

This success illustrates how conservation initiatives — in this case, those that focus on sustainable grazing and restoration of degraded rangelands — can also create employment opportunities for women.

Meet four young women who are now rangeland management leaders on page 19.

Investing in Local Nature-Positive Businesses Now Builds a Sustainable Future for Us All

Conservation International Ventures LLC (CI Ventures), an impact-first investment fund powered by philanthropic contributions and managed by Conservation International, invests in nature-positive businesses that create jobs and protect and restore forests, rangelands and oceans. To date, this groundbreaking fund has invested US$ 13.5 million in 36 businesses to leverage an additional US$ 86 million in financing from partners and follow-on investments — meaning every dollar Conservation International has invested has unlocked seven more dollars.

This year, the fund invested in nature-positive enterprises operating across Africa, Asia-Pacific and the Americas in sectors ranging from seaweed farming to food waste management.

In Mexico, for example, CI Ventures invested in the growth of two community-led coffee cooperatives that operate near protected forest areas and use sustainable farming practices. As climate change increasingly alters where coffee can grow, and with demand for the popular beverage showing no signs of slowing, investing in small producers now will help them adapt and continue to use the land already set aside for coffee cultivation — keeping nearby healthy forests intact while also improving local livelihoods.

In addition to CI Ventures, Conservation International continues to promote sustainable economic development in the Peruvian Amazon through the Amazon Business Alliance. In partnership with USAID (United States Agency for International Development) and the government of Canada, this initiative invests in sustainable businesses to improve quality of life for communities, while also reducing the degrading and clearing of forests. To date, over US$ 7 million has been invested in 12 sustainable businesses across the Peruvian Amazon, setting these businesses up to become eligible for loans, to access public funds and to find new markets — and ultimately supporting 2,800 local producers, including 900 women, in the coffee, cacao, aquaculture, medicinal plant and ecotourism business sectors.

As part of this partnership, Peruvian fashion designers traveled to the Yanesha Indigenous community in the Amazon to learn ancestral textile dying techniques, such as using natural materials like roots, tree bark and leaves. The designers incorporated these traditions into outfits that were then showcased at a fashion show in Lima in April. The innovative vision of the designers on the runway promoted broader conversations on sustainable fashion, the preservation of Indigenous culture and new opportunities for sustainable business development in the Peruvian Amazon.

US$

86

MILLION INVESTED

with partners in 36 nature-positive businesses

Women in the Yanesha Indigenous community in Peru use natural materials, like roots, tree bark and leaves, to create a palette of more than 20 colors for dyeing fabrics. © Conservation Internationl Peru/Marlon del Águila

FINANCE SPOTLIGHT

Bridging the Gap in the Maasai Mara

More than 80 percent of wildlife in Kenya's Maasai Mara region roam across lands owned, managed and protected by Indigenous peoples — many of whom earn their essential income by leasing this land (managed by associations known as "conservancies") to lodges and safari operators. The COVID-19 pandemic shut down tourism, putting wildlife-dependent incomes and protected habitats in jeopardy.

© Jonathan Irish

Through a collaboration with landowners, tourism partners, fellow nonprofits and the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association, Conservation International designed and launched the African Conservancies Fund. We raised funds from private individuals so that between December 2020 and December 2022, we could provide more than US$ 2 million in loans to four conservancies. The loans paid families in the Maasai Mara to continue to conserve their lands even in the absence of tourism revenue — bringing them money they could use to pay for health care, home repairs, children's school fees and more. And because tourism revenues support wildlife protection, the funding also ensured full-time employment of rangers to carry out regular wildlife patrols; this consistency resulted in zero poaching incidents reported.

Now that tourism in the Maasai Mara is returning to pre-pandemic levels, the conservancies are repaying their loans, and some have even expanded their lands. Conservation International is exploring opportunities to fund new conservancies and expand to other African countries. What began as an effort to help the Indigenous landowners and families in the Maasai Mara weather the pandemic is evolving into a model to scale up investments in conservation to benefit local communities and wildlife.

