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Audubon

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN FOR
THE AMERICAS

FEBRUARY 2017

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN FOR THE AMERICAS

Developed by twelve partners of the BirdLife Partnership in Latin America
and the Caribbean with leadership from Audubon and BirdLife International

ARGENTINA — THE BAHAMAS — BELIZE — BOLIVIA — BRAZIL — CHILE — COLOMBIA

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC — EL SALVADOR — MEXICO — PANAMA — PARAGUAY

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN
FOR THE AMERICAS

BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL is the world's largest nature conservation partnership. Together we are 122 BirdLife Partners—one per country or territory and growing—with 13 million members and supporters, over 4,000 local conservation groups, and 8,000 staff. BirdLife's vision is a world rich in biodiversity, where people and nature live in harmony. We are driven by our belief that local people, working for nature in their own places and connected nationally and internationally through our global partnership, are the key to sustaining all life on this planet. In the Americas, the BirdLife Partnership network comprises 19 national conservation NGOs spanning North, Central, and South America, and the Caribbean, from the Canadian tundra to Tierra del Fuego.

www.birdlife.org

THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY (AUDUBON), the BirdLife Partner in the U.S., has been the U.S. leader in protecting birds and the places they need since 1905. With an unparalleled network of 23 state pro-grams, 41 nature centers, 463 chapters, and one million members, today's Audubon is tackling the most urgent environmental issues through science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation. Working with the BirdLife Partnership in the Americas, we extend our reach and impact throughout the Western hemisphere to support full life-cycle protection of migratory birds.

www.audubon.org

SHORELINE IN PACORA, PANAMA CITY, PANAMÁ
PHOTO: KARL KAUFMANN/AUDUBON PANAMÁ

This *Climate Action Plan for the Americas,* developed with generous support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, provides a roadmap to a sustainable and resilient future for ecosystems across Latin America and the Caribbean, and for the birds and people they support.

The strategies it outlines will deliver climate adaptation, mitigation, and conservation outcomes at critical sites across the region. It will guide BirdLife's National Partners to affect change in their own countries; it will also unite the full BirdLife network to achieve results at scale across the region over the next five years. Equally important, it establishes a shared framework for building stronger relationships and collaboration with NGOs, governments, academia, and other key institutions as we work together to address climate change.

As the first comprehensive plan addressing the impact of climate change on birds and ecosystems in the region, our plan draws its strength from a continental-scale scientific analysis, and the contributions of a cohesive network of partners with expertise and experience in conservation and science as well as a deep connection to and understanding of the region's socio-economic, political, and environmental context. Our year-long process involved staff from BirdLife International, National Audubon Society (Audubon), and BirdLife Partners from 12 countries. In addition to this comprehensive regional plan, each of the 12 partners developed a detailed, national country plan to guide their work locally based on input from their national governments and other organizations (*see accompanying document*). Regional and national strategies were developed simultaneously, to promote the sharing and incorporation of best practices, science, and ideas across boundaries—and to open a region-wide dialogue on climate change, birds, and people. The plans were developed using the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation[1]; this widely used approach is science-based, focuses actions on measurable outcomes, and offers a scalable methodology that we could apply at the country and regional level.

This *Climate Action Plan for the Americas* aims to ensure that the remarkable and diverse birds of Latin America and the Caribbean will thrive into the future. But while birds will help lead us to our work, they will not be the only ones to reap its benefit. A brighter future for birds and the places they need also means a healthier and more resilient future for ecosystems and communities that depend on them. By connecting the dots between climate, birds, and people, we can unleash a network of conservationists, development experts, and others working towards climate solutions through on-the-ground conservation, science, and policy— for birds, biodiversity, and people.

Our Vision

A comprehensive network of effectively managed and climate-resilient Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) and other critical sites across Latin America and the Caribbean that continue to support birds, other biodiversity, and people in the face of climate change.

> ❯ **2022 Goals**

1 Improve the conservation status and climate resilience of IBAs covering 74 million hectares (183 million acres), to maintain and enhance their carbon capture and storage capacity, and to help birds and people adapt to climate change

  › Improve the resilience and adaptive capacity of coastal wetland IBAs covering 8.6 million hectares (21.3 million acres)

  › Improve the resilience and adaptive capacity of inland and high-altitude wetland IBAs covering 16.3 million hectares (40.2 million acres)

  › Foster and enhance conservation and climate-smart management[2] of 13.7 million hectares (33.9 million acres) of native grassland

  › Support and promote the conservation, restoration, and climate-smart management of 35.3 million hectares (87.2 million acres) of forest IBAs

2 Establish a region-wide Climate Watch program that strengthens avian monitoring for climate change across all IBAs, complements national and regional monitoring systems, informs policy decisions, and supports adaptive management

3 Incorporate nature-based solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation into Nationally Determined Contributions, national adaptation plans, or other relevant policies of at least eight countries, and regional development and investment strategies

4 Strengthen the financial, institutional, and technical capacity of the BirdLife Partnership and other stakeholders in at least 12 countries to implement ecosystem-based mitigation and adaptation projects at key IBAs, to facilitate species adaptation and to shape climate and biodiversity policy
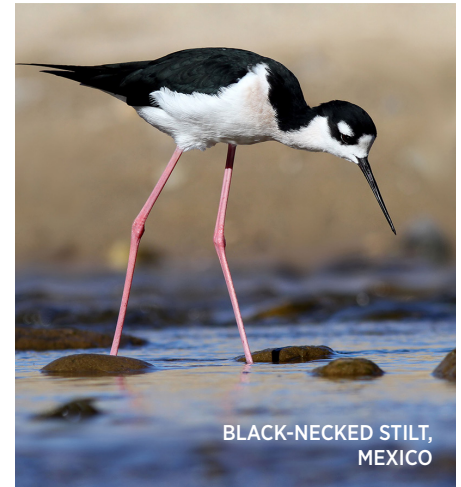
BLACK-NECKED STILT, MEXICO

IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) are sites identified as internationally important for the conservation of bird populations on the basis of globally standardized criteria. The program was developed and sites are identified by BirdLife International. IBAs also form the core of the global network of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs): sites that are important for the global persistence of biodiversity. BirdLife manages the World Database of Key Biodiversity Areas (www.keybiodiversityareas.org) on behalf of the KBA partnership, a consortium of 11 organizations including BirdLife International, IUCN, Amphibian Survival Alliance, Conservation International, Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, Global Environment Facility, Global Wildlife Conservation, NatureServe, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, World Wildlife Fund, and Wildlife Conservation Society.

We must act now

Without bold, collective action, the unprecedented threat of climate change will destabilize economies, disrupt the ecological processes that underpin human well-being, and drive Earth toward its greatest mass extinction since the dinosaurs.

People in Latin America and the Caribbean will find their livelihoods and even lives threatened by food and water shortages and increases in insect-borne diseases. Ecosystems, infrastructure, and people will also be at risk from increasingly frequent heatwaves, particularly in tropical coastal areas, and from flooding and landslides associated with extreme rainfall. Caribbean countries are especially vulnerable, with sea level rise during this century expected to result in the loss of over 2,500 square kilometers (1,000 square miles) of coastline—including agricultural land, important tourism assets, and critical turtle nesting habitat—leaving one million people exposed to flooding from storm surges[3]. Poor and marginalized individuals and communities—often those who have contributed the least to causing climate change—are likely to suffer the earliest and gravest consequences. And birds, as indicators of overall ecosystem health, are sounding a warning.

The Messengers—a global synthesis of hundreds of scientific studies produced by BirdLife International and Audubon in 2015—found that climate change has already led to shifts in the distribution of bird species, disrupted

interactions between competitors, predators and prey, and shifted the timing of key events such as breeding and migration. In Mexico, for example, rapid loss of endemic species in recent years already has been linked to rising temperatures. Further, the global impacts of climate change are anticipated to intensify[4] and projections suggest that climate change could become the leading cause of biodiversity loss in this century. In addition, our comprehensive continental scale science analysis of climate change's impacts on birds, which underpins this plan, found that, on average, the 3,801 bird species of Latin America and the Caribbean

stand to lose half their range by mid-century.

This *Climate Action Plan for the Americas* comes at a time when temperature records are being broken every year and when the window of opportunity for putting the world on a 1.5 degrees Celsius pathway[5] is quickly closing. But if we act now, we can still foster a vibrant, climate-resilient future for the forests, grasslands, beaches, and mangroves of Latin America and the Caribbean, support sustainable economies, ensure the provision of ecosystem services essential for people, and help birds like the Harpy Eagle and the Spix Macaw thrive.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement adopted in 2015 set the political stage for international and national progress on climate, and guided by the shared vision represented in this plan, the BirdLife Partnership in the Americas is ready to act. By spearheading the adoption of practices and policies that conserve, restore, and manage ecosystems to make them more resilient, we can buffer people from climate-related impacts and hazards and deliver critical social, economic, and environmental benefits.

