

IN THIS ISSUE
Spider Monkeys



Hope for Spider Monkeys in Central America's Dry Forests

For the last four decades, experts at the IUCN Primate Specialist Group have watched with concern as the Central American black-handed spider monkey has been extricated from much of the dry tropical forest of northern Central America. Spider monkeys are now absent from the lowland Pacific dry forest in Honduras and Guatemala, and are only present in a few Pacific dry forest provinces in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

As a newly formed nonprofit, Paso Pacífico's very first action in 2005 was to conduct a direct search for black-handed spider monkeys in the northern part

of Nicaragua's Rivas province at the Chococente wildlife refuge, with the support of the **Primate Action Fund**. Sadly, the monkeys were not found. So, we launched a program in 2009 to monitor and protect spider monkeys across southern Rivas, where local populations could "source" from neighboring Costa Rica. **Primate Conservation Inc.**, the **Disney Conservation Fund**, the **Prince Bernhard Nature Fund** and the **U.S. Forest Service International Institute of Tropical Forestry** were all instrumental in the early development of this program.

Since then, Paso Pacífico community rangers have monitored and protected black-handed spider monkeys on small and large forest fragments on private lands across southern Rivas. More recently (2018–2022), this work has been supported by the IUCN Netherlands Land Acquisition Fund, the Apenheul Primate Conservation Trust, and the Thin Green Line Foundation.

Your partnership made all the difference.



Continued from front

When we first started the monitoring efforts, we rarely saw these special primates. Our rangers sometimes jogged through the forest to gather data, catching fleeting glimpses of monkeys slipping through distant canopies. But thanks to habituation (helping monkeys recognize and feel comfortable in our rangers' presence) and a stabilization and increase in the primate population, our rangers now commonly observe the species. In addition, the monkeys' range has expanded across new watersheds due to strategic reforestation. We are deeply grateful to the partners who made this possible.

Our experiences with wild spider monkeys in Nicaragua allowed us to fast-track an impactful program in El Salvador near the Olomega Lagoon, starting in 2019. In just two short years, we habituated a very elusive sub-population of spider monkeys and made huge strides toward protecting the degraded dry forest habitat by hiring rangers to build fire breaks and prevent poachers from entering the jungle.

With support from **Zoo Boise**, the **Apenheul Primate Conservation Trust**, the **Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund** and the **Thin Green Line Foundation**, our Salvadoran community rangers worked throughout 2022. This year, they extinguished at least four wildfires. They report a sense of pride that their forgotten corner of El Salvador is receiving global recognition from conservation organizations like yours!

Thank you. We are proud of these accomplishments, and hope to keep progressing in saving these dear monkeys through your partnership and support.



Director's Note

Dear Partner and Friend,

This is our first partner newsletter, where we hope to highlight the many conservation and philanthropic organizations that are helping to protect wildlife and strengthen communities in Central America. As a relatively small nonprofit, we rely on your investment to keep our programs going. With Nicaragua's political crisis and the worldwide pandemic, the past five years have been particularly challenging for our organization, but partners like you helped sustain our work. Because of you, Paso Pacífico continued to make a difference for countries like Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Our spider monkey program is one of the most well-documented cases of our partners' impact. Spider monkeys have disappeared from most dry forest areas of Nicaragua, but in the Rivas province where we work, they have expanded their range to the north. The troops that we monitor (twice weekly across three sites) now number more than 245 individuals. Clearly, our partners are making a difference.

There is more to the story, so please reach out if you have questions about this program. Thank you again for your support.

With gratitude,

Sarah M. Otterstrom, Ph.D.
Founder & Executive Director





Building Community at the Mono Bayo Reserve

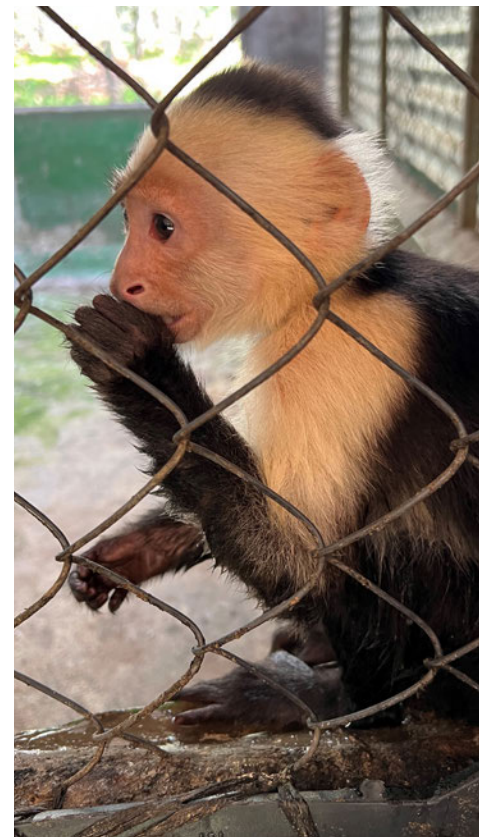
Small protected areas are critical to connecting habitats across fragmented landscapes. The Paso del Istmo wildlife corridor lacks large national parks. Fortunately, the IUCN Netherlands Land Acquisition Fund, supported by the Dutch Postcode Lottery, invested in our idea to connect and protect a series of small forest areas for the black-handed spider monkey and other endangered species. This includes support for the purchase of our Mono Bayo Reserve, a place that has become a center of activity.