What began as an effort to help Indigenous landowners and families in the Maasai Mara weather the pandemic is evolving into a model to scale up investments in conservation to benefit local communities and wildlife. © Jonathan Irish

The Herding for Health (H4H) initiative puts livestock herding communities at the center of solutions to strengthen climate resilience and improve local livelihoods. © M&M Pictures

Collaborating To Restore African Grasslands, Savannas and Bushlands

Rangelands — vast grasslands, shrublands and savannas — cover two-thirds of the African continent, supporting iconic wildlife as well as the well-being and livelihoods of 50 million Indigenous and local farmers. However, more than 60 percent of these vital lands are now degraded due to climate change, overgrazing and urban development.

To revive Africa's rangelands, Conservation International and our partner Peace Parks Foundation developed the Herding for Health (H4H) model. This community-driven program provides training on sustainable grazing practices in exchange for benefits such as jobs, medicine and vaccinations for livestock, and improved market access.

What started as a small pilot project in 2017 with 348 farmers in one community in South Africa is now expanding to restore and sustainably manage 7 million hectares (over 17 million acres) of rangelands across Botswana, Kenya, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa by 2003 with funding from the French Development Agency (AFD) and the European Union. This expansion, centered around a strengthened partnership with Peace Parks Foundation announced at Africa Climate Week in September 2023, will build on successful conservation strategies to advance the well-being of communal livestock farmers, rebuild ecosystem resilience and sequester carbon in some of the world's most climate-vulnerable areas.

7

MILLION HECTARES

(over 17 million acres, about the area of South Carolina) of vitally important grasslands, savannas and bushlands under improved management

"This kind of collaboration is the best way to maintain the ecosystems that for 200,000 years have sustained life across the African continent."

Suzanne Ngo-Eyok, Senior Vice President and Chief Field Officer, Conservation International Africa

SCIENCE SPOTLIGHT

Our Science Guides Corporate Commitments to Nature

What can a company do today to build a nature-positive future? Conservation International serves as a core partner of the Science Based Targets Network (SBTN), which provides companies with the methods, tools and guidance to start answering that question. A global coalition of more than 80 environmental nonprofits and business associations, the SBTN released its first set of targets, focused on protecting land and improving freshwater quality, in May 2023. A pilot group of 17 companies are planning to set their first nature targets by the end of the year. This is a critical step toward building a future where companies take the right actions in the right places to tackle deforestation and biodiversity loss.

The Science Based Targets Network, a global coalition that includes Conservation International, released its first set of targets for companies to take the right actions in the right places to tackle deforestation and biodiversity loss. © Trond Larsen

At the 2023 Global Fashion Summit in Copenhagen, Conservation International's Executive Vice President Sebastian Troëng (second from right) joined The Fashion Pact partners to release a guide for fashion, textile and apparel businesses to protect and restore lands and waters. © Conservation International/photo by Katie Russell

What's in Demand This Season? Sustainable Fashion

The sourcing and production of raw materials for the fashion industry are too often unsustainable. Materials such as leather, rubber, cotton and viscose (commonly known as rayon) drive deforestation and land degradation; chemical use in fabric dyeing contributes to water pollution.

To help guide the industry toward a more sustainable future, Conservation International collaborates with The Fashion Pact. This initiative is led by CEOs of ready-to-wear, sport, lifestyle and luxury fashion and textile brands — from Asics to Prada — to tackle climate change, restore biodiversity in the fashion supply chain and protect the world's oceans.

Since our work began in 2020, the number of Fashion Pact companies with a biodiversity strategy in place is up nearly 50 percent. Also, at the 2023 Global Fashion Summit in Copenhagen, Conservation International and The Fashion Pact released the partnership's flagship publication: a guide for fashion, textile and apparel businesses on how to set science-based targets for nature and take actions to protect and restore lands and waters.

This year, Conservation International expanded its partnership with The Fashion Pact; together, we are developing a deforestation- and conversion-free roadmap for fashion's raw materials — and continuing to pave a path to a nature-positive fashion sector.