PIPING PLOVER RESEARCH,
JOULTER CAYS, BAHAMAS
PHOTO: WALKER GOLDER/AUDUBON

THE SCIENCE FOUNDATION FOR OUR PLAN

At the heart of this *Climate Action Plan for the Americas* is a continent-wide scientific analysis, a collaborative effort led by Audubon, BirdLife, and Durham University. This analysis explored the potential impacts of future climate change on 3,801 species at 1,139 IBAs in the region—sites already identified as the most critical habitat sites for birds. Species distribution models were created to characterize the relationship between species distributions[6] and recent climate variables, and to project species' distributions in 2050 based on a business-as-usual emissions scenario[7]. The following are key findings of our bird and climate science analysis (*see accompanying Science Report*).

> Ranges are projected to decrease 56% by mid-century, on average, across 3,801 bird species analyzed.

> Seventy-two globally threatened species are among those that will suffer the greatest impacts.

> Climate change will put many currently common birds at risk, too—in fact, the majority of species with the greatest projected range loss have not yet been identified as species of high conservation concern.

> As climate change drives shifts in species' ranges, IBAs can play an increasingly important role in helping species adapt; median turnover of priority species was 33% across all IBAs, and 44 IBAs had turnover rates above 70% for priority species.

> There were 190 IBAs with projected high turnover rates and a lack of observation data, making them critical priorities for monitoring.

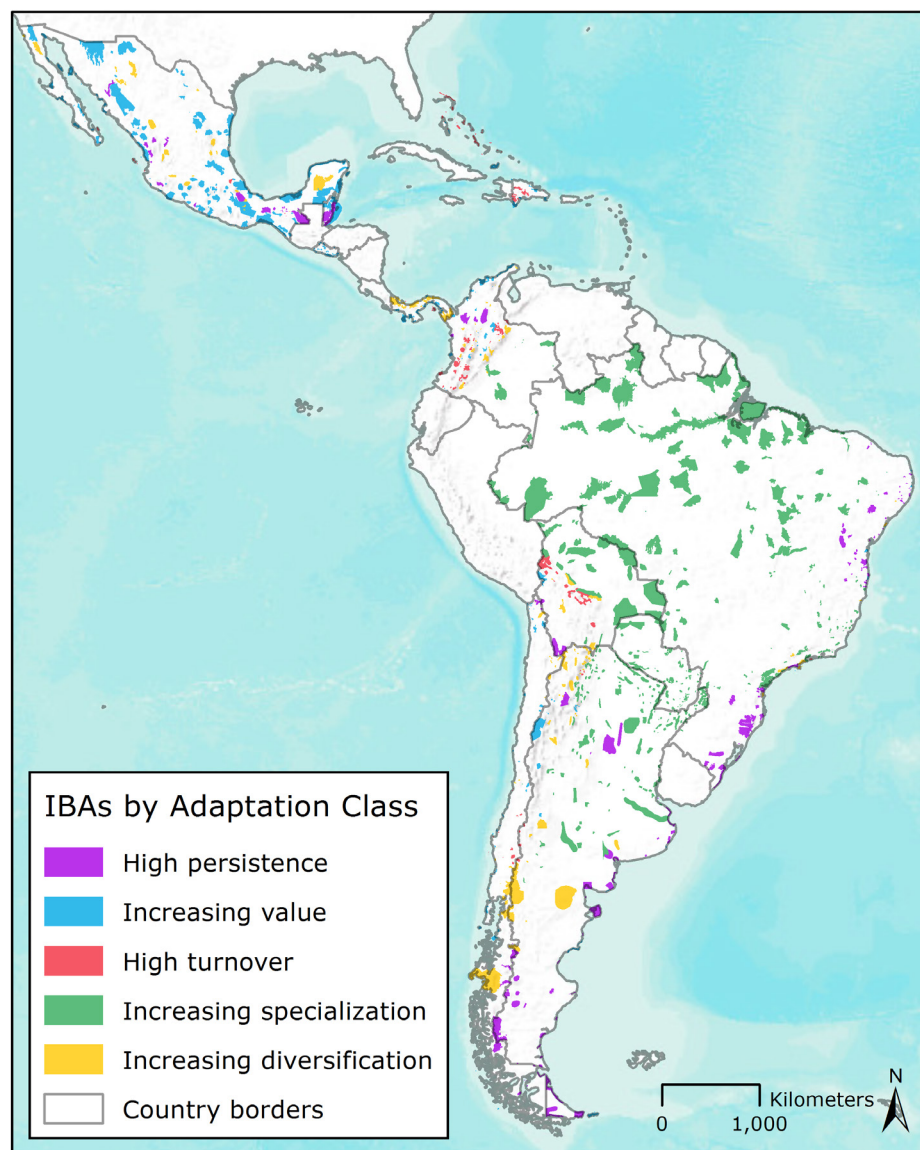> 84% of IBAs currently have either no or inadequate protection.

IBA Adaptation Classification

As part of our analysis, we grouped and mapped IBAs on the basis of the proportion of species expected to leave or colonize as a result of climate change—species turnover. This provides a framework for determining required adaptation interventions. IBAs with **high persistence**, which are expected to have continued importance for current species, along with IBAs with **increasing value**, are priorities for protection, site expansion, restoration, and possible species translocations. IBAs with **high turnover**, including sites with **increasing specialization** (more species leaving), or **increasing diversification** (moderate numbers of species leaving and colonizing) are priorities for sustained monitoring, for ensuring habitat connectivity to facilitate movement, and for possible habitat restoration and species translocation.

PRIORITIES FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

We also assessed the needs and potential for additional avian monitoring across the region through an analysis made possible by generous support from the Leo Model Foundation. This study identified IBAs with high monitoring need (where information on species occurrence is lacking) and potential (where accessibility is high and birders frequent). These areas of high monitoring need and potential were combined with the climate change adaptation classes to inform monitoring priorities for the region.

IBAs by Adaptation Class
- ■ High persistence
- ■ Increasing value
- ■ High turnover
- ■ Increasing specialization
- ■ Increasing diversification
- □ Country borders

Kilometers
0   1,000

N

ÁREA DE CONSERVACIÓN EJIDO PUEBLO NUEVO, DURANGO, MÉXICO PHOTO: ROGER SAFFORD

THE FRAMEWORK FOR OUR PLAN

Our plan is framed by two sets of strategies. Through four Ecosystem Strategies focused on wetlands (coastal, and inland and high-altitude), grasslands, and forests, we will advance science-based solutions that prepare ecosystems, birds, and people for changing weather patterns, sea level rise, and other climate change impacts. These strategies encompass a range of interventions: ecosystem-based approaches that help humans mitigate and adapt to climate change; climate-smart practices for agriculture and livestock farming (defined as practices that increase productivity, enhance resilience, and reduce or remove greenhouse gases); and a range of conservation interventions to help the region's most vulnerable species and sites adapt to climate change.

Three Enabling Strategies, focused on science, policy, and capacity building, will ensure that all 12 BirdLife Partners represented in this plan are equipped to carry out and apply sophisticated bird and climate science, to work effectively with governments and other non-governmental partners to address climate threats, and to inform and guide climate and biodiversity policy in the region.
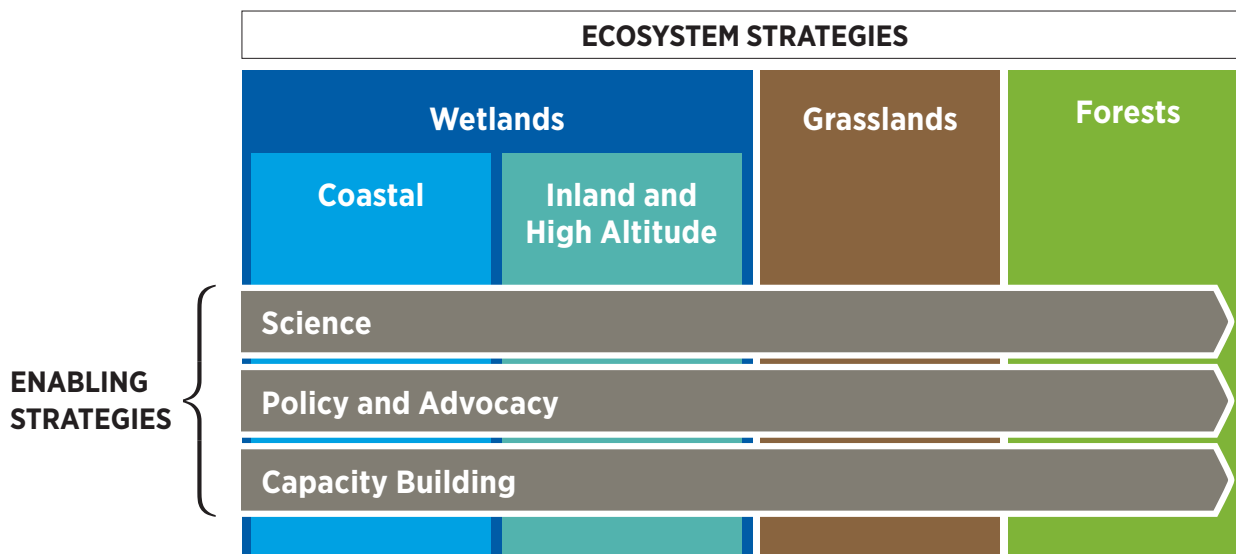
CENTRAL ANDEAN PUNA
PHOTO: JONATHAN STACEY

ECOSYSTEM STRATEGIES

The scope of the *Climate Action Plan for the Americas* for the BirdLife Americas Partnership covers an extensive area from Mexico and the Bahamas to Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of Argentina and Chile. Defining a manageable number of ecosystem or major habitat types as region-wide targets for conservation planning under climate change in such a heterogeneous region is challenging. We began with IBAs as they are BirdLife's building blocks, being identified and widely recognised as internationally important for conservation on the basis of rigorous globally standardised criteria, and because BirdLife Partners are already working at many of these sites in the region. To make sure we were incorporating other vital habitat we added significant protected areas of high conservation value that have not yet been designated

IBAs. The resulting suite of conservation targets was categorized on the basis of biogeography, ecological similarity, conservation status, threats, and expected or projected climate change impacts.

