

Biodiversity Restoration and Community Development Cuero y Salado, Honduras

Objectives

- Rehabilitate mangrove ecosystems which form crucial habitat for migratory song birds, biodiversity and the provision of eco system services.
- Develop a mangrove nursery and demonstration centre for biodiversity restoration projects along the north coast of Honduras and within the Cuero y Salado Wildlife Reserve
- Develop local expertise and capacity to restore degraded coastal ecosystems
- Increase eco-tourism opportunities for birdwatchers in order for local people to generate an income through activities which promote the restoration of healthy eco systems and communities
- Promote the involvement of women in activities which promote food security, income generation, and landscape restoration.



Project Area The Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge was founded in 1987 as a protected area under the Honduran state. The refuge comprises 13, 225 hectares and includes two small communities as well as various pockets of inhabitants dispersed in different sites throughout the refuge. The refuge, is home to various species of birds, bats, fish, mammals, insects, amphibians, and reptiles.

Community There are 110 families living directly within the wildlife reserve, and many more dispersed around the outskirts of the area. There are changing demographics as a community who has traditionally relied on fishing as a primary food source, is faced with declining resources and livelihood opportunities. Traditionally, women have not been involved in fishing activities; however, as the everyday reality changes, and fishing resources are in short supply, there is greater need for women to play a role in providing for their families and communities.

Ecosystem



The Cuero y Salado region is a unique estuary zone at the convergence of the Atlantic Ocean and the Cuero and Salado rivers. The refuge area comprises tropical forest, marsh lands, sandy beach, and ocean. Crocodiles, Turtle Tortoises, iguanas, white faced monkeys, howling monkeys, jaguars and anteaters, are just a few of the species which are found in the refuge. 10% of the global

population of Manatees, which are at threatened with extinction, are found in the Cuero and Salado region.



There are more than 200 birds which make their home in Northern North America during the summer, and migrate south to Central America and the Caribbean during the colder Winter months. Protecting bird habitat along migratory and over-wintering routes is a crucial step to ensuring the health of bird populations along the Atlantic Coast.

Methodology

Habitat restoration will follow the Analog Forestry methodology in order to ensure that rehabilitated land mimics the natural ecosystem of the area. (please see: www.analogforestrynetwork.org for more information). The Analog Forestry system ensures that local people can plant species which create income generating opportunities while increasing food security and the availability of nutritional local foods. In the riparian zone of Cuero and Salado, degraded lands will be reforested with native species of mangroves and understory plants, as well as



with species which have additional value to local people. There will be particular emphasis on including species which will provide an additional food source for the community, while ensuring the integrity and viability of the native ecosystem.

Project activities

1. Develop and deliver biodiversity restoration training resources specific to the mangrove ecosystem in the Cuero and Salado region. Special emphasis will be placed on restoring habitat for migratory birds, and incorporating species which create income generating opportunities and provide a food source for local families.
2. Train local landowners, farmers, and community members in Analog Forestry and provide technical support as they initiate the process on their lands.
3. Conduct biodiversity awareness and restoration activities in local primary schools
4. Evaluate demand and supply potential of non-timber forest products derived from the restored mangrove ecosystem to create income generating activities for local people.
5. Promote long-term project sustainability by developing community and practitioner tools, guidebooks, and website. Disseminate lessons learned to other organizations and community groups on the North Coast of Honduras and Central America to promote the transfer of knowledge, seeds, and restoration materials for other coastal communities.

Background

Destruction of habitat with the resultant dramatic decline in biodiversity is a worldwide phenomenon but is specifically critical in Central America. As communities struggle for survival, they place large burdens on surrounding ecosystems in attempt to garner

enough food and fuel to support their families. Finding sustainable alternatives that support the needs of local people is crucial in order to support the health of local communities and biodiversity.

In addition to promoting biodiversity, benefiting eco-tourism, and strengthening community development, rehabilitating coastal areas; habitat restoration will result in increased carbon sequestration as well as protection of water courses. Rehabilitating mangrove areas will provide a crucial buffer zone to the people and ecosystems of the area from severe weather events and storm surges.



PARTNERS



Falls Brook Centre

Falls Brook Centre is a leading organization in the restoration of degraded areas throughout Central America and the Caribbean. Falls Brook Centre is currently managing biodiversity restoration and community development projects in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, and Honduras

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