21%

OF FASHION PACT COMPANIES

have a biodiversity strategy — a 50% increase since 2020

"An opportunity Namaqualand youth are rarely granted."

—Helenice Vries

These four young women faced limited job prospects in South Africa. Conservation International's work to restore degraded rangelands opened economic opportunities for them.

JESVILINE KRIEL, 22 years old

Yes4Youth provided Jesviline her first-ever job. She gained hands-on experience in climate change adaptation, learning how to build rock-filled cages to help reduce soil erosion. She also learned how to work as part of a team. After she completed the program, a farming cooperative hired Jesviline as its full-time administrator; in this role, she guides sustainable grazing activities and monitors accounting practices.

SHAYLEE LINKS, 24 years old

During her apprenticeship, Shaylee learned how to reduce and prevent erosion, monitor ecological conditions and administer vaccines and medications to livestock. After also strengthening her communications, time management and personal finance skills, Shaylee was hired as a full-time administrator at a farming cooperative; in this role, she guides livestock farming and financial management.

MARITZA BEUKES, 28 years old

Through her Yes4Youth job, Maritza learned about climate change adaptation and developed administrative skills. After she completed the program, a farming cooperative hired Maritza as its full-time administrator; this role includes overseeing the cooperative's livestock handling training program.

HELENICE VRIES, 25 years old

For Helenice, her position with Yes4Youth meant she could support her household, including her 6-year-old son. She learned a range of skills, from restoration and erosion control to computer literacy and personal finance. After she completed her apprenticeship, a farming cooperative hired Helenice as its full-time administrator. She describes her experience as "an opportunity Namaqualand youth are rarely granted."

WITH YOU BY OUR SIDE,

We Are Reimagining Conservation

To make conservation work for all, it must be more conscious and inclusive. It must also continue to embrace and elevate the voices of Indigenous peoples and local communities, whose expertise and knowledge of the land and waters they steward is critical to addressing the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Conservation International is partnering to create a US$ 100 million fund for long-term support to the Māori-led ocean conservation actions. © Gerald Corsi/istock

Supporting Indigenous-Led Ocean Conservation in Aotearoa (New Zealand)

In Aotearoa (the Māori-language name for New Zealand), Conservation International is partnering with the Māori Indigenous peoples, scientists and economists to protect the island nation's coastal waters and high seas, guided by both traditional approaches and science.

Launched by CI at the U.N. climate talks in November 2022, the Hinemoana Halo initiative is rooted in the leadership and self-determination of the Māori peoples to respect and uphold their rights. As ocean conservation leaders, the Māori will manage the world's first Indigenous-led blue carbon project, which will generate benefits, like jobs and infrastructure, for coastal communities. ("Blue carbon" is the term used to describe the carbon locked up in marine and coastal ecosystems, such as mangroves and seagrasses.) The Māori will also develop a plan to recover endangered and threatened species that are sacred to them, including whales, sharks, sea lions, dolphins, manta rays and migrating seabirds. Conservation International is partnering to create a US$ 100 million fund for long-term support to the Māori-led ocean conservation activities.

Meet Aperahama Edwards, a Māori leader, on page 23.

Alongside the national government, Conservation International's team in Bolivia helped establish a network among Bolivian municipalities with protected areas to share knowledge and build partnerships. © Trond Larsen

Bolivia Achieves 2030 Target Years Ahead of Goal Through Strong Local Partnerships

Years ahead of schedule, Bolivia has met an ambitious goal to protect 30 percent of its land — thanks in large part to Amazonian towns and villages that are accelerating the pace and scale of conservation in the country.

Bolivia's last national protected areas were created in the early 2000s. Since then, local municipalities have stepped up. Today, their lands represent a third of all land under conservation in the country. With support from Conservation International, two new municipalities deep in the Amazon joined this growing effort this year.

Historically, Bolivia has had one of the highest deforestation rates in the world. In 2021 alone, it lost more than 550,000 hectares (1.4 million acres) of forest, an area nearly the size of Delaware. Turning this trend around requires strong partnerships with Indigenous peoples, local communities, and local and national governments. Alongside the national government, Conservation International's team in Bolivia has helped establish a network among Bolivian municipalities with protected areas to share knowledge and build partnerships.