We developed grouped habitats based on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) classification system, and segmented our targets for conservation divided into four broad habitat categories: **Coastal Wetlands**, **Inland and High-altitude Wetlands**, **Grasslands**, and **Forests**. This approach facilitates ecosystem-wide planning and implementation, provides for efficient sharing of best practices and collaboration across national boundaries, and focuses our work at a scale that can deliver significant impact. The following pages provide an overview of strategies for each of these ecosystems.

BIODIVERSITY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Latin America and the Caribbean encompass a dazzling array of landscapes, from the peaks of the Andes to the beaches and mangroves of the Caribbean islands, and from the sweeping grasslands of Mexico and the Southern Cone to the tropical rainforests of the Amazon. The region holds an astounding forty percent of the world's biodiversity: almost half of the world's tropical forests, 33% of its mammals, 35% of its reptile species, 50% of its amphibians, and 41% of its birds.[8] But this rich mosaic of vibrant ecosystems—and the well-being of the millions of people that depend on them—are at unprecedented risk from climate change.

PRONATURA SUR'S MANGROVE AND
CLIMATE CHANGE CORRIDOR INITIATIVE
PHOTO: JESUS GARCÍA RODRÍGUEZ

COASTAL WETLANDS

Coastal wetlands throughout Latin America and the Caribbean provide rich habitat for 156 coastal wetland species, including the endangered Red Knot, as well as hundreds of terrestrial bird species and other terrestrial and marine biodiversity. Places like Panama Bay include salt marshes, intertidal mud and sand flats, beaches, cays, mangrove forests, and estuaries that underpin local and national economies, and provide nurseries for commercial fisheries and destinations for tourists. Equally important, coastal wetlands protect communities from storm surges and rising seas that could cost billions of dollars in losses, and they play a significant global role in climate mitigation.

The Climate Threat

The coastal wetlands of Latin America and the Caribbean are already being degraded and lost at an alarming rate as the result of a multitude of threats, including coastal development, pollution, and shortsighted river system management. Furthermore, only 13% of IBAs with coastal wetland habitat have full protection. Ironically, some efforts to protect communities from climate change, including costly seawalls and other hard infrastructure approaches, can reduce coastal wetland resilience in the long term. Our analysis shows that ranges for coastal wetland species will lose 18% of their current area, on average, by mid-century, and this does not include habitat lost to sea level rise. Meanwhile, coastal communities will face an ever-growing threat from sea level rise and storms.

BIRDLIFE PARTNERS ON COASTAL WETLANDS

Aves Argentinas
ARGENTINA

Bahamas National Trust
THE BAHAMAS

Belize Audubon Society
BELIZE

SAVE Brasil
BRAZIL

CODEFF
CHILE

Calidris
COLOMBIA

Grupo Jaragua
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

SalvaNatura
EL SALVADOR

Pronatura
MEXICO

Panama Audubon Society
PANAMA

How We Will Work

The potential impact of climate change on coastal wetlands and communities demands a multi-pronged and timely response that engages communities, policy-makers, coastal developers, and industries, such as aquaculture and tourism. The BirdLife Partnership will carry out science-based advocacy—regional and national—for protection, restoration, and enhancement of coastal wetland IBAs. Each of these actions is a vital step toward improved coastal resilience for cities, communities, and infrastructure, as functioning coastal wetlands can effectively mitigate the threat of flooding. We will work to ensure that coastal development projects incorporate the protective role of natural wet-lands in their plans and operations and to increase wetland resilience by promoting better management of upstream lands, hydrology, and urban waste. Through this suite of strategies, we will reduce the impacts of climate change on coastal wetlands and improve the outlook for birds, biodiversity, communities, and economies.

> ### ❯ 2022 Goal
>
> Improve the resilience and adaptive capacity of coastal wetland IBAs covering 8.6 million hectares (21.3 million acres) by increasing their formal protection, promoting sustainable management and resto-ration, and communicating their value for climate change mitigation and human adaptation.

REDDISH EGRET

Restoring Mangroves in Mexico Enhances Carbon Sequestration and Benefits the Community

Mangroves are among the largest natural reservoirs of carbon in the tropics; they also encompass some of the most important habitat for birds and other wildlife. However, they are vulnerable to many threats, including habitat destruction from over-development and over-exploitation. These are compounded by climate change impacts, such as sea level rise. Pronatura (BirdLife in Mexico) is leading efforts to restore mangroves in the Gulf of Mexico and Chiapas-Oaxaca. Pronatura is also working with partners and community members to build awareness of the ecological value of the mangroves and their importance to climate resilience. These efforts will ensure the effective storage of carbon and improve the habitat for resident and migratory waterbirds such as Reddish Egret.

Strategy 1	**Expand the protection, conservation, restoration, and sustainable management of coastal IBAs to enhance resilience to climate change, support threatened species, increase carbon storage, and secure the provision of ecosystem services to people**

OBJECTIVE 1

By 2022, the number of coastal wetland IBAs conserved through protected areas or other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) has increased by 3 million hectares across 10 countries through the establishment of new protected areas and adoption of climate-smart management plans

› Work with two regional conservation initiatives—the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative and Pacific Flyway Shorebird Business Plan—to incorporate coastal wetland adaptation and resilience work with coastal communities to promote and enact sustainable, climate-smart management and conservation of priority coastal wetland IBAs

› Identify and address avian and climate-related data gaps for coastal wetlands

› Integrate coastal wetland IBAs into Marine Protected Area (MPA) priorities and designation programs to ensure that coastal bird species are recognized in the MPA process

› Develop science-based communication materials urging governments to establish new coastal protected areas to support ecosystem-based adaptation to sea level rise and storm surge

› Work with government agencies, NGOs, and other key stakeholders to update existing management plans for coastal protected areas to make them climate smart

› Review the protection status and management of critical coastal wetland IBAs to identify wetlands that should be included by Ramsar as wetlands of international importance

› Work with Ramsar Secretariat and stakeholders to strengthen the Ramsar mechanisms in the region, to share best practices and knowledge, and to secure protection for additional sites under the Ramsar Convention

Strategy 2	Deliver climate science and economic analyses to help ensure that ecosystem-based coastal mitigation and adaptation strategies are incorporated into national policies and bilateral/multilateral investment strategies

OBJECTIVE 1

By 2019, the evidence base and people's awareness of the socio-economic benefits of healthy coastal wetlands and their importance for mitigation and coastal resilience is strengthened

› Gather and map future climate scenarios including sea level rise at coastal IBAs across five target countries

› Conduct an analysis of climate risk to coastal infrastructure, aquifers, and wetlands in five countries

› Review and synthesize analyses of the economic value of coastal wetland services, and the cost-effectiveness of ecosystem-based approaches for adaptation and mitigation

› Deliver audience-tailored messaging of the results to local/national governments, businesses, communities, and other key stakeholders

OBJECTIVE 2

By 2022, NDCs and/or national adaptation plans in at least eight countries in the region include commitments to coastal wetland conservation and ecosystem-based mitigation and adaptation (i.e. mangrove and salt marsh conservation/restoration)

› Build cross-sectoral partnerships for advocacy (e.g. development NGOs, conservation NGOs, communities)

› Identify/develop and promote a series of ecosystem-based and bird-friendly adaptation strategies to inform national NDCs and management agencies

› Develop country-specific advocacy and communication tools, including climate science, case studies, and reports, to inform advocacy processes

› Advocate, together with partner organizations, for the inclusion of commitments to coastal wetland conservation/restoration in NDCs and national adaptation plans

OBJECTIVE 3

By 2022, BirdLife Partners are working with development banks and lending agencies to promote and guide investments in ecosystem-based approaches for coastal resilience and to incorporate IBAs into safeguard policies

› Build on and expand existing partnerships with bilateral and multilateral agencies in national offices and headquarters

› Share climate and biodiversity science, case studies of ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation and mitigation, and insights with bilateral and multilateral investment agencies investing in the Americas

› Work with bilateral and multilateral agencies to align organizational priorities and to help guide investments so that they support coastal resilience and ecosystem-based approaches to mitigation and adaptation

Strategy 3	Develop and promote best practices for coastal land-use planning
	OBJECTIVE 1 By 2022, land-use plans developed or revised in at least five target countries that encompass critical coastal wetland habitat or upstream watersheds account for climate change and promote better protection and sustainable management of wetlands › Identify and compile examples of effective coastal land-use planning and industry regulations that promote coastal resilience, as well as socio-economic and ecological sustainability › Work with planning agencies, key sectors, and local governments to implement pilot projects and case studies on the use of best practices supporting climate-smart adaptation and resilience › Revise and update land-use plans for critical coastal wetland habitat or upstream watersheds to improve their protection, sustainable management, and resilience under different climate scenarios › Develop science-based analyses to inform decision-makers and local/national governments on the best land-use and development practices to support climate-smart adaptation and resilience › Monitor and assess the impacts of these practices and advise decision-makers and local/national governments on results and opportunities to increase their effectiveness › Advocate to decision-makers and local/national governments for regulations to secure the protection and sustainable management of coastal wetlands that are under economic use

