

NEWS

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In a Challenging Year, Conservation Organization Reaches Significant Benchmarks

Rainforest Trust marks more than 25.6 million acres under protection and raises match to \$50M challenge grant

WARRENTON, Va., Jan. 5, 2021 – Founded in 1988, Rainforest Trust celebrated in 2015 when the organization marked 10 million acres protected. The following year, an anonymous conservation supporter offered a \$50 million 1:1 matching grant to be met by the end of 2020. At the time, Rainforest Trust was a small organization, and the challenge seemed ambitious. But in the last five years, the organization more than doubled the total acres protected and met the \$50 million challenge.

While 2020 was not an easy year for nonprofits, especially those with projects around the world, Rainforest Trust attributes its success to never having waived from its original mission to save endangered species by protecting tropical habitat. With newly established protected areas in Myanmar, Nepal, Ecuador, Papua New Guinea and Peru, Rainforest Trust closes out the year with more than 25.6 million total acres protected in cooperation with its local partners.

Strong working relationships with local partners underpins Rainforest Trust’s conservation work. Together, they develop plans to establish and maintain protected areas that are based on science and best practices for each location. With a network of 150 partners in 50 countries, the impact is tangible. Combined, the protected acres provide refuge to 65% of the world’s bird species, 41% of all mammal species and 25% of all amphibians.

“Rainforest Trust has remained focused on habitat and land protection. Our approach works, 92% of our protected areas have experienced less than 5% deforestation,” explained James Deutsch, Ph.D., CEO of Rainforest Trust. “This is important as deforestation releases as much carbon as the entire global transportation sector each year.” Nearly 70,000 acres of tropical rainforest are lost every day and with the majority of the world’s plants and animals found in rainforests, protection is critical.

In 2016, with the launch of the SAVES Challenge \$50 million matching grant, Rainforest Trust set the bold goal to invest \$100 million to save rainforests across the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Rainforest Trust establishes protection not just for rainforests, but also other important tropical habitats including oceans to safeguard threatened marine life. On December 21, the organization supported local partner Conservation des Espèces Marines in the creation of the first-ever marine protected area in Côte d’Ivoire, the 640,000-acre Grand Bereby Marine Protected Area.

“We’re not just saving acres,” Deutsch explained. “We’re creating safe havens for endangered species around the world.”

Connectivity is important for species survival. Rainforest Trust is also helping protect critical migration paths and wildlife corridors by connecting landscapes. In the Peruvian Amazon, the

organization is currently working to save a “missing link” that, once complete, will protect a combined 7.8 million-acre tri-national (Peru, Ecuador, Columbia) corridor.

Another success indicator is new-to-science species discovery. Within protected areas, Rainforest Trust partners are routinely re-discovering species that were believed extinct while also discovering new species in that same habitat. “In some areas, species are nearly extinct but, by saving their habitat, they have an opportunity to thrive. Occasionally, a species is re-discovered, which is very exciting,” Deutsch explained. Two recent successful projects in Brazil protected habitat for recently re-discovered birds, the Blue-eyed Ground Dove and Kaempfer’s Woodpecker.

“Five years ago and over its first 27 years of work, Rainforest Trust was able to report the protection of 10 million acres. Today, and just five years later, we can account for 25.6 million, I’m so proud of our impact,” Deutsch added. “It’s a tribute to our hard-working staff, our great partners, our strong and dedicated base of supporters and our continuing commitment to do everything we can to save and protect threatened habitat. We recognize the urgency and that, once habitat and species are lost, they’re gone forever.”

To learn more about the Rainforest Trust, visit 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, [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), or [Facebook](#).