Locally managed lands represent

30%

OF ALL LAND UNDER CONSERVATION IN BOLIVIA

"When people think about conservation they tend to think of national parks and other protected areas created by national governments. In this case, little by little, municipalities — some as small as 200 people — are having an impact on the Amazon."

Eduardo Forno, Vice President of Conservation International-Bolivia

SCIENCE SPOTLIGHT

Study Pinpoints the Lands and Seas That Are Most Critical to Human Well-Being

A new study, co-authored by Conservation International scientists, found that conserving 30 percent of Earth's land and 24 percent of the ocean would directly support the lives and livelihoods of more than 6 billion people. The research offers a new way to approach conservation by measuring and mapping natural areas that provide critical benefits for humanity — like fresh water, protection from flooding and fodder for grazing livestock.

"While nature matters everywhere, this study provides a new way to identify where people need nature to thrive," said Conservation International scientist Dave Hole, who co-authored the study. "Moreover, it shows that a relatively modest proportion of Earth's land and seas contributes 90 percent of the assets that are critical for human well-being."

The research is not only the most comprehensive global mapping of nature's benefits to people, but its methodology can be adapted to national or subnational decision-making — helping to better account for the impacts of conservation policies and investments on local communities worldwide.

FINANCE SPOTLIGHT

Economic Incentives for Forest Protection

Since 2008, Socio Bosque, a program developed by the Ecuadorian government with the technical support of Conservation International's Conservation Stewards Program, has been providing direct economic incentives for landowners and Indigenous communities who voluntarily commit to protecting their forests. In short: Agree not to cut down forests on your land, and in return, receive financial support from the government. This successful program continues to expand, now under the leadership of the first female president of an Achuar Indigenous community. A new agreement signed in 2023 with the Mashientz community will conserve 50,000 hectares (123,000 acres) of forest in the Ecuadorian Amazon. In return, Mashientz will receive a direct financial incentive of US$ 91,400 per year to provide development and well-being opportunities to 380 people from 90 families.

Conservation International is expanding a successful program in Ecuador that provides financial incentives to communities in return for protecting their forests. © Lucas Bustamante

Creating Opportunities for Visionary Indigenous Women

Conservation International is the global executing agency for the Dedicated Grant Mechanism (DGM) for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, a grant program for stemming forest loss by putting project design and funding decisions into the hands of communities.

This year, Conservation International organized the first-ever DGM Global Women's Meeting in Nepal, with support from the Climate Investment Funds and the World Bank. Indigenous and local women from nine countries shared their experiences and challenges, and prepared recommendations to address gender-based violence, access finance for women-led initiatives, increase women's leadership and improve coordination. Studies have shown that women disproportionately suffer the impacts of climate change because of cultural norms and the inequitable distribution of roles, resources and power, especially in developing countries. This meeting is one example of Conservation International's commitment to changing the narrative; it resulted in the creation of a women's network to provide a space for sharing and learning, as well as an action plan to promote Indigenous and local women's decision-making and leadership roles — and ensure their rights are recognized and respected.

On the other side of the world, the Amazonia Indigenous Women's Fellowship Program — led by Conservation International and COICA (Coordinator of the Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin) and funded by the French government — is an opportunity for Amazonia's Indigenous women to pursue their interests in conservation and climate-related activities. The region-wide program connects women with funding, training, mentoring and networking opportunities to change their world and ours.

Since its creation in 2021 as part of the Our Future Forests–Amazonia Verde project, the fellowship program has supported 96 Indigenous women from across the Amazon in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Suriname. In July 2023, the program welcomed its third cohort of fellows; over the next year, 35 women will work toward goals such as increasing Indigenous women's participation in local economies and revitalizing Indigenous knowledge.

