

## **Rainforest Trust and Conservation Organizations Announce Major Milestone in Colombia Magdalena River Valley**

El Silencio Reserve expansion benefits critically endangered species and a beloved U.S.-nesting songbird

**WARRENTON, Va., Jan. 14, 2021**—Rainforest Trust announced 3,839 acres in the El Silencio Natural Reserve, located in Colombia’s Middle Magdalena Valley, have been secured for conservation. In addition to Rainforest Trust, other partners in the powerful conservation alliance include World Land Trust, Saving Nature, American Bird Conservancy and Fundación Biodiversa Colombia. This has almost doubled the size of the reserve to 6,844 acres. Additional assistance came from a partial voluntary compensation from the owner companies La Zebra and Tierra y Río.

Conserving and protecting this land is extremely important. Over 98% of the lowland rainforest in the Magdalena Valley has been destroyed for cattle ranching and illicit coca production. It is also under pressure from illegal logging. In addition to providing habitat for many rare species, the land has long been an important winter location for many migrating birds.

“Partnerships like this one demonstrate that while no reserve is an island, no organization is an island either,” said James Deutsch, Ph.D., CEO of Rainforest Trust. “That’s why we’re so thrilled to partner to protect threatened forests thousands of miles away that provide habitat for so much wildlife including birds we value in our own backyards.”

Colombia is the second-most biodiverse country in the world and the Middle Magdalena Valley is one of its most diverse regions. Not only is it critical habitat for migrating birds but it is also home for six primate, 345 bird, 42 amphibian and 723 vascular plant species.

In 2018, Fundación Biodiversa Columbia created the 1,470-acre Barbacoas Reserve at the center of the highly fragmented Middle Magdalena Valley. Increased development led the two organizations (Fundación Biodiversa Columbia and Rainforest Trust) to team up and seek expansion immediately by purchasing neighboring properties for sale.

This latest land acquisition connects the area’s two main forest patches through wildlife corridors, protecting the largest contiguous forest in the middle Magdalena Valley in northern Colombia. This habitat is of great importance to the Critically Endangered Brown Spider Monkey (one of the rarest primates on earth) and Blue-billed Curassow, as well as three other threatened and endemic monkey species, Lowland Tapirs, large cats including Jaguar, Spectacled Bear, nearly 300 bird species, endangered hardwood trees, and other wildlife. In addition, the reserve’s wetlands and riparian forests are important for the Magdalena River Turtle, American Manatee, American Crocodile, and fish species of great economic value to local communities. These same riparian forests at El Silencio are key wintering areas for Prothonotary Warblers, which nest in the eastern United States.

In research published in [The Condor: Ornithological Applications in 2019](#), Christopher Tonra at Ohio State University and colleagues analyzed geolocator tag data from Prothonotary Warblers and found that most birds recovered wintered in the area of Colombia’s Magdalena River Valley.

In 2020, a Blue-billed Curassow was videotaped along a path bordering a forest restoration plot within El Silencio Reserve, raising hope that these birds now frequent recently restored habitat on former pasture lands.

“This is very exciting, not only because this proves the success of the restoration objective, but also because it is really close to the research station, which will allow us to study and observe the species more easily,” says Fernando Arbalaez, executive director of Fundación Biodiversa Colombia.

To learn more about the Rainforest Trust, visit [www.rainforesttrust.org](http://www.rainforesttrust.org).

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### **About Rainforest Trust**

Since 1988, Rainforest Trust has been safeguarding imperiled tropical habitats and saving endangered species by establishing protected areas in partnership with local organizations and communities. With its partners, Rainforest Trust has safeguarded more than 25.6 million acres of vital habitat across Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Rainforest Trust is a nonprofit organization that relies upon the generous support of the public to successfully implement its important conservation action. The organization is proud of earning a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator. Learn more about the work of Rainforest Trust by visiting [www.RainforestTrust.org](http://www.RainforestTrust.org), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), or [Facebook](#).