

Expand Africa's Premier Green Sea Turtle Sanctuary

The Bijagós Archipelago is located about 30 miles off the coast of Guinea-Bissau in western Africa. It is composed of 88 separate islands and islets. The coastal intertidal ecosystem of Bijagós—the area between high and low tide—is Africa's largest. Its extensive network of channels have created rich areas of intact, old-growth mangroves, mudflats, seagrass and sand flats that sustain a staggering diversity of coastal and marine wildlife.

This intertidal treasure is Africa's most important nesting site for Endangered Green Turtles and the second-largest of the Atlantic Ocean. The area is critical in supporting healthy populations of sea turtles, sharks and rays, marine mammals and abundant fisheries.

Bijagós faces many challenges. The primary threat is overfishing by foreign fishermen. Several illegal fishing camps on the edge of the archipelago put increasing outside pressure on fisheries, as does sport fishing. Poverty drives much of the illegal fishing. Marine surveillance is not currently effective at stopping it.

Rainforest Trust and our partner, Partenariat Régional pour la Conservation de la zone côtière et Marine en Afrique de l'Ouest (PRCM) seek \$2,058,901 to protect 337,542 acres, the majority of the Bijagós Archipelago, by supporting government designation of four Marine Protected Areas (MPA), including a "corridor" MPA and three island Community MPAs. The project also aims to protect sacred areas and sites through the creation of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Conserved Territories and Areas (ICCA) that will overlap MPA protections.

SECURE A SAFE HAVEN FOR SEA TURTLES, SHARKS, RAYS, MARINE MAMMALS AND FISH

Five of Earth's seven species of sea turtle frequent the archipelago: Green, Hawksbill, Olive Ridley, Loggerhead and Leatherback turtles—all of them threatened—migrating hundreds of miles to reach its pristine beaches. Estimates for the number of Green Turtle nests laid each year on Poilão Island, the southernmost island of the archipelago, have reached as high as 79,000 nests in some years.

The waters of the Bijagós are crucial for critically endangered sharks and rays, including the Scalloped Hammerhead, Largetooth Sawfish (potentially one of the last refuges for this ray in western Africa), Blackchin Guitarfish, and Lusitanian Cownose Ray. These waters also provide habitat for Atlantic Humpback Dolphin and African Manatee, and nourish one of the richest fishery resources in West Africa.



337,542
ACRES

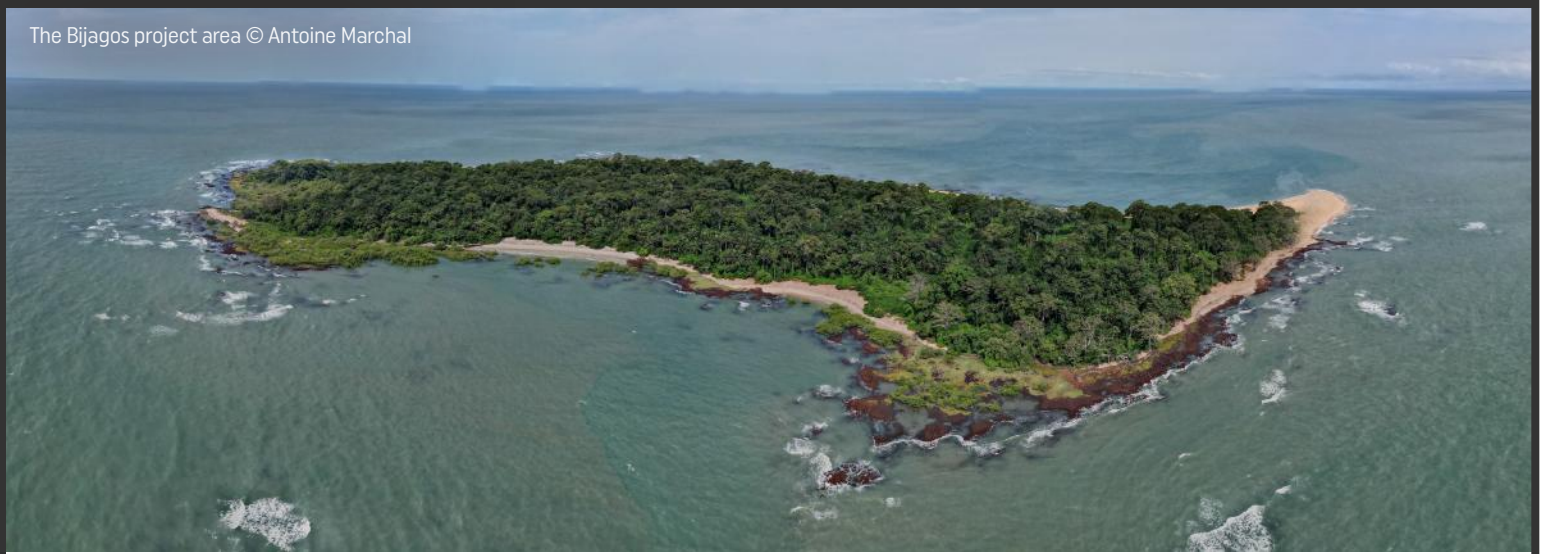
\$2,058,901
PROJECT COST

\$6.10
COST PER ACRE

34,780,596 mT
CO₂ EQUIVALENTS
STORED

KEY SPECIES:

Blackchin Guitarfish (CR),
Atlantic Humpback Dolphin (CR),
Common Guitarfish (EN),
Timneh Parrot (EN),
Green Turtle (EN)



The archipelago is the third most important site in the East-Atlantic flyway, with concentrations of almost a million migratory waders, including Common Ringed Plover, Curlew Sandpiper, Sanderling, Red Knot, Common Redshank, Grey Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit and Eurasian Wimbrel. It is the only active "deltaic" archipelago on the Atlantic coast of Africa, meaning that rivers from the mainland are still shaping the archipelago.

SAVE SACRED SITES AND COASTAL LIVELIHOODS FOR TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES

The biodiverse forests on the islands are sacred to the Bijagos' traditional communities. They are threatened by exploitative tourism and natural resource extraction. The establishment and management of the new protected areas will benefit from a participatory management process that will include local fishermen and residents, with well-defined fishing zones and regulations to meet the subsistence and ceremonial needs of residents. The terrestrial area will be zoned to protect intact habitats and sacred sites.



Mangroves in the project area © Antoine Marchal



Rainforest Trust • P.O. Box 841, Warrenton, VA 20188
(800) 456-4930 • RainforestTrust.org

RAINFOREST
TRUST®