Over the next year, 35 Indigenous women from across the Amazon will work toward goals such as increasing Indigenous women's participation in local economies and revitalizing Indigenous knowledge. © César David Martínez

Aperahama Edwards, leader of the Ngātiwai tribe, serves as co-chair of the Hinemoana Halo Ocean Fund. © Conservation International Aotearoa

"I know that our ancestral knowledge and traditional conservation practices hold solutions."

APERAHAMA EDWARDS

A conversation with Aperahama Edwards, leader of the Ngatiwai Tribe of Aotearoa (New Zealand).

Please describe your first memory of experiencing the ocean.
The ocean has been a constant in my life as long as I can remember, like breathing. I belong to the Ngatiwai tribe. *Wai* means water; we are an ocean people. I have lived my life hearing the waves, and time is governed by the tides. We turn to the ocean for physical, spiritual, mental, emotional and social well-being and support. One of our tribal proverbs says, "Even when I am upon the land, my heart is immersed in the sea."

Please describe your role as a partner to Conservation International's Hinemoana Halo initiative. What brought you to this role, and why are you doing this work?
My love for the natural world, or what we call *Taiao*, brought me to this role, and a sense of duty as a tribal leader given that our people, lands and waters are grappling with the impacts of climate change. Our siblings, the endemic flora and fauna of our lands and waters, are struggling; we can feel their *mauri* (life principal) is being diminished. I am doing this work because I know that our ancestral knowledge and traditional conservation practices hold solutions for these problems.

Why is it important for Māori tribes to lead solutions to protect and care for Aotearoa's ocean?
It is important because the ocean is a living ancestor, and we trace our genealogy back to it. The ocean has its own *mauri, tapu* (sacredness) and *mana* (prestige). We view ourselves as *Kaitiaki*, or stewards and guardians of the ocean.

What was it like to be a part of the largest Māori delegation to ever participate in a side event at the 2022 U.N. climate talks?
It was an incredible experience. I appreciated being able to share glimpses into our unique worldview, values and principles around conservation, our Hinemoana Halo project and the opportunity to network and learn from others. I was heartened to hear that people the world over, who have for generations forgotten the web of life, have started on their journey to remember how to listen and speak with our ancestors of the natural world, the Earth, the oceans, the sky, the forest.

The Hinemoana Halo initiative sets out to use both traditional approaches and current science. Please describe a few examples of traditional approaches and why it's important to carry on these traditions.
An example of a traditional approach is *Rahui*, a customary practice of habitat and ecosystem protection and restoration. Rahui takes a holistic view of the space being protected, both the physical and spiritual.

What are some of the impacts you and your family and community are already seeing from a changing climate and rising ocean, in your day-to-day lives?
Extreme weather events have become more frequent in Aotearoa. We have seasonal indicators that denote the time to undertake various activities; now, the time of year these indicators are appearing is changing. We have plants flowering and trees budding out of season, and the same thing is happening in the ocean.

What are your hopes and dreams for the future?
That our children and all future generations can be nurtured by our ancestors of the natural world and remain as stewards of our *taonga*.

Looking Ahead

Thanks to your generosity, we forged new partnerships and made considerable progress in protecting nature and people in the past year. Here are just two of our new initiatives launching this year with our community of local and global allies, all backed by your support.

New Documentary Shines a Light on One of the Greatest Tools To Stabilize Our Climate

Around the world, mangrove forests, seagrass meadows and tidal marshes (together known as coastal blue carbon ecosystems) capture and store significant amounts of climate-warming carbon.

Conservation International scientists have long known blue carbon's role as a climate superstar, using flexible funding over a decade ago to build an internationally recognized program that designs high-quality blue carbon projects in partnership with local communities; now, blue carbon is the star of its own documentary film.

Hosted by Grammy-nominated DJ and marine biologist Jayda G, with a soundtrack from the Wu-Tang Clan's RZA and Brazilian artist Seu Jorge, "Blue Carbon" weaves together music and science to uncover what could be our greatest tool to stabilize our climate.

From the shores of Colombia to the coastline of Vietnam, the film explores how the world is losing mangroves, seagrasses and tidal marshes at an alarming rate — and how we can work together to protect them from further destruction.

