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## Hectares, trees and rangers for Colombia's Antioquia Brushfinch

How your appeal donations will expand Guanacas Reserve for an extinction-facing bird and hundreds of other species





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## Country

Colombia

## Partner/Organisation

Fundación Guanacas Bosques de Niebla

## Biome

Tropical and subtropical moist broadleaf forests

## Ecoregion

Magdalena Valley montane forests

## Habitats

In northwest Colombia, just north of Medellín city, lies a haven of singular, threatened biodiversity. Perched 1,900-2,700 metres above sea level, Guanacas ('sacred water over stone', in the tongue of the Nutabe and Tahamí Indigenous people who once lived here) is a reserve that lives up to its name. Some 18 different water sources crisscross the cloud forests and regenerating pastures within this protected area, one among few precious remnants of wilderness that still cling to the slopes of the Cordillera Central. What's left of this orchid-, magnolia-laden canopy buzzes with the call of Critically Endangered birds, Vulnerable wildcats and frogs only found in Colombia – and with your help, starting in 2023 we can expand and restore this habitat, for the benefit of all.

## Project summary

A chance exists this year to safeguard and expand the home of a tropical songbird so rare it was once thought extinct – and your support to our new appeal can make this possible.

For years, WLT supporters have been helping to protect the Guanacas Reserve, established in the broader area where – in 2019 – the Antioquia Brushfinch was first seen alive. With the species thought to number fewer than 50 individuals, this 850-plus hectare (ha) reserve could not be more crucial and Fundación Guanacas is acting to expand it, with your help.

This is what your appeal donations will do:

- Enlarging the reserve by 181 ha through the acquisition of 3 properties
- This is more than half of the 302 ha our partner can secure with help from others
- Bringing 36,500 trees so that 100 ha can be restored from 2023 to 2027
- Employing four rangers from the local community from 2023 to 2025
- Financing ecotourism cabins to fund conservation action in the long run

Together, we can save one of the last remnants of lower montane wet forest left in this area. We can hand a lifeline to a Critically Endangered bird and hundreds of other species, fighting climate change and delivering a future of protected water sources and job opportunities for local people.

## Main threats to the area

The story of this stretch of the Antioquia Department is a familiar one among South America's vanishing cloud forests. Deforestation from agriculture and livestock rearing has shrunk these habitats and fragmented them to the extreme, pushing species – wildcats such as Oncilla, Ocelot and Puma in particular – into the hands of poachers and other forms of human-wildlife conflict. This is where WLT supporters come in. At a time of rising impacts from climate change, your appeal donations will help Fundación Guanacas to safeguard, reforest, reconnect and expand what is left of these habitats.

Antioquia Brushfinch



Oncilla



Chocolate Frog



**Key species<sup>1</sup>**

Antioquia Brushfinch (*Atlapetes blancae*, CR); Magnolia yarumalense (*Magnolia yarumalensis*, CR); White-capped Tanager (*Sericossypha albocristata*, VU); Black-and-gold Tanager (*Bangsia melanochlamys*, VU); Quindio Wax Palm (*Ceroxylon quindiuense*, VU); Red-bellied Grackle (*Hypopyrrhus pyrohypogaster*, VU); Oncilla (*Leopardus tigrinus*, VU); Chocolate Frog (*Hyloscirtus Antioquia*, VU); Serna's Robber Frog (*Pristimantis dorsopictus*, VU).

<sup>1</sup>The Red List of Threatened Species, maintained by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), includes categories of Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN), Vulnerable (VU), Near Threatened (NT), Least Concern (LC) and Data Deficient (DD).

**Global prioritisation**

If you support this project, you will be bringing protection to part of the world's most biodiverse region: the Tropical Andes Biodiversity Hotspot. This is one of the last tracts of lower montane wet forest left in the northern half of Colombia's Antioquia Department and its just-right mix of elevation, temperature and humidity has shaped an ecosystem teeming with species in their hundreds, many found only in this area of the country.

