



# Bridge the Gap for Species Protection in Costa Rica

## SFA Children's Eternal Rainforest Reserve Expansion



Resplendent Quetzal © Wirestock Creators



Baird's Tapir © Jim Brown Photography

PROJECT ACRES  
**324**

PROJECT COST  
**\$381,552**

COST PER ACRE  
**\$1,177.63**

CO<sub>2</sub>e STORED  
**40,438 mT**

Costa Rica serves as a biological bridge between North and South America. It is home to over 500,000 plant and animal species, an astounding number for its small size. The Monteverde region in the Tilarán Mountains in the northwest is one of the country's most important conservation landscapes. The exceptional biodiversity found in the threatened cloud forest here ranges from amphibians, orchids, and epiphytes (air plants) to wide-roaming mammals like Jaguar and Endangered Baird's Tapir to altitudinal migrants such as the Vulnerable Three-wattled Bellbird and the Resplendent Quetzal.

The Children's Eternal Rainforest reserve protects 57,000 acres of the Monteverde region for biodiversity and important water sources. It lies between the Arenal Volcano National Park and the Alberto Manuel Brens Biological Reserves, among others. But unprotected private parcels in the buffer zone around the reserve are vulnerable to deforestation and degradation related to the current boom in tourism. Road expansion and

improvements (paving) and other infrastructure projects are opening up access to the reserve for illegal wild species collection and hunting within this poaching hotspot.

Rainforest Trust seeks \$381,552 to support our partner, the Monteverde Conservation League (MCL), to purchase 324 acres of highly intact cloud forest adjacent to the Children's Eternal Rainforest reserve, which they created with Rainforest Trust support in the early 1990s. Timely acquisition is urgent: the current owner wishes to see the property permanently conserved but is also elderly and time is of the essence. Securing this parcel will eliminate the immediate risk of forest loss from subdivision, logging, or agricultural conversion.

Preventing forest fragmentation here will close vulnerable gaps in protection between lower and upper elevation forests—corridors that are essential for species to move up and down to adapt to climate change. Protecting the project's high-integrity headwater rainforests will safeguard

### KEY SPECIES |

*Ocotea monteverdensis* (CR), Central American Spider Monkey (EN), Baird's Tapir (EN), Resplendent Quetzal (NT), Three-wattled Bellbird (VU), Jaguar (NT), numerous endemic amphibians and epiphytic flora



water resources that support downstream ecosystems and communities.

### Fortify decades of protection in Costa Rica

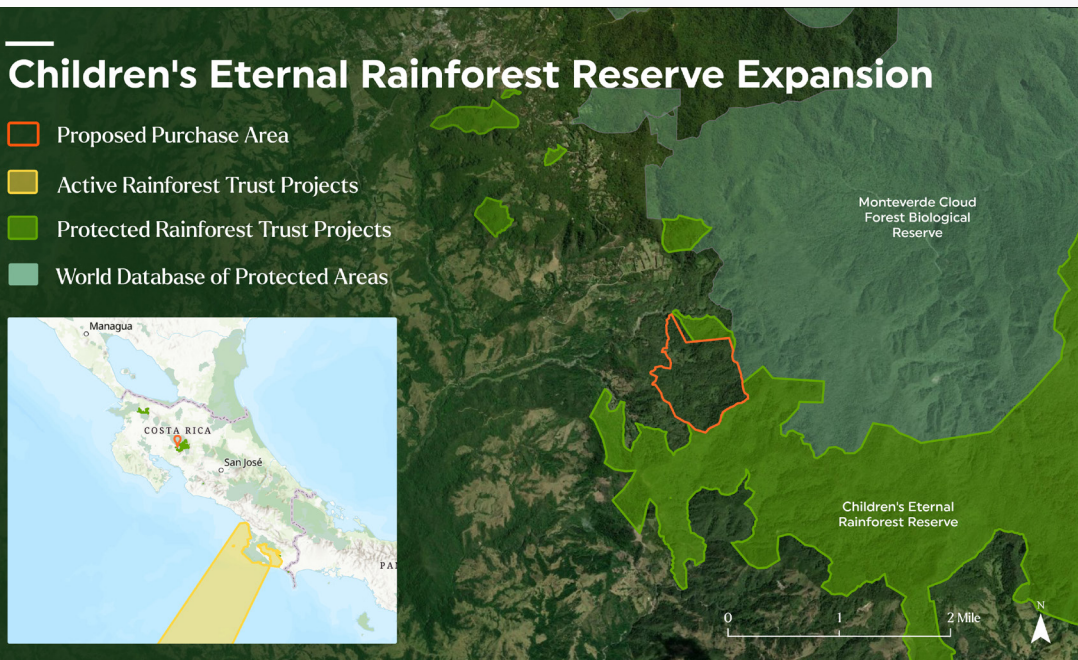
This important expansion of the Children's Eternal Rainforest builds on our initial support of the reserve in 1993. Now 57,000 acres, it is Costa Rica's largest private reserve and was created to protect Pacific Slope rainforests from deforestation for spreading agriculture. MCL currently manages the reserve for forest protection, research, and conservation.