Dr. Emily Pidgeon, Conservation International's blue carbon lead, serves as the science technical advisor for the documentary, which will premiere in Germany, France and the U.K. in late 2023, followed by the U.S. in early 2024. Conservation International is an executive producer.

Where 1 Billion People Rely Directly on Nature, We Are Working With Partners To Plant 1 Billion Trees

Spanning northeast India, Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh, the Eastern Himalayan region represents more than 8 percent of global biodiversity and is home to 1 billion people who are some of the most climate-vulnerable on our planet, threatened by melting glaciers, rising sea levels, and ever more frequent and more violent storms.

In response, Conservation International and the Balipara Foundation of Assam, India, alongside a network of local partners from every corner of the Eastern Himalayas, are working on one of the largest restoration and conservation efforts in the history of South Asia. Announced at the G20 summit in New Delhi in September 2023, the Great People's Forest of the Eastern Himalayas seeks to raise US$ 1 billion, plant 1 billion trees and restore and protect 1 million hectares (2.47 million acres) of land across the region, from mountains to mangroves.

The goal is not to reinvent the wheel. An established network of local organizations is already implementing effective solutions to climate change, such as practicing regenerative agroforestry and community-led conservation. Yet, despite sharing a common goal to protect nature, local groups often inadvertently compete for the same limited resources to execute their projects. In a region where 80 percent of the economy depends on nature, joining forces to increase conservation is imperative.

"This may be the most important region the world has never heard of. It receives a fraction of the global attention and investment of other critical ecosystems like the Amazon or the Congo Basin — despite being one of the most threatened. Through our partnerships, we're looking to supercharge work that's already underway and put this region on the global conservation agenda."

Jason Knauf, Conservation International Global Leadership Fellow

Photo: Monica Álvarez, of the Yanesha Indigenous community in Peru, holds the native tree saplings she helped grow to restore degraded lands, as part of the Our Future Forests-Amazonia Verde project. With funding from the government of France, the project currently supports 27 groups of Indigenous peoples and local communities across seven countries — providing them with the tools, training and funding needed to build sustainable businesses and social enterprises that do not contribute to deforestation in the Amazon. © Conservation International Peru/Marlon del Águila

Here are a few things we want you to know:

- **Generous and visionary philanthropists** make our work possible and enable us to leverage public and corporate funding, quadrupling the impact of each flexible philanthropic dollar we receive.
- **Every dollar matters.** From leadership gifts from your foundation or donor-advised fund to bat mitzvahs, weddings and birthdays redirected to nature, or naming Conservation International as a beneficiary of your hard-earned estate — we promise to make the best use of your funds.
- We have a world-class, **highly engaged board of directors,** many of whom have spent decades committed to advancing our cause.
- **Our scientists rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of our programs,** and our research and tools empower governments, corporations and local communities to develop strategies and actions that protect nature for people.
- At least **30 percent of our annual budget is granted to partners and local communities** to deliver impact and build enduring capacity. We have the tools and systems to get funding to them quickly and help monitor results.
- Of our global field staff, **97 percent are from the various communities, ethnicities and cultures where we operate.**
- **We put people at the center of our work,** and we respect and include the people who live closest to and steward nature.

CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

Thank You

Every success story in this report — the groundbreaking research, the vast areas of nature protected and restored, the people benefiting from sustainable livelihoods — is possible because of the vision, passion and trust of our donors and partners. Thank you for your commitment to nature, to people and to our shared future.

CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

On the Cover: Working together is pivotal to protecting the future of all life on Earth. In an unprecedented partnership, Conservation International's Surf Conservation Program is teaming up with surfing communities to secure coastal forests, mangroves and coral reefs surrounding the world's best waves. In collaboration with Save The Waves Coalition and the World Surf League, and our in-country partner Konservasi Indonesia as the main implementer, our Surf Conservation Program has supported the creation of 18 Surf Protected Areas in Indonesia, with 20 more in development. This year, the program expanded this powerful approach to Costa Rica, Peru and Brazil.

Cover photo: Bali, Indonesia. © 2019 Wonderful Nature/Shutterstock

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