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## **New Reserve Announced in Ecuador to Protect Rare Birds from Extinction**

*The Ridgely Reserve in Selva Alegre Established Through Partnership Between Rainforest Trust, Fundación Jocotoco, American Bird Conservancy, and the Conserva Aves initiative*

(Quito, Ecuador and Warrenton, VA) [Fundación Jocotoco](#), [Rainforest Trust](#), [American Bird Conservancy](#), and the [Conserva Aves](#) initiative announced the creation of the Ecuador Ridgely Reserve in Selva Alegre, a vital sanctuary for the Endangered Red-faced Parrot and other threatened species. The newly protected area harbors the largest known population of the Endangered Red-faced Parrot, numbering less than 2,400 individuals worldwide.

Named in honor of world-renowned ornithologist Dr. Robert Ridgely, a champion of bird conservation, Rainforest Trust board member, and co-founder of Fundación Jocotoco, this new reserve represents a major step forward in protecting Ecuador's rich biodiversity.

The 518-acres (210-hectare) protected area is nestled within the Chilla Mountain Range near Saraguro in Loja in southern Ecuador. Its ecosystem comprises high Andean and stunted forests in the highlands that gradually transitions into Páramo habitat interspersed with pines, eucalyptus, and agricultural and livestock areas in the lower valleys. Although the area has not been fully surveyed, more than 90 bird species have been recorded there. Red-faced Parrots have been consistently recorded since the mid-1990s, making it the best-known location for this very rare species.

In the past 28 years of increased deforestation in southern Ecuador, the forest was cleared for economic activities, including grazing and agricultural practices. Currently, these activities cover 46 percent of the total area of Selva Alegre and contribute to pressures on biodiversity and fragile ecosystems. The Red-faced Parrot is highly sensitive to the fragmentation and degradation of this habitat, and monitoring efforts suggest that the population is undergoing rapid declines. These declines have justified the recent uplisting from Least Concern to Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Ecuador is home to nearly 1,600 bird species in an area the size of Colorado. In contrast, the United States has about 800 regularly observed species. This concentration highlights the importance of protecting Ecuador's habitats and the species that depend on them. The creation of the new reserve will conserve wildlife while also generating numerous environmental benefits for residents of the region, in the city of Saraguro and surrounding areas. It will provide clean water for human consumption, reduce the occurrence of landslides, and preserve the area's unique ecosystems.



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A world-famous ornithologist with a career spanning over four decades, Dr. Ridgely has written seven books on neotropical birds. In 1997, while trekking through a cloud forest in the Andes of southern Ecuador, he first identified his namesake species, *Grallaria ridgelyi*, commonly known as the Jocotoco Antpitta, by its distinctive bark-hoot call.

Over the years, Dr. Ridgely traveled tirelessly across South America to document its vast avian diversity in his influential volumes. He participated in numerous research expeditions with teams of ornithologists and played a key role in making this conservation project possible through his deep, long-standing connections within the local community. His efforts extended beyond research, hiring and training locals to monitor migratory birds to ensure long-term conservation impact.

Jocotoco has become a leader in conservation and nature-based tourism, and has helped set the standard for international bird conservation. Dr. Ridgely remains on its board, and Rainforest Trust has collaborated with Jocotoco on 14 conservation projects covering 63,914 acres, with an additional 3,726 acres in progress.

The Ridgely Reserve is also part of the broader [Conserva Aves](#) effort, led by ABC, National Audubon Society, BirdLife International, Birds Canada, and the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Environmental Funds (RedLAC) and supported by Bezos Earth Fund. The initiative aims to support 100 new subnational protected areas in Latin America and the Caribbean, totaling at least 4.9 million acres.

Speaking about the new reserve James Deutsch, CEO of Rainforest Trust stated:

“Rainforest Trust board member and ex-President Bob Ridgely has committed his life to conserving Ecuador's rich biodiversity, especially birds, and it is so fitting that his name will grace the newest reserve established and managed by the Ecuadorian NGO he founded, Jocotoco Foundation. Rainforest Trust is honored to support this initiative.”

Martin Schaefer, CEO of Jocotoco, highlights:

"Bob Ridgely and all the other founders of Jocotoco have created a remarkable legacy by establishing our reserves, founding the Jocotoco Foundation, and expanding our protected areas across Ecuador. Today, we can see how that legacy has flourished, with the Ridgely Reserve in southern Ecuador serving as a prime example. This new sanctuary in Selva Alegre, home to the world's largest known population of the Endangered Red-faced Parrot, shows our commitment to safeguarding Ecuador's incredible biodiversity. The reserve plays a key role in ensuring that our conservation legacy continues to thrive, inspiring future generations of conservationists."

American Bird Conservancy:



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“The Red-faced Parrot is a very rare neotropical species whose habitat is restricted to montane cloud forests of southern Ecuador and adjacent northern Peru,” said Marcelo F. Tognelli, International Project Officer at American Bird Conservancy. “Unfortunately, deforestation and habitat loss has been contributing to its rapid decline. The creation of Ridgely Reserve in southern Ecuador will help ensure this endangered species thrives by improving habitat connectivity, while also providing a healthier environment for local communities.”

Rainforest Trust is proud to have the honor and the pleasure of working with Bob Ridgely for many years, and to share an abiding love for Ecuador and its astounding species—not the least of which are its magnificent birds.

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

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### **About Rainforest Trust**

Since 1988, Rainforest Trust has been working with partners to safeguard imperiled tropical habitats and threatened species by helping to establish protected and conserved areas in partnership with Indigenous and local organizations and communities. To date, Rainforest Trust has helped protect more than 54 million acres of vital habitat across Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region. 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 [RainforestTrust.org](http://RainforestTrust.org), [X \(Twitter\)](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), or [LinkedIn](#).

### **About Jocotoco**

Fundación Jocotoco is an Ecuadorian conservation foundation created in 1998. The organization’s mission is to conserve Ecuador’s biodiversity, especially its threatened species and ecosystems, guided by scientific evidence and local leadership. Fundación Jocotoco protects and manages 18 reserves that cover more than 103,000 acres (42,000 ha), while cooperatively managing another 188,000 acres (76,000 ha) of private and communal protected areas. Combined, these reserves cover an area larger than New York City.

### **About American Bird Conservancy**

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) takes [bold action](#) to conserve wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. Inspired by the wonder of birds, we achieve lasting results for the bird species most in need while



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also benefiting human communities, biodiversity, and the planet's fragile climate. Our every action is underpinned by science, strengthened by partnerships, and rooted in the belief that diverse perspectives yield stronger results. Founded as a nonprofit organization in 1994, ABC remains committed to safeguarding birds for generations to come. [Join us!](#) Together, we can do more to ensure birds thrive.

### **About Conserva Aves**

Conserva Aves protects territories of life. It is an innovative, bold, and visionary conservation initiative led by American Bird Conservancy, National Audubon Society, BirdLife International, Birds Canada, and the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Environmental Funds (RedLAC) that aims to create, consolidate, and manage subnational protected areas for the benefit of birds, biodiversity, and local communities across Latin America and the Caribbean.