**Biodiversity**

It is hard to overstate the extent of biodiversity that will benefit if Guanacas Reserve is expanded and reforested, with your support. These cloud forests are not just a crucial home for the rusty-crowned Antioquia Brushfinch; they also harbour populations of 132 other bird species, including Vulnerable forest dwellers such as the striking White-capped Tanager and the Colombia endemic Red-bellied Grackle. And it doesn't stop there. If we act, we can safeguard habitat for 70 orchid species, the Critically Endangered *Magnolia yarumalensis*, the world's tallest palm tree – the Quindio Wax Palm – and Vulnerable amphibians, including the Chocolate Frog. We can reinforce a pivotal biological corridor for Ocelot, Oncilla and Puma, wildcats all and top predators who are central to the health of their ecosystem.

**Local communities**

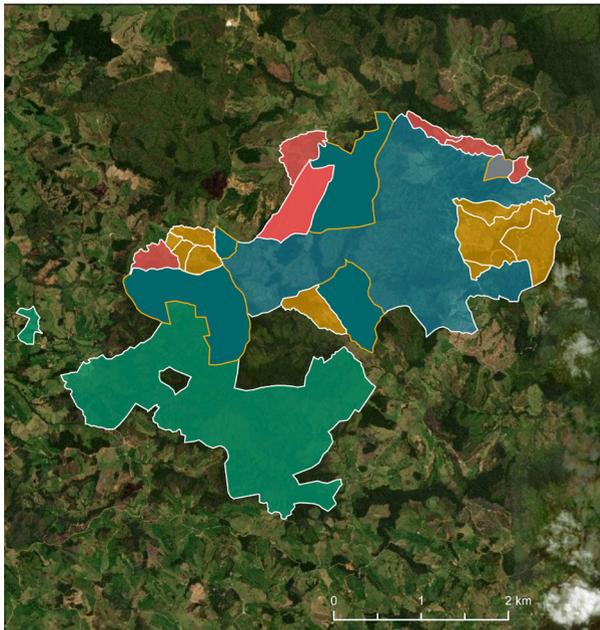
Cattle ranchers and fruit crop farmers live in the neighbouring communities and for the decades this project has been ongoing, Fundación Guanacas has worked hard to involve them, engaging through site visits, education and employment opportunities. Funded by your appeal donations, the project's next phase will too place local people at its heart. The expanded reserve will not only act as a water source, carbon store, soil fertility ally and barrier against climate-driven erosion and landslides. It will also unlock jobs, such as the four rangers, six tree-planters, and tree nursery coordinator – local people all – funded by your donations. It will bring ecotourism revenues, so that both conservation and the local economy can become more financially sustainable in the long haul.

UN Sustainable Development Goals directly advanced by this project

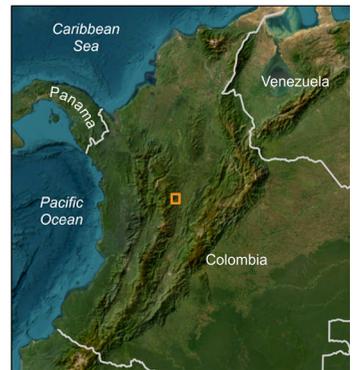




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- Current boundaries of Guanacas Reserve
- Completed reserve extensions funded by WLT
- Reserve extensions in progress funded by WLT
- Your donations will fund these extensions of 181 ha in 2023
- Future extensions
- Santa Rosa de Osos Municipal Reserve



### Partner/Organisation

This conservation project you can make possible goes back over 30 years. In 1990, Fundación Bosques de Niebla founder José Rodrigo Castaño kickstarted the protection of these cloud forests through the purchase of a first 120 ha, along the foothills near Cerro San José. With the non-profit registered in 2007 and the first ranger families involved one year later, Fundación Guanacas has since expanded the reserve to 850-plus ha, including 233 ha secured with WLT's help in recent years. With your support, we can now achieve yet another extension, another chapter for a project that has already come incredibly far for the unique, threatened life of the Guanacas mountains.

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