Today, this reserve hosts Junior Rangers as they learn about the dry tropical forest. Other partners have stepped in to support activities like reforestation (Offset Alliance), banding stations for migratory birds (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service—Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation), and parrot nest conservation (Loro Parque Fundación). At the reserve, we also demonstrate native beekeeping techniques, and have hosted bat counts and local researchers studying native beetles. We want to thank the IUCN Netherlands Land Acquisition Fund for understanding that nature's best gifts come in small packages.

Collaborations Reduce Wildlife Trade

El Salvador is Central America's most populous country, with most people living in cities. These urban centers contain both financial resources and demand for wildlife as pets. With the support of partners like Zoo Boise, we built a relationship with El Salvador's Ministry of the Environment (MARN). This agency has prioritized stopping the illegal wildlife trade. Last year, we helped MARN draft their five-year national strategic plans for two heav-

ily traded species: the black-handed spider monkey and the yellow-naped amazon parrot. The SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund funded the parrot conservation plan. Together with Zoo Boise, we were also able to help MARN improve conditions of captive care, especially for rescued primates like the capuchin monkey at right. Thank you to our partners for increasing the effectiveness of public agencies charged with protecting wildlife.





Thank You to Our Funders!

Recent Partners (Starting in 2021)

- | | |
|--|--|
| ADETCO El Salvador/
Oriente Salvaje | Nathan Wallace Charitable
Lead Trust |
| Apenheul Primate
Conservation Trust | Ocean Conservancy |
| Arizona Game & Fish
Department | Offset Alliance |
| Benedict Family Foundation | Pacific Flyway Council |
| Alvin I. and Peggy S. Brown
Family Charitable
Foundation | Parque Marítimo El Coco |
| Bruce & Marilyn Wallace
Foundation | Partners in Flight |
| Fundación Enrique Figueroa
Lemus | Patagonia |
| Fundación Zoológica de
El Salvador (FUNZEL) | PRBB Foundation |
| Greater Los Angeles Zoo
Association | Rancho Santana |
| Grupo CASSA | Save the Turtles |
| IUCN Netherlands | SeaTurtles.org |
| Los Angeles Zoo | Sequoia Park Zoo Foundation |
| Loyal Bigelow and Jedediah
Dewey Foundation | Southern Wings |
| Ministry of the Environment,
El Salvador (MARN) | Turtle Island Restoration
Network |
| Morgan's Rock Hacienda &
Ecolodge | U.S. Fish & Wildlife
Service—International
Affairs |
| Mujeres y Naturaleza
(MUNAT) | U.S. Forest Service—
International Institute for
Tropical Forestry |
| | UNAN-Managua Centro
para la Investigación en
Recursos Acuáticos de
Nicaragua (CIRA) |
| | Woolley Family Foundation |
| | WSL—One Ocean |
| | Zoo Boise Conservation Fund |

We are grateful to our recent funders who share our commitment to protecting biodiversity in Central America, or have a complementary mission to ours. They are helping plug major gaps in biodiversity funding and striving to ensure no region is left behind. A special thanks goes to our long-term partners. ♥

Get Involved Now

A New Wildlife Corridor Awaits!

You have many options for getting involved with our work. Some are in the Paso del Golfo, a new wildlife corridor running from El Salvador to northern Nicaragua.

There, we are growing early programs in monitoring and conservation—not just for the monkeys, but also for **endangered parrots** and **neotropical migratory birds**. In the coming year, we also aim to establish new forest reserves for the spider monkey and collaborate with **communities** to help them market nature-based tours. In addition, we hope to restore **freshwater and mangrove wetlands** by supporting **women-led** efforts to plant mangroves, and to harvest and make sellable crafts from invasive aquatic plants.

Your help is needed to achieve these goals.

Research has shown that investing in tropical conservation is one of the most cost-effective ways to safeguard biodiversity. As species go extinct due to climate change and habitat loss, **now is the time to get more involved in saving them**. Please reach out to our executive director, Dr. Sarah Otterstrom, to join forces. Email her today at sarah@pasopacifico.org. **Thank you!**



[pasopacifico.org/
onepercent](http://pasopacifico.org/onepercent)



P.O. Box 1244 | Ventura, CA 93002-1244
info@pasopacifico.org | +1-805-643-7044

[Learn more about us at pasopacifico.org](http://pasopacifico.org)