Strategy 4	Improve biodiversity monitoring of coastal IBAs to assess changes in the habitats and coastal-dependent bird species, identify threats, and evaluate the effectiveness of management responses
	OBJECTIVE 1 By 2020, strengthen monitoring across all coastal IBAs within the scope of the project with special emphasis on sites with limited or no avian data › Analyze monitoring needs and priorities across coastal IBAs within the target countries › Convene BirdLife Americas coastal working group to agree on coastal monitoring protocols and identify active partners and funding opportunities to strengthen and grow appropriate monitoring needs for coastal IBAs › Promote inclusion of climate monitoring programs at priority sites in the Atlantic and Pacific Flyway Shorebird plans

LAGUNA PUTANA, SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA, CHILE PHOTO: ANA IÑIGO

INLAND AND HIGH-ALTITUDE WETLANDS

Inland and high-altitude wetlands provide essential habitat for 717 bird species of the Americas, including many migratory species. Healthy, functional, and resilient inland wetlands at both high and low altitudes also play a critical role in the provision of freshwater resources for people as well as biodiversity. They help meet the demand for drinking water and irrigation, provide clean water that supports fisheries, provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, and store carbon, particularly in peat bogs.

The Climate Threat

Inland and high-altitude wetlands already face a multitude of threats, including agricultural and industrial pollution, conversion to agricultural lands, and upstream water use that alters flow and reduces available water. Climate change compounds these challenges with new ones. Droughts, anticipated to increase in both frequency and intensity in some regions, will lead to lower water levels and shrinking wetlands. Glacial retreat will drain high-altitude wetlands such as Andean peat bogs, many of which are fed primarily by glacial meltwater. In the near future, many glacier-dependent wetland ecosystems are expected to dry up entirely or for at least several months per year—eliminating valuable carbon sinks. In addition, short-sighted responses to climate change and development activities such as increased upstream diversions for agriculture and mining also jeopardize high-altitude and inland

BIRDLIFE PARTNERS ON INLAND AND HIGH-ALTITUDE WETLANDS

Aves Argentinas
ARGENTINA

Asociación Armonía
BOLIVIA

SAVE Brasil
BRAZIL

CODEFF
CHILE

Calidris
COLOMBIA

Grupo Jaragua
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Pronatura
MEXICO

Guyra Paraguay
PARAGUAY

wetlands. Our science analysis projects that range sizes for birds that depend on these habitats will be only 57% of their current extent, on average, by mid-century. And only 20% of these inland wetlands are currently protected. The potential loss of these vital ecosystems carries a high cost for human well-being—as watershed health declines, so do essential ecosystem services like clean water and carbon storage.

How We Will Work

Science, policy action, capacity building, and on-the-ground conservation are all needed to make inland wetlands more resilient and sustainable. A key priority of our plan is to further

our understanding of how climate change impacts the birds, biodiversity, and economies that depend on them. We will identify, share, and advance cost-effective best practices for restoring and managing wetlands that increase their resilience to the impacts from climate change. And we will engage with national and regional governments and bilateral and multilateral institutions to incorporate our climate adaptation and mitigation recommendations into conservation and development initiatives and investments. Through these efforts, pressures to inland and high-altitude wetlands will be reduced and habitats will more easily adapt and become resilient to impacts from changes in the climate.

> ## ❯ 2022 Goal
>
> Improve the resilience and adaptive capacity of inland and high-altitude wetland IBAs covering 16.3 million hectares (40.2 million acres) by increasing their formal protection, promoting sustainable management and restoration, and communicating their value for climate change mitigation and human adaptation.

QUECHUA COMMUNITY, BOLIVIAN ANDES

Conserving the High Andean Wetlands Supports Birds and People

The wetlands of the high Andes provide fresh water for more than 100 million people, and store significant amounts of carbon. These montane wetlands are also home to a wide range of bird species, including the Titicaca Grebe, Andean Flamingo, and other wildlife. Unregulated and unsustainable development threatens these habitats and their capacity to support people and wildlife. Now, climate change is compounding those challenges, and making their function as carbon sinks even more important. BirdLife Partners in Argentina, Bolivia, and Ecuador work with local communities to promote nature-based conservation and sustainable use of these wetlands.

Strategy 1	Enhance protection, restoration, and sustainable management of a set of priority inland wetland IBAs to increase resilience to climate change and support the provision of fresh water and other ecosystem services to people
	OBJECTIVE 1 By 2022, at least five critical wetlands have improved protection and management through a suite of strategies including protected area designations, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, payment for ecosystem services (PES), and landscape-level management tools › Evaluate the current protection and management status of priority wetland and watershed IBAs › Promote improved protection status for critical inland wetland IBAs (such as Mar Chiquita in Argentina) › Collate and disseminate information on successful PES and landscape-level management initiatives › Based on feasibility study, work with communities and other stakeholders to develop PES or other landscape-level management initiatives in priority wetland and watershed IBAs › Develop a working strategy to improve effectiveness and implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Latin America
	OBJECTIVE 2 By 2019, at least five countries are implementing climate-smart management plans to enhance the resilience of the existing network of inland wetlands already under protected area or other special management status › Gather and disseminate relevant information and data required to inform the development of climate-smart management plans › Work with governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders to 1) develop and implement climate-smart management plans to enhance wetland resilience and 2) monitor results
	OBJECTIVE 3 By 2022, the number of wetland IBAs under protected areas or other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) has doubled in at least five countries › Leverage information about priority wetlands for conservation action (as identified under Objective 2.2) that lack protected area or other special management status to inform policy and decision-makers and other key stakeholders › Develop strategies for the inclusion of priority wetlands in protected or special management area systems

Strategy 2	Advance climate and biodiversity science and socioeconomic analyses to guide and support policies, investment strategies, and development initiatives that foster the implementation of nature-based solutions and enhance wetland resilience

OBJECTIVE 1

By 2019, there is a compelling and comprehensive body of science-based evidence of the economic value of inland wetlands for human adaptation, mitigation, and other socio-economic, recreational, and cultural benefits

› Review and synthesize relevant studies and experiences for target geographies and identify key knowledge gaps

› Work with other organizations to implement a set of socioeconomic studies and ecosystem services assessments to fill key knowledge gaps

OBJECTIVE 2

By 2019, at least five countries have mapped future climate, hydrology, and land-use change scenarios and associated risks to freshwater resources, ecosystem services, aquifers, and biodiversity for a prioritized set of inland wetland and watershed IBAs

› Review and synthesize climate, hydrology, and land-use change analyses for target geographies and identify knowledge gaps

› Conduct modeling analyses for different near-future and medium-term climate, hydrology, and land-use change scenarios in priority watersheds

› Conduct viability analyses of priority wetland IBAs under different future climate, hydrological, and land-use change scenarios

› Determine priority wetland IBAs for conservation action and develop specific wetland "adaptation classes" as guidelines for management and interventions

OBJECTIVE 3

By 2019, outcomes of the activities under the two preceding objectives have been disseminated and communicated to government and development agencies, to guide and support policies, investment strategies, and development initiatives

› Design and implement a strategy for communication, outreach, and advocacy

› Work with governments to ensure that NDCs, adaptation plans, and other national policies in at least five target countries include commitments to inland wetland conservation for adaptation, mitigation, and sustainable development

› Work with multilateral and bilateral institutions (e.g. UN agencies, World Bank, IDB, USAID) to ensure that key policies or investment strategies promote inland wetland resilience and the role of wetlands in delivering nature-based solutions for adaptation and mitigation

› Collaborate with appropriate entities to ensure that at least three targeted regional conservation and development initiatives, including the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network and Ramsar site network, incorporate the adaptation needs of inland wetlands and their mitigation/human adaptation role

Strategy 3	Develop and promote best practices that support climate change adaptation and resilience of inland wetlands and provision of ecosystem services to local communities that depend on wetland habitats
	OBJECTIVE 1 By 2020, best practice guidelines for climate-smart management and sustainable use of inland wetland IBAs that enable successful adaptation of wetlands and local communities have been published and disseminated › Identify stakeholders (e.g. development/environment NGOs, local communities, or governments) with experience or interest in implementing climate-smart management and ecosystem-based adaptation actions for wetland habitats to safeguard ecosystem services and biodiversity › Compile successful interventions/experiences of climate-smart resource use, management, and regulation of inland wetlands and assess their economic, ecological, and social costs and technical feasibility › Assess the projected effects and implications of interventions under different climate change scenarios › Summarize, publish, and disseminate successful interventions/experiences, recommendations, and guidelines for wetland management and sustainable use
	OBJECTIVE 2 By 2022, communities at critical wetland IBAs in at least five countries are adopting best practices for wetland management in the face of climate change › Train the BirdLife Partners in the region and other key stakeholders in promoting best practices for climate-smart wetland management, use, and regulation › Work with communities, local governments, and other stakeholders at critical wetland sites to support adoption of more sustainable, climate-smart management practices and ecosystem-based adaptation › Monitor, evaluate, and disseminate results to inform stakeholders and to share across the region

