



Biodiversity & Protected Areas

Executive Summary

South America is one of the most biologically rich and globally critical regions for nature conservation. It harbours over 40% of the planet's biodiversity, contains about 25% of the world's forests, and approximately 26% of its freshwater resources. From the Andean range and Amazonian lowlands to the Gran Chaco, Pantanal, and dry forests of the Pacific slope, the region is not only species rich, but highly endemic and ecologically diverse. These ecosystems provide crucial ecosystem services, cultural values and livelihoods for Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Yet this biodiversity is under increasing threat. The main drivers of loss include largescale land use change (deforestation for agriculture, livestock, agricultural production, expansion of road and infrastructure networks), habitat fragmentation, illegal mining and extractive activities, pollution, invasive species, and the accelerating impacts of climate change. As these pressures escalate, the effectiveness of protected areas (PAs) and other effective conservation measures is increasingly challenged.

Governance and management challenges in the region are diverse. Many PAs are under-resourced: lacking sufficient funding, staff, enforcement capacity, monitoring, community engagement, or integration with surrounding landscapes. Overlaps with Indigenous and community conserved territories, ambiguity or weak tenure or rights of local/Indigenous communities, insufficient legal frameworks or political will, corruption or weak rule of law also reduce effectiveness. In many cases, protection is more nominal than real: threats from illegal deforestation, encroachment, and land conversion continue inside PAs. The combination of these threats with climate change and changing socioeconomic pressures (population growth, market demand for agricultural and extractive commodities) means that both the coverage and the management quality of PAs must be strengthened to halt biodiversity loss in South America.

The mission towards 2030, is to take urgent action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and to put nature on a path to recovery for the benefit of people and planet by conserving and sustainably using biodiversity and by ensuring the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of genetic resources, while providing the necessary means of implementation. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) recognises and considers diverse value systems and concepts, including, for those countries that recognise them, rights of nature and rights of Mother Earth, as an integral part of its successful implementation.

Program Targets

Effective conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services has contributed significantly to addressing the nature - global change nexus, including through Nature-based Solutions to build ecosystem and societal resilience and reduce the risks to nature of unsustainable responses to anthropogenic global crises.

- The effective protection, conservation and restoration of terrestrial key biodiversity areas, other areas important for biodiversity, ecosystems and species has been achieved equitably and inclusively.
- The integration of the biodiversity and health sectors is advanced through the One Health approach establishing a pathway towards improved human, wildlife and ecosystem health.
- IUCN standards and tools on species, ecosystems, protected and conserved areas, and Key Biodiversity Areas and other areas important for biodiversity have informed and guided implementation and monitoring of the KMGBF.
- National and sub-national governments, Indigenous peoples and local communities, and civil society have been supported in implementing plans for fair and effective systems of protected and conserved areas.

Geographical Opportunities

- ♣ Amazon basin | Andes Mountains | Dry Forests (Perú & Ecuador) | Guiana Shield | Pantanal | Gran Chaco | Chocó bioregion | Cerrado savannas | Atlantic Forest | Mangroves in the tropical Pacific & Atlantic coasts

Investment Opportunities

Donors can engage with the IUCN Regional Office for South America for innovative approaches in biodiversity conservation for climate resilience, effective management of Protected Areas, monitoring and guiding species conservation efforts, scaling pilots with proven impact, through project funding, small grants schemes and earmarked support or multistakeholder coalitions. Regional opportunities include:

- **Promoting effective management of protected and conserved areas using the IUCN Green List Standard:** By positioning the Green List Standard as a guiding tool to assess and recognize good governance, sound planning, effective management, and conservation results. It includes technical assistance, policy support to governments to integrate or align the standard into national frameworks, enhance institutional capacities, and apply tools that ensure equitable and effective area-based conservation.
- **Red List of Ecosystems (RLE):** Advise and support national and/or regional assessments and application of the IUCN Red List of Ecosystems in South America: updating national ecosystems classification, identifying ecosystems at risk (from collapse), and assessment for land use planning and decision-making including restoration and conservation prioritization. These includes strengthening national capacities, improving data and monitoring systems, and integrating RLE into national and subnational strategies.
- **Species Conservation Action:** Support targeted species conservation interventions, national and regional expert meetings and management of data bases for threatened, endemic, or keystone species in South America. Includes threat mitigation (hunting, habitat loss, trade), population monitoring, recovery plans, breeding and reintroduction, community-based species protection, restoration of habitats and KBAs. Furthermore, embedding species action into broader planning to maximize impact.
- **Strengthening Voluntary Reserves, Indigenous Territories, and Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMs):** Promote the recognition, strengthening, and effective management of OECMs, including private reserves and other community-led conservation initiatives. This includes tailored technical assistance, support for appropriate governance frameworks, promote connectivity and alignment with IUCN tools and standards to ensure long-term conservation quality and permanence. Priority will be given to integrating these areas into public policy, sustainable finance mechanisms, and broader landscape-level conservation planning.
- **Reducing wildlife traffic and illegal timber trade across South America:** Strengthening law enforcement, monitoring, enhancing institutional capacities, and fostering cross-border cooperation. Targeted support and advisory services to key stakeholders. Promote sustainable bio-economy models as alternatives to illicit activities, with a special focus on the trafficking of marine species and other CITES-listed fauna and flora. Addressing illegal hunting and logging within and around protected areas to reinforce conservation efforts.
- **Promoting the One-Health Approach:** Investing in programs that integrate human, animal (wild/domestic), and ecosystem health in interventions, especially in areas where zoonotic spillover risk is high, ecosystems are degraded, land use change is rapid, or wildlife trade is intense. This could include disease surveillance tied to ecosystem monitoring, habitat restoration that reduces contact between wildlife and humans, policy/strategy to mainstream One Health in national biodiversity/environment/health planning.

Why Partner with IUCN?

- Over 75 years of global conservation leadership.
- Trusted network: states, subnational governments, NGOs, Indigenous organizations, academia.
- Evidence-based and rights-focused approaches.
- Strong regional presence and impact measurement systems.
- Science-based international policy work strengthening multilevel dialogues with practical solutions.

South America is rising. Join us in advancing bold action for people and nature.

Contact

IUCN Regional Office for South America

samerica@iucn.org / https://linktr.ee/uicn_sur