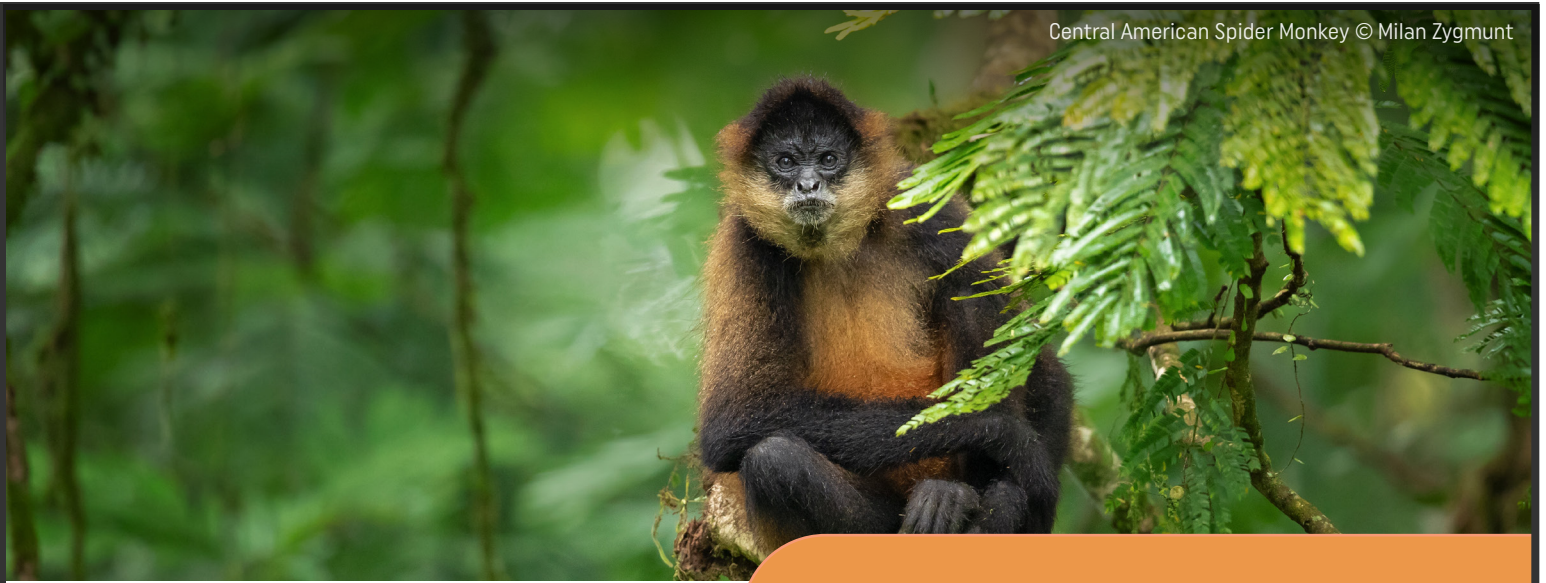
Once the formal title is obtained, MCL intends to establish permanent conservation easements prohibiting subdivision, development, and incompatible land uses in perpetuity. Eventually, the property could also be incorporated into Costa Rica's biological corridor initiative.

### Help threatened species adapt to climate change

The project area is predominantly old-growth forest. Its protection will close a critical, lower elevational gap across the Tilarán Range, linking premontane to upper montane cloud forest and enabling species to make seasonal and climate-driven upslope movements essential to their resilience and long-term survival. These forest types are the most heavily deforested and most poorly protected of all of Costa Rica's life zones. This lush corridor of contiguous, intact forest supports elevational migrations of many species, including bats, birds, and invertebrates.

The area has one of the highest concentrations of orchid species (500-550 species) in a single location on Earth, and thus is a magnet for illegal orchid traffickers. Critically Endangered *Ocotea*





*monteverdensis* is a canopy tree that provides food for quetzals, bellbirds, and oilbirds. Eleven frog species occur within this elevational belt, including several locally restricted species. Studies suggest these elevational gradients provide refuge and the potential for recolonization when frog populations are infected by the deadly chytrid fungus.

Endangered Central American Spider Monkey and Baird's Tapir are dependent on the larger conservation area, as are wide-roaming Jaguars.

Costa Rica is a global leader and co-chair of the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, promoting the 30x30 goal to protect 30% of the world's land and oceans by 2030. It has bypassed its marine protection goals with 31% of its marine zone protected, and its National System of Conservation Areas preserves 25% of its land.

Jaguar © Pedro Helder Pinheiro

## PROJECT PARTNER

### Monteverde Conservation League (MCL)

Monteverde Conservation League has decades of experience managing protected areas and maintains an excellent national and international reputation for transparent governance, strong land management, and scientific collaboration. The Children's Eternal Rainforest was established by MCL with Rainforest Trust support in 1993. The long-term conservation success of that original investment demonstrates the durability and effectiveness of MCL's stewardship. They have a 40-year track record of sustained engagement with the local communities that border the Children's Eternal Rainforest that includes collaborative conservation initiatives like reforestation, Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) that benefit over 8,600 acres of forested land, and environmental education.