Strategy 4	Improve and expand regional biodiversity monitoring to track and assess changes in habitats and responses of wetland-dependent bird species to environmental changes, and to evaluate the effectiveness of management responses
	OBJECTIVE 1 By 2020, a regional monitoring program is established and implemented providing key scientific information on species' responses to climate change, adaptive management decisions, and policy-making › Synthesize current empirical and theoretical knowledge and identify knowledge gaps about responses of wetland species to direct and indirect effects of climate change and different types of management in and beyond the region › Determine priority sites for monitoring that represent different types of inland wetland › Develop a standardized protocol for gathering, managing, and disseminating monitoring information › Establish a regional wetland bird and biodiversity monitoring program as a baseline to assess population trends › Establish communication channels to share key insights from monitoring to the public, governments, bilaterals/multilaterals, NGOs, and other important stakeholders

TRADITIONAL HERDING BY HORSEMEN IS AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE AND IDENTITY THAT THE GRASSLANDS ALLIANCE IS CONTRIBUTING TO PRESERVE. RIO GRANDE DO SUL, BRAZIL
PHOTO: DAVID C. WEGE/ BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL

GRASSLANDS

Natural grasslands stretching from Mexico to Argentina encompass billions of hectares. They provide essential habitat for 848 species of birds, including globally threatened species like Sprague's Pipit, Pampas Meadowlark, Saffron-cowled Blackbird, Black-and-white Monjita, and the Cock-tailed Tyrant. Healthy grasslands play an integral role in the region's economy, supporting ranching and agricultural activities that generate billions of dollars of income.

The Climate Threat

Grasslands are disappearing as a result of agricultural conversion, overgrazing, and poor land and water management practices, and only 17% of the grassland IBAs in Latin America and the Caribbean are currently formally protected. Now, climate change is accelerating this decline and drought is reducing fields of native grasses to desert in places like Mexico and Argentina. Our science analysis found that range sizes for grassland species will shrink 56%, on average, as a result of climate change. And with the degradation and disappearance of grasslands comes a loss of both biodiversity and vital ecosystem services, including water and soil retention, and carbon storage.

BIRDLIFE PARTNERS ON GRASSLANDS

Aves Argentinas
ARGENTINA

Asociación Armonía
BOLIVIA

SAVE Brasil
BRAZIL

Calidris
COLOMBIA

Pronatura
MEXICO

Guyra Paraguay
PARAGUAY

How We Will Work

Since almost all natural grasslands in the region are privately owned, private landowners are a critical part of the solution, especially ranchers who rely on healthy grasslands for their economic wellbeing. The BirdLife Partnership in the Americas will build on 10 years of work with ranchers and other landowners in the Southern Cone and similar efforts in Mexico to promote ranching practices that deliver socio-economic as well as ecological benefits. This is how we can replace the downward cycle of grassland overuse, degradation, desertification, and loss with a sustainable and resilient model that preserves ranching communities and their traditional way of life while also conserving grassland biodiversity and increasing resilience and adaptive capacity. At the same time, by promoting the advantages of best management practices to policy-makers, we will ensure that this approach is factored into national and regional biodiversity, climate, and development policies, including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

> ❯ **2022 Goal**
>
> Foster and enhance conservation and climate-smart management of 13.7 million hectares (33.9 million acres) of native grassland through improved ranching, better policy, and formal protection.

SUSTAINABLE BEEF PRODUCTION, PAMPAS

Promoting Sustainable Agricultural Systems Increases Resilience in the Southern Cone Grasslands

Unsustainable land management practices, combined with an increasing expansion of soybean agriculture and afforestation (of pines and eucalyptus), is severely impacting South Americas' natural grasslands, putting pressure on the unique "gaucho" way of life and threatening migratory and resident birds. However, in 2006, BirdLife Partners in Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay formed the Southern Cone Grasslands Alliance to promote sustainable cattle grazing practices to ranchers. Today, 448 Alliance farms (covering 517,000 hectares) are using good grassland management practices. The triple-win benefits are clear: an up-to-threefold increase in beef production versus traditional grazing systems; more sustainable conservation of their natural capital—resulting in sustained production into the future; and enhanced biodiversity and ecosystem services. Thanks to these benefits, ranchers are able to maintain their gaucho culture and traditions.

Strategy 1	Expand and strengthen coalitions of producers in the Southern Cone, Bolivia, Mexico, and Colombia who implement ranching practices that increase climate-resilience, carbon sequestration, integrity and productivity of natural grasslands

OBJECTIVE 1

By 2020, the ranchers' coalition is expanded in the Southern Cone to 800 ranchers, covering at least 1M hectares

› Develop and implement a plan to increase involvement and communication with new ranchers and their associations

› Organize annual meetings and events for ranchers and a system to reward leaders and good grasslands management practices

OBJECTIVE 2

By 2017, rancher coalitions are initiated and/or strengthened in Mexico, Bolivia, and Colombia to build support for sustainable ranching practices

› Engage with and leverage existing coalitions and initiate new ones in key countries to promote greater interaction to help reach at least 400 producers covering 1.25M hectares

› Develop and implement a system of knowledge sharing, nationally and among countries, to facilitate rancher adoption of best management practices on natural grasslands across the hemisphere to better integrate climate change and biodiversity considerations

OBJECTIVE 3

By 2020, 1,000 ranchers (small and large, approximately 500,000 hectares) have enhanced capacity to use practices that improve grassland mitigation, adaptation and resilience in Colombia, Mexico, and the Southern Cone

› Develop and implement a plan for capacity building and platform-based technology transfer for agricultural producers, extension service providers, and local authorities

› Support national and local extension agencies to provide support directly to agricultural producers in at least three countries

› Develop a toolkit to support integration of climate change considerations into ranching through extension services and training

› Establish a team of experts/specialists from the partnership and other entities to support ranchers' alliances to adopt ranching practices that increase climate-resilience, carbon sequestration, integrity and productivity of natural grasslands

Strategy 2	Advance the development of domestic and international markets for commodities produced in a system that enhances natural grasslands and their capacity for adaptation and mitigation
	OBJECTIVE 1 By 2020, sustainable beef from ranches in the Southern Cone, Bolivia, Mexico, and Colombia is branded and sold in the market › Conduct research needed to support continued market growth, including studies and assessments of the beef market, consumer perspectives, and production chain › Develop and implement a uniform certification protocol for the region for beef produced in a system that enhances natural grasslands and their capacity for adaptation and mitigation › Develop and implement a plan for engaging certifiers and the industry in marketing and promoting the benefits of sustainable practices for beef production
	OBJECTIVE 2 By 2020, build on sustainable rice production work, mainly in Colombia, Argentina, and Paraguay to develop the climate-smart production practices that support wetlands management in grassland ecosystems › Develop and test climate-smart rice production practices that contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation › Assess the benefits of best practices in rice production for biodiversity as well as for birds (migratory, waterfowl) › Assess feasibility of product certification and branding that differentiates climate-smart, bird-friendly rice for consumers

Strategy 3	Deliver evidence-based advocacy to integrate natural grassland conservation and sustainable ranching into policies and investment strategies of governments and bilateral and multilateral agencies (e.g. WB, IDB, USAID) to increase protection for natural grasslands
	OBJECTIVE 1 By 2022, BirdLife Partners support conservation of at least 4M hectares of natural grassland through public protected areas, and private land initiatives and incentives for conservation › Provide greater support to local and national governments and regional entities to increase grassland areas under formal conservation protection › Develop alliances with private lands organizations and governments to support legal mechanisms and incentives for conservation of natural areas in the grasslands
	OBJECTIVE 2 By 2022, ensure native grasslands and ranching best practices are included in national and regional biodiversity and climate policy initiatives, such as NDCs, national adaptation plans, and national implementation plans for sustainable development goals › Convene and contribute to national and regional discussions on climate policies, in part by making our science available to decision-makers › Develop alliances with agricultural research institutions and other NGOs working on similar subjects to have greater impact on policy-making and advocacy
	OBJECTIVE 3 By 2022, policies and investment strategies of multilateral and development agencies (such as WB, IDB, USAID, among others) include approximately 5M hectares of natural grasslands as a priority for mitigation and/or adaptation and recognize the importance of grasslands to the resilience of traditional livelihoods, biodiversity, and ecosystem services › Provide data and share insights and best practices with bilateral/multilateral institutions to inform their policies and investment strategies › Develop alliances with key institutions working on similar subjects to strengthen policy-making and advocacy at the supra-national level

Strategy 4	Strengthen science and monitoring to better understand grassland species' response to climate change and the effectiveness of our interventions, and communicate the climate, biodiversity, and human adaptation value of healthy natural grasslands

OBJECTIVE 1

By 2019, science-based evidence supporting the economic, biodiversity, and carbon value of intact native grasslands and best practices for livestock farming is available and shared widely

› Determine key monitoring questions and information needs for integrating change mitigation and adaptation into ranching, including assessment of socioeconomic benefits/well-being of ranchers and communities

› Identify and work with key partners to share and carry out a common monitoring agenda

› Establish an effective communication platform and process to provide science information to ranchers, the public, governments, bilaterals/multilaterals and other key stakeholders

