



Save the Pantanal: The World's Largest Tropical Wetland

The Pantanal is the world's largest wetland, covering over 43.5 million acres across west-central Brazil and eastern Bolivia and Paraguay—20 times larger than the Everglades in the U.S. This vast expanse harbors extraordinarily rich biodiversity with thousands of species, including Hyacinth Macaws, the most dense population of Jaguars in the world, and possibly the most important refuge for Giant Otters. Time is of the essence in protecting this biodiversity treasure, as any delays could jeopardize moving forward while the political climate is amenable in Brazil.

The Pantanal has become the second-most popular tourism site in South America after the Galapagos—a blessing and a curse. Although significant portions of the Pantanal, particularly in Brazil, remain relatively pristine and untouched by human activities, only 4.6% is currently protected and competing interests for land mean opportunities to conserve large-scale wilderness areas are becoming increasingly rare.

This vast wetland is under increasing pressure for agricultural conversion, with deforestation on the rise. Climate change contributes to a drying trend that negatively impacts wildlife and human communities, and has led to unusually early and intense blazes in the region.

To significantly expand the protection of a critical wildlife corridor connecting the northern and southern Pantanal (the most widely known and touristed area of the wetlands), Rainforest Trust is playing a critical role as part of a collaborative effort with the Mato Grosso do Sul state's Environment Agency, Onçafri – the local project implementer, local stakeholders, and an alliance of international and national funders to establish the new 326,179-acre Taquari Wetlands State Park.

The total cost of this project is expected to fall in the region of \$28 million, with \$24 million earmarked specifically for land purchase, half of which is being provided by the State of Mato Grosso do Sul and half through philanthropic support. The Wyss Foundation has committed \$3.25 million to support land purchase efforts. The Bobolink Foundation has generously committed \$5 million towards our \$10,450,000 goal.

SAFEGUARD IMPERILED SPECIES IN WETLANDS LIKE NO OTHER

The wetlands of the Pantanal are home to around 3,500 plant species, 656 bird species, 325 fish species, 159 mammal species, 53 amphibian species, and 98 reptile species. The density of the Jaguar population in the Pantanal shapes the entire region. Scientists estimate the Giant Otter population at more than 4,000 individuals, an astounding number. Maintaining large areas of intact habitat in the Pantanal, particularly along the river corridors, is vital for these large, wide-ranging animals as



326,179
ACRES

\$10,450,000
PROJECT COST

\$48.28
COST PER ACRE

37,587,200 mT
CO₂ EQUIVALENTS
STORED

KEY SPECIES:

Hyacinth Macaw (VU),
Chestnut-bellied Guan (VU),
Bush Dog (NT),
Jaguar (NT),
Marsh Deer (VU),
Giant Armadillo (VU)



Jaguar © Fabianomr

well as for Bush Dog, Marsh Deer, the largest deer in South America, and Giant Armadillo. The hundreds of bird species that depend on the Pantanal's vast wetlands speaks to its global importance for birds. Its geographic location and ideal environment make it a critical stopover site for birds migrating to and from North America. Threatened birds living within the proposed state park include the Hyacinth Macaw (the largest parrot on Earth) and Chestnut-bellied Guan. It is also home to Osprey and the renowned Jabiru, a large stork.

PREVENT FURTHER ALTERATION OF THIS SPECTACULAR LANDSCAPE

Due to four decades of human impact on the springs that feed the Taquari River, the river has experienced drastic siltation. The Pantanal has also lost approximately 30% of its water volume in recent years due to overuse of water upstream in the Cerrado, climate change, and fluctuations in rainfall. Because it is a dynamic ecosystem, the Pantanal is adapting and so are its species.

The lack of effective conservation measures and government presence has exacerbated the situation, with illegal activities such as overfishing, illegal hunting, bushfires, and uncontrolled occupation and deforestation becoming urgent threats. Once the Taquari Wetlands State Park is established, only activities related to research, management, and eco-tourism will be permitted. Commercial exploitation, including mining, will be prohibited. This project will support a new fire-response team.

In 2013, Rainforest Trust supported our partner, Panthera, to safeguard the 24,640-acre Porto Jofre Private Natural Heritage Reserve.



Taquari Wetlands area, courtesy of Onçafari Association