› Integrate bird-friendly index into conservation ranching across the Americas to monitor and demonstrate resilience of the grassland ecosystem and production system in the face of climate change

OBJECTIVE 2

By 2019, the science behind methane emissions and other greenhouse gases derived from the ranching system is established, and shared, and key information for mitigation is provided

› Develop research and assessment of methane emissions derived from different ranching approaches

› Synthesize the results and make them available for different target groups of re-search through institutions and associations working on ranching

OBJECTIVE 3

By 2018, a monitoring program is established and implemented providing scientific information on species' responses to climate change and adaptive management decisions

› Synthesize current empirical and theoretical knowledge and identify knowledge gaps about responses of wetland species to the effects of climate change and different types of management

› Determine priority sites for monitoring the representativeness of the different types of grassland ecosystems occurring in the region

› Develop a protocol to gather, manage, and disseminate monitoring information

YERBA MATE PLANTATION IN PARAGUAY FOREST PHOTO: EVELYN BRÍTEZ /GUYRA PARAGUAY

FORESTS

Latin America and the Caribbean encompass one of the most important forest regions in the world, with nearly one quarter of the world's forest cover. Forests cover 48% of the total land area of the region and include approximately 834 million hectares of tropical forest and 130 million hectares of other forest types: temperate, dry, coastal, and montane.[9] They are an important carbon sink and regulator of weather patterns, and they provide millions of people with food and clean water, fuel, and protection from floods, erosion, and landslides. The forests of the Americas are also critical for biodiversity, including some 3,466 bird species that depend on the region's diverse forests, such as critically endangered species like the Belem Curassow and Ridgeway's Hawk.

The Climate Threat

Clearing for cattle ranching, agriculture, and logging has already taken a massive toll on the forests of the region; from 1990 to 2005, nearly 69 million hectares disappeared[10]— and with only 16% of forested IBAs under full protection, the toll is rising. Now, climate change is compounding these threats, increasing the incidence and severity of fires and desertification in dry tropical forests, and reducing water flow in humid tropical forest sites. Rising temperatures mean increasing numbers of invasive species in temperate and dry tropical forests, resulting in further declines in montane forest habitat. Our analysis revealed that climate change will cause the ranges of most forest bird species to shrink, on average, to 41% of their current size by mid-century.

BIRDLIFE PARTNERS ON FORESTS

Aves Argentinas
ARGENTINA

Bahamas National Trust
THE BAHAMAS

Belize Audubon Society
BELIZE

Asociación Armonía
BOLIVIA

SAVE Brasil
BRAZIL

CODEFF
CHILE

Calidris
COLOMBIA

Grupo Jaragua
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

SalvaNatura
EL SALVADOR

Pronatura
MEXICO

Panama Audubon Society
PANAMA

Guyra Paraguay
PARAGUAY

Also at stake are a suite of critical ecosystem services, including carbon storage, flood protection, and erosion control.

How We Will Work

In collaboration with our network of local conservation groups and governments, the BirdLife Partnership will help ensure that critical areas of natural forest are conserved, and work to restore degraded forests. We will leverage our science to guide protected area policy and planning and to secure protection for additional sites. We will also promote scaling-up of REDD+ (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) and other locally appropriate mechanisms, and support community-led forest management initiatives. Building on our experience working with agriculture sectors, we will promote adoption of sustainable, climate-smart agriculture in buffer zones and corridors, in order to reduce pressure on forests, enhance forest resilience, and increase connectivity between forest fragments. What we learn as we monitor the impacts of our interventions on forest health and biodiversity will help us improve policy responses and adaptive management at priority forest sites.

YERBA MATE NURSERIES IN ALTO VERÁ, PARAGUAY

> ### 2022 Goal
>
> Support and promote the conservation, restoration, and climate-smart management of 35.3 million hectares (87.2 million acres) of forest IBAs to mitigate climate change, enhance forest resilience, and secure the flow of critical ecosystem services in the face of climate change.

Conserving Forests in Paraguay Benefits Climate, Wildlife, and Local Communities

Yerba mate joins coffee and tea as favorite hot drinks in much of South America. The popular beverage is also at the heart of a program to save the remaining fragments of Paraguay's Atlantic Forest. Guyra Paraguay (BirdLife in Paraguay) is leading a collaborative initiative among farmers, indigenous communities, and marketers to promote shade-grown yerba mate cultivation on nearly 70,000 hectares in the San Rafael IBA. This initiative, which includes training for local mate growers and provides product certification for the organically-grown mate, is boosting the market value and profit potential for San Rafael communities. Guyra Paraguay is also encouraging government representatives to implement policies that encourage adoption of these cultivation practices. This nature-based climate solution provides economic benefits while also preserving the forest and critical ecosystem services like carbon storage.

Strategy 1	Conserve, restore, and sustainably manage biodiverse natural forests to increase their resilience, enhance their carbon capture and storage capacity, and secure continued provision of ecosystem services in the face of climate change
	OBJECTIVE 1 By 2022, at least six countries have enhanced the effectiveness and resilience of forest-protected-area networks and the mitigation and adaptation benefits they deliver › Assess protected-area networks' resilience and connectivity and vulnerability to climate change (e.g. drought and fire) › Identify forest areas critical for delivering human adaptation benefits (e.g. watersheds for cities, landslide prevention in mountainous areas) › Work with governments, civil society, and others to strengthen and integrate climate change considerations into protected-area policy, planning, and management › Work with governments to formalize protection of unprotected forest IBAs as a measure to enhance climate change mitigation and adaptation › Identify, share, and promote practices that enhance forest resilience (e.g. species adaptation plans, fire management), and support development and implementation of adaptation strategies for particularly vulnerable sites
	OBJECTIVE 2 By 2022, priority forest IBAs in 10 countries in the region are being restored or better conserved through locally appropriate, climate-resilient approaches implemented by BirdLife Partners or other key actors with BirdLife support and guidance › Design and implement projects to directly manage or positively influence management of key sites, with a focus on enhancing forest resilience and maximizing mitigation benefit › Build partnerships with governments, businesses, and civil society to explore and advance effective policy approaches and tools for long-term forest management, governance, and financing (e.g. conservation concessions, green bonds, and certification) › Empower forest-dependent communities to understand and advocate for standing natural forests as a core component of low-carbon, climate-resilient development, and to effectively manage their forests for multiple benefits, including climate adaptation and mitigation › Identify pilot sites for restoration (e.g. reforestation, natural regeneration) based on an assessment of mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity benefits and feasibility studies › Work as a partnership, and with public and private actors, to identify and share practices for climate-smart restoration throughout the region

Strategy 1	

OBJECTIVE 3

By 2022, BirdLife Partners in at least six countries have enhanced capacity on REDD+ and are guiding and supporting national and/or jurisdictional REDD+ processes

› Review National REDD+ strategies, baselines, environmental and social safeguards, and plans in each country, using common assessment framework

› Deliver regional training workshop on REDD+ and ecosystem services and policy/advocacy for BirdLife Partners

› Identify and engage with key actors and platforms for REDD+ nationally and regionally to identify and promote best practices for integrating biodiversity into REDD+

› Provide monitoring and science inputs to inform strategic implementation of REDD+ at jurisdictional and/or national levels, and ensure adequate application of REDD+ safeguards

Strategy 2	**Work with the agricultural sector to enhance forest resilience and connectivity within production landscapes, and reduce pressure on standing forests**

OBJECTIVE 1

By 2018, climate-smart practices for cocoa, coffee, and yerba mate farming that benefit people and biodiversity are identified, shared, and tailored to the national context by BirdLife Partners in at least six countries

› Convene BirdLife Partners and regional experts to share experience and best practices for climate-smart cocoa, coffee, and yerba mate farming

› Develop partnerships with other NGO sector networks, private sector, and/or academic institutions focused on climate-resilient, forest-friendly cocoa and coffee production (e.g. Sustainable Agriculture Network)

› Conduct a global assessment of climate-smart practices for cocoa and coffee through the BirdLife Partnership and with other partners

OBJECTIVE 2

By 2019, BirdLife Partners in at least six countries are supporting assessment and adoption of climate-smart practices by coffee/cocoa/yerba mate farmers in forest buffer zones and corridors

› Build capacity, raise awareness, and provide guidance to farmers and support piloting of new techniques

› Develop or enhance partnerships with government and producer associations

› Identify and support development of incentive mechanisms to support farmers to transition to more resilient practices

› Work with Sustainable Agriculture Network and other stakeholders to monitor social, environmental, and economic variables at a sample of farms, as well as the ecosystem services provided, and communicate results widely

Strategy 3	Conduct regional forest monitoring to inform public policy and adaptive management
	OBJECTIVE 1 By 2022, a common monitoring framework has been developed for the region that integrates national science and on-site monitoring with collaborative global science/monitoring initiatives and other NGO partners › Standardize forest biodiversity monitoring protocols to improve the decision-making process and incorporate existing data as a baseline › Compile climate data and an analysis of climate variability for priority forests in the region › Employ an interactive online forest monitoring and alert system to provide BirdLife Partners and other stakeholders (government and other NGOs) with near real-time information on the status of forest IBAs in the region › Develop capacity of the World Database on Key Biodiversity Areas (WDKBA) to display remote sensing data on forest loss and condition › Integrate citizen science data from across the region into the WDKBA
	OBJECTIVE 2 By 2022, BirdLife Partners, governments (i.e. protected area agencies, forestry authorities), local communities, and non-state actors have increased capacity to monitor and effectively communicate about forest health, threats, and the impact of interventions to inform policy and forest management › Train NGOs, communities, and other local actors to monitor forest health and effectively promote awareness of emerging threats and nature-based interventions

AN AUDUBON VOLUNTEER RELEASES A
PIPING PLOVER BANDED IN THE BAHAMAS
PHOTO: WALKER GOLDER/AUDUBON

ENABLING STRATEGIES

To fully realize the power and potential of the Partnership, the *Climate Action Plan for the Americas* includes three Enabling Strategies focused on Science, Policy, and Capacity Building. These strategies, which will be guided by BirdLife International and Audubon together, are designed to leverage the geographic presence and respective strengths of each national Partner, and to realize the full potential of the local-to-global structure of the BirdLife Partnership. We aim to facilitate knowledge exchange and peer-to-peer support, and to strengthen the voice and influence of the Partnership in political and other forums. Ultimately, by implementing these strategies we will prepare each Partner to drive climate solutions at an individual country level, and at the same time unite and prepare the full BirdLife Partnership in the Americas to deliver regional scale impact on climate change adaptation and mitigation.

POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS

The BirdLife Americas Partnership, with its extensive geographic reach and network of local NGOs, is uniquely positioned to drive action on climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Partnership comprises 19 national conservation NGOs spanning North, Central, and South America, and the Caribbean, from the Canadian tundra to Tierra del Fuego.

REGIONAL SCALE SCIENCE AND MONITORING

To continue to ground our work in science and provide the data and information needed to guide decision-making, we will develop a region-wide science and monitoring program that enables us to monitor changes in ecosystem health using birds as indicators. It will also enable us to identify adaptation priorities and assess the impacts of our conservation interventions. In addition, we will conduct targeted socio-economic analyses that help us better understand and communicate climate change's implications for people, economies, and the ecosystem services upon which they depend. This knowledge will provide strategic insights and credible evidence to inform our actions, and communicate evidence to support decisions taken by communities, industry, governments, and development agencies.

› 2022 Goal

Establish a region-wide Climate Watch program to strengthen avian monitoring for climate change across all IBAs/KBAs and provide input to national and regional monitoring systems, inform policy, and support adaptive management.

Priority Actions

Monitor changes in the abundance and distribution of priority bird species across different ecosystem types to validate models of species turnover at IBAs and to inform adaptive management

Expand and enhance species turnover modeling through incorporation of new data and factors

Assess human vulnerability and adaptation needs, and the potential impacts on IBAs from the human responses to climate change

Identify potential new IBAs and habitat corridors important for enhancing climate resilience of the IBA network, taking account of projected shifts in distributions

Develop IBA-specific management prescriptions based on the habitat needs of colonizing and emigrating species that support local conservation efforts and needs

Extend BirdLife's Avian Sensitivity Mapping tool to Latin America and the Caribbean to provide an authoritative, transparent, and accurate assessment that can inform the future siting of renewable energy infrastructure

Develop climate change adaptation plans for the most climate-impacted species

POLICY AND ADVOCACY

We are at a critical point in time for shaping and advancing sound policy-driven climate solutions in Latin America and the Caribbean. As governments establish and implement policies and plans to cut emissions, adapt to climate change, and pursue sustainable development, BirdLife and its partnership in the Americas are ready to bring our collective science, on-the-ground experience, and forward-thinking recommendations to the discussion. By empowering, mobilizing, and working with our constituencies, supporters, and partner organizations we will achieve tangible policy outcomes that are good for nature and good for people. Specifically, we will carry evidenced-based messages about the environmental and socio-economic benefits of nature-based climate solutions to development agencies, financial institutions, and national governments—and work to ensure they incorporate these considerations into their policies and investment strategies. We will guide and support implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and other multilateral environmental agreements, and help governments harness the synergies between biodiversity, climate change, and development policy areas.

> ❯ **2022 Goal**

Incorporate nature-based solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation into Nationally Determined Contributions, national adaptation plans or other relevant policies of at least eight countries, and regional development and investment strategies.

Priority Actions

Build a team of Climate Champions within the BirdLife Americas Partnership that coordinates inputs from Partners to inform regional and global policy processes, and provide them with peer-to-peer support to effectively engage in and shape national policy and climate and development investments

Working with other civil society organizations, deliver evidence-based advocacy to promote and guide the integration of nature-based climate solutions and IBA/KBA protection into Nationally Determined Contributions, national adaptation plans, and other relevant national policies

Assess policies associated with renewable energy expansion, provide data, and share best practices with developers, governments, and the international finance community to ensure renewable energy deployment is in harmony with nature

Work with bilateral and multilateral institutions to ensure that nature-based climate solutions are incorporated into their national and regional investment portfolios, and that their investments safeguard IBAs/KBAs

Explore and build partnerships with regional institutions and initiatives such as the Caribbean Community Climate Change Center (CCCCC) and REDparques, among others, to continue to build the evidence base, exchange experiences, and strengthen our voice

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

The BirdLife Partnership in the Americas has decades of on-the-ground presence and successful conservation experience, as well as solid relationships with governments, NGOs, and universities and other partners —nationally and across the Americas. But to meet the unprecedented threat of climate change, we will transition from traditional conservation interventions to climate-smart ones. And we will grow our partner and network capacity to carry out climate adaptation and mitigation activities—including through the use of recently developed tools such as the Adaptation for Conservation Targets (ACT) framework and the adaptive management cycle. Our plan transcends national boundaries and to support its implementation we will:

› Strengthen our organizational capacity for partnership-wide collaboration and integration;

› Improve our processes and our platforms for sharing best practices for climate-focused conservation; and

› Increase the sophistication and effectiveness of our communication, outreach, and advocacy efforts.

This is how we will realize the full potential of the partnership as a highly effective, engaged regional movement prepared to advance climate solutions in the Americas.

Priority Actions

Develop and implement an organizational strengthening program for partners and key collaborators that builds critical climate-smart conservation, science, communication, and policy skills needed to engage and support communities, other NGOs, private sector, and governments to address climate priorities

Strengthen the partnership network by creating robust science, policy, communication, and project development platforms that increase our collective impact at scale

Develop effective communications and advocacy capacities that help build constituencies and better engage decision-makers

Pool and strengthen the science and analytical capacity in the region to effectively carry out our Climate Watch program and other science and socio-economic analysis

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› **2022 Goal**

Strengthen the financial, institutional, and technical capacity of the BirdLife Partnership and other stakeholders in at least 12 countries to implement nature-based mitigation and adaptation projects at key IBAs, to facilitate species adaptation, and to shape climate and biodiversity policy.

PRIORITY ACTIONS FROM NATIONAL CLIMATE PLANS DEVELOPED BY EACH OF OUR PARTNER COUNTRIES

In addition to developing the *Climate Action Plan for the Americas*, the BirdLife Partners developed national action plans in consultation with governments and other stakeholders in their countries. The national action plans were informed by—and informed—the regional plan. The table below provides an overview of the types of actions that each partner will be taking in their country over the next 5-10 years.

The plans vary in their focus and timescale, reflecting the diversity of the partnership and national contexts. The implementation of these national plans will complement and help carry out the work outlined in the *Climate Change Action Plan for the Americas* that we are undertaking as a partnership (*see accompanying document for complete country plans*).

COUNTRY	PRIORITY ACTIONS
ARGENTINA	› Develop and implement a standardized monitoring system using birds as indicators to track the effects of climate change on the IBAs/KBAs in Patagonia's high-altitude wetlands, temperate grasslands, and the Mar Chiquita inland wetland system; identify priority species and interventions and sites of increasing importance in the face of climate change › Train professionals and students from the agricultural and livestock sectors, including government and industry representatives, in climate-smart agricultural practices and nature-based solutions to climate change › With the Commission for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity (CONADIBIO), and other entities, help identify and promote formal conservation of key grassland sites within the Argentinian National Parks System that have high potential to support biodiversity and human adaptation › Support the declaration of the Mar Chiquita wetlands as a national protected area as a first step to improve their climate resilience and adaptive capacity
THE BAHAMAS	› With the University of the Bahamas, develop and implement a Climate Watch Monitoring program using birds and other taxa as indicators across at least five prioritized National Parks and IBAs, to inform climate-smart planning and adaptive management › Develop capacity within the Bahamas National Trust, other protected area management agencies, and Bahamian conservation partners to better plan for climate change and support policy and management practices that enhance resilience and adaptive capacity of the country's protected area system › Leverage this *Climate Action Plan for the Americas* and science to inform the Bahamian government's sustainable development planning and policies, including Nationally Determined Contributions, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, and Sustainable Development Goals

COUNTRY	PRIORITY ACTIONS

BELIZE

> Engage vulnerable communities adjacent to priority protected areas managed by Belize Audubon to promote climate-smart practices and ecosystem-based adaptation focused on livelihood diversification, water management, and agricultural practices

> Launch a climate change awareness campaign for the national protected areas system, targeting protected areas staff and the tourism industry, and design and implement best-practice guidelines to integrate climate change consider-ations into protected areas management

> With the University of Belize, implement a pilot Climate Watch Monitoring program using birds as indicators in priority sites/ecosystems identified under the updated NBMP (National Biodiversity Monitoring Program) within the National Protected Areas System

BOLIVIA

> Replicate sustainable ranching practices used in other South American countries that support climate adaptation and resilience in target ecosystem grassland sites in the Llanos de Moxos region

> Establish tree nurseries and develop reforestation plans in at least five com-munities/municipalities in inter-Andean dry valleys; establish tree nurseries in six local communities and develop a climate-smart plan for the restoration of high-Andean Polylepis forests

> Train program staff and communities adjacent to Amboró National Park to implement ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation and to support climate-vulnerable species

> Develop and implement a Climate Watch Ecological Monitoring program to inform climate-smart planning and management, beginning with three priority IBAs: Bosque de Polylepis de Madidi, Cuencas de Rios Caine y Mizque, and Oeste de Rio Mamore

COUNTRY	PRIORITY ACTIONS
BRAZIL	❯ Work with the Brazilian Government's Inter-ministry Committee on Climate Change to jointly implement strategies common to the SAVE Brasil/BirdLife Americas strategies and the National Plan for Climate Change Adaptation ❯ Initiate a landscape-scale, climate-smart forest conservation project at the Rio Capim IBA in the eastern Amazon, though creation of a protected area and development of mechanisms to add value to the standing forest ❯ Develop a participatory (i.e. citizen science) bird-monitoring program in the Montane Atlantic Forest IBAs to track montane species' responses to climate change (e.g. altitudinal changes in range) ❯ Work through the ranchers' coalition in southern Brazil to promote the adoption of practices that support grassland resilience and adaptation, and launch a marketing campaign to add value to the certified beef being produced ❯ Launch a marketing campaign to add value to the certified beef being produced ❯ Address desertification of the Caatinga dry forest, which is exacerbated by overgrazing, by providing goat ranchers with capacity-building to implement sustainable ranching practices that support adaptation and resilience in the Curaçá IBA
CHILE	❯ Strengthen alliances with conservation and community organizations around CODEFF's priority forest and wetland IBAs, and jointly advocate for zoning, land use, tourism, hunting, and domestic and feral dog management policies, which will improve the health and resilience of key wetlands and forests ❯ Work with local private landowners to build support for an incentive system that promotes sustainable management practices in priority wetland and forest IBAs and increases the areas' climate resilience and adaptive capacity ❯ Promote best practices for efficient water use and management by consumers of water near priority wetland IBAs—including the Reserva Nacional los Flamincos, Desembocadura del Rio Maipo, and Maule-Metaquito wetlands complex—to help increase the resilience and adaptive capacity of these IBAs

COUNTRY	PRIORITY ACTIONS

COLOMBIA

> Create climate-smart management plans, based on climate impact assessments, for up to 13 priority sites spanning 1.5 million hectares (3.7 million acres) to conserve forests, grasslands, and wetlands (including mangroves) in the face of climate change through collaboration with the National Parks Unit, local communities, and other key stakeholders

> Engage the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development and other key stakeholders to support Colombia's NDCs (under the Paris Agreement) and national biodiversity goals through our climate action plan, and position associated projects for financing vis a vis Colombia's newly established Carbon Tax (1/1/2017) and other financial mechanisms and legal tools

> Complete climate impact assessments for coffee (Andean region), rice (Casanare and S. Valle de Cauca), and cattle production (Orinoco Basin/llanos) in Colombia and develop adaptation guidelines for conserving birds and other wildlife

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

> Enhance the capacity of 1,000 cacao and coffee producers in key forest corridors to implement climate-smart and biodiversity-friendly practices through educational outreach, local workshops, and other technical support

> Raise awareness among key communities and stakeholders of the ecological value of the Reserva Privada Zorzal, the José del Carmen Ramírez National Park, and the Laguna Saladilla to promote actions that minimize threats, improve resilience to climate change, and ensure the ongoing provision of ecosystem services

> Engage six priority communities in the dry forest of southwestern Dominican Republic in drought-resistant agroforestry activities through a community agroforestry program; establish three new native tree nurseries

> Launch a communication/advocacy campaign to prevent the encroachment of agriculture and cattle on target wetlands, including Laguna Cabral and Laguna Saladilla

COUNTRY	PRIORITY ACTIONS

EL SALVADOR

> Integrate climate-smart agricultural practices into Salvanatura's technical assistance program (SalvAsist), which provides training in sustainable agriculture practices and certification programs (SalvaCert) for coffee and cocoa

> Work with producers, the government, and other organizations to incorporate climate recommendations into El Salvador's official Sustainable Agriculture Guidelines

> Continue to support and promote adoption of climate adaptation and resilience practices at coffee plantations enrolled in SalvAssist programs and extend the number of plantations enrolled

> Develop and provide information and technical support enabling government entities, non-profit organizations, and communities to integrate climate change considerations within the management of the natural protected areas system

MEXICO

> Mobilize funding through REDD+ for the conservation of 17 key forest IBAs totaling 6.5 million hectares

> Consolidate the Pronatura Network's wetland conservation and restoration efforts across 14 IBAs to increase their contribution to climate mitigation and adaptation; begin by targeting seven pilot sites for implementation of adaptation measures

> Expand the total grasslands under climate-smart management by improving cattle-ranching practices across 40,000 hectares, completing restoration of 2,000 hectares of grasslands within priority IBAs, and supporting extension of legal protection to 40,000 hectares of private grasslands and 200,000 hectares of public grassland

COUNTRY	PRIORITY ACTIONS

PANAMA

› Work with Panama's Environmental Ministry and focal groups involved in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to include climate mitigation and adaptation actions for IBAs/KBAs in the new National Biodiversity Strategy and Nationally Determined Contributions; help establish a mechanism (roundtable) that enables the continuation of this work

› Support local municipal authorities and the National Directorate of Protected Areas of the Ministry of Environment to protect the Bahía de Parita IBA/KBA, and the designation of the site as a protected area

› Ensure that the new Bay of Panama Protected Area Plan incorporates the important role of wetlands in protecting the city from the impacts of climate change (e.g. flooding) and includes ecosystem-based adaptation approaches that increase the resilience of the wetlands and the human population

› Design and implement a Climate Watch Ecological Monitoring protocol involving local communities for at least four priority IBAs/KBAs, including the Bay of Panama, and train community members on bird identification, monitoring, and data collection

PARAGUAY

› Work with the Ministry of Public Works & Communications to ensure that guidelines for the construction and improvement of major highways and access roads are informed by an understanding of nature-based strategies that promote climate resilience for both infrastructure and biodiversity

› Develop a national campaign to create awareness of greenhouse gas emissions from different types of land use (especially forestry and agriculture) among the public, government authorities, and private sector

› In support of Paraguay's national development plan, promote REDD+ and payment for ecosystem services that support sustainable production practices —especially in grasslands—that deliver mitigation and/or adaptation benefits

› Support implementation of ranching practices through the Grasslands Alliance that reduce the climate change vulnerability of the traditional ranching culture and increase the resilience of natural grasslands

END NOTES

1 Conservation Measures Partnership (2013). Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation. Conservation Measures Partnership.

2 The most commonly used definition of "climate-smart practices" comes from the agricultural sector and is provided by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which defines them as practices that sustainably increase productivity, enhance resilience (adaptation), reduce or remove GHGs (mitigation) where possible, and contribute to national food security and development goals. FAO (2013). Smart Agriculture: Sourcebook. Rome, Italy: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3325e.pdf

3 Simpson, M. C., D. Scott, M. Harrison, R. Sim, N. Silver, E. O'Keeffe, S. Harrison, M. Taylor, G. Lizcano, M. Rutty, H. Stager, J. Oldham, M. Wilson, M. New, J. Clarke, O. J. Day, N. Fields, J. Georges, R. Waithe, and P. McSharry. 2010. Quantification and magnitude of losses and damages resulting from the impacts of climate change: Modelling the transformational impacts and costs of sea level rise in the Caribbean. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Barbados, West Indies. 142 pp.

4 IPCC, 2014: Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, 151 pp.

5 Idem.

6 From BirdLife International and NatureServe (2012) Bird species distribution maps of the world. Version 2.0. BirdLife International, Cambridge, UK and NatureServe, Arlington, USA

7 The greenhouse gas emissions scenario explored in the science analysis was RCP 8.5. RCP stands for Representative Concentration Pathway, while 8.5 means the watts per meter squared of radiative forcing represented in that RCP. See Collins, M., et al.: Section 12.3.1.3 The New Concentration Driven RCP Scenarios, and their Extensions, in: Chapter 12: Long-term Climate Change: Projections, Commitments and Irreversibility (archived 16 July 2014), in: IPCC AR5 WG1 2013, pp. 1045–1047

8 UNEP (2010) Environment Outlook of Latin America and Caribbean (GEO-Latin America and the Caribbean 3). UNEP, San José Costa Rica

9 FSC International (2016). National Forest Stewardship Standards: Latin America. https://ic.fsc.org/en/certification/national-standards/latin-america. Accessed on January 2017.

10 United Nations (2010). Millennium Development Goals: Advances in Environmentally Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/G.2428-P). Santiago, Chile: United Nations.