

# Report on BirdLife Partners land purchase experiences in the Americas

## Purchasing and Protecting Key Forest Sites for Nature Conservation in the Americas

April 2014



## Land purchase for conservation in the Americas

### Private Land Conservation in the Americas – an introduction of the key issues

Designating public protected areas is one of the oldest and most effective conservation tools in the world. According to the world database on protected areas, in 2012 14% of the world's terrestrial area and territorial waters were covered by protected areas. The Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 states that "By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes."

Of all regions, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has the highest proportion of land and territorial water protected, 20.9% in 2012. However, given the extremely high biodiversity of this region, there are still significant gaps in the coverage of this protected area network, both in terms of threatened species and representative ecosystems.

Conservation of private land can be an effective tool to fill these gaps. They are often established at areas of high biodiversity value, indeed, conservation NGOs are usually targeting their conservation efforts of private land conservation to sites of high conservation returns, such as IBAs, KBAs, AZEs or biodiversity hot-spots. Apart from protecting sites of high conservation value, they can also complement the system of public protected areas in various ways:

- Establishing conservation corridors between existing protected areas
- Protecting the buffer zones of protected areas
- Protecting private land within protected areas
- Leveraging resources for conservation.

There are many ways of achieving the conservation of natural habitats and wildlife on privately (or communally) owned land. Some of the most commonly used tools are the following:

- Establishing private reserves through strategic land purchase
- Conservation easements
- Informal reserves established by private land owners by putting voluntary restrictions on the use of land
- Community reserves
- Limited development projects
- Conservation concessions.

In the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region, the use of these tools is variable depending on the countries concerned. Several of these options are included, at least to some extent, in existing legislation but there are major gaps in the legal system in practically all countries concerned. For example, the Ecuadorian national system of protected areas contemplates the establishment of sub-systems for private and community reserves but legislation and policy to back this up is lacking. Economic incentives for private land conservation exist in some countries, such as payments for environmental services, tax easements or direct payments



Photo: Palkachupa Cotinga Phibalura boliviana, a threatened endemic species which is the focus of land purchase efforts by Armonia in Bolivia. Copyright: Asociación Armonia

to land owners (such as the Socio Bosque scheme in Ecuador).

Around the world, BirdLife Partners are engaged in a diversity of conservation efforts on private land, most prominently in the purchase of land for establishing private reserves. The BirdLife Partners with the largest network of private reserves are the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in the UK (managing 211 reserves on 141,833 ha of which 57% is owned), Natuurpunt/Natagora in Belgium (17,147 ha on more than 400 reserves) and National Audubon in the USA (50 sanctuaries covering 42,414.8 ha). The current report summarizes the experiences of five BirdLife Partners in the LAC region (Guyra Paraguay, Grupo Jaragua, National Audubon, Save Brasil and Armonia) regarding land purchase for conservation of private land. It is worth mentioning that there are several other BirdLife network organizations in the Americas with land purchase experience (e.g. Pronatura in Mexico, CODEFF in Chile, Panama Audubon Society) who were not included in the survey.

### The Jensen Foundation project on land purchase – brief summary

In 2012–13, the Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation funded the project "Purchasing and Protecting Key Forest Sites for Nature Conservation in the Americas". The project goal was "To ensure the long term conservation of key forests at IBAs in Argentina, Dominican Republic and Paraguay, through land purchase to create private reserves and the development of sustainable finance mechanisms for long-term management and effective protection." The project intended to secure the purchase of a minimum of 474 ha and up to approximately 584 ha of critical forest habitat and over 60 globally threatened species of birds and other taxa in the critically threatened Atlantic Forest of Argentina and Paraguay, and the Caribbean Dry Forest of the Dominican Republic. Additionally, the project also sought long term protection and effective management of purchased lands ensured through the development of sustainable financing mechanisms and increased capacity of BirdLife Partners to secure and manage protected areas.

After the first year of the project it became clear that the funds allocated to purchase land in Misiones, Argentina would no longer cover the increased costs of buying available land parcels at the site originally identified (Cruce

Caballero Provincial Park). Land prices in the area have increased more rapidly than anticipated which meant that land purchase has become prohibitively expensive there. Various alternative options of high-value sites (all IBAs) were revised but no suitable land for sale was found. Therefore, a decision was made to divert the funds originally allocated to Argentina to the project site in the Dominican Republic (buffer zone of the Jaragua National Park) where several land parcels were offered for sale at reasonable prices. As a result of the project, 528.1 ha in total of forest habitats were purchased, 274 ha in the San Rafael area in Paraguay and 254.1 ha in the Dominican Republic.

One of the proposed activities of the project was to “Document and share lessons and case studies of BirdLife Partner experience of forest conservation through land purchase, and develop best practice guidance, including aspects of local consultation and engagement”. Two of the project partners, Guyra Paraguay and Grupo Jaragua had previous valuable experience with land purchase at the project sites and beyond. Guyra Paraguay has purchased 19 properties covering 35,835 ha of prime habitats at four sites (San Rafael, Bahía Negra, Alto Paraguay – Chaco and Campo Iris – Chaco Seco). Grupo Jaragua has started purchasing land in 2010 and so far they have purchased 429.25 ha dry forest. In addition, the following BirdLife Partners in the Americas were also invited to share their experiences and lessons learned in this area:

- National Audubon (USA): One of the biggest nature conservation organizations in the United States, Audubon started to buy land for conservation in 1923. Since then, they have established approximately 50 nature sanctuaries purchasing 104,809.27 acres of land (42,414.8 ha).
- Armonia (Bolivia): has started purchasing land for conservation in 2005 at strategic locations within Bolivia. To date, they have bought five parcels of land totaling 9,793 ha establishing four private reserves (Palkachupa Reserve, Barba Azul Nature Reserve, Red-fronted Macaw Reserve and Amazona Tucumana Reserve). All sites are important for threatened bird species.
- Save Brasil (Brazil): bought a single property covering 360 ha in the Serra do Urubu IBA in Pernambuco State in the Atlantic rainforest. The site holds three Critically Endangered, four Endangered and three Vulnerable species of birds, representing outstanding value for conservation.



Photo: Nesting colony of Royal Terns *Sterna maxima*, Wainwright Island, National Audubon. Copyright: Walker Golder

Between them, the five BirdLife Partners own 88,832 ha of conservation land spread among 60 private nature reserves. They have 122 years of combined experience in land purchase, providing a highly valuable resource for the BirdLife Partnership and beyond.

### Land purchase questionnaire

To draw out the experiences and lessons learned of the five BirdLife Partners, a simple questionnaire was designed and distributed as part of the project. The questionnaire has the following main sections:

- Information about the organization: country, organization’s name, details of the main contact person
- Organization’s experience with land purchase: year when the organization started land purchase activities, number of land parcels bought to date, total area of land purchased to date (ha), information about the private reserves established (name, area, locality, status)
- Financing issues for land purchase: financing mechanisms, lessons learned, examples
- Lessons learned during each of the main phases of the land purchase process: prospecting, initial survey of the selected property, legal issues, claims of indigenous communities, negotiating and signing a deal with the land owner, after purchase issues and long-term purchasing strategies
- Any other issues.

A copy of the land purchase questionnaire can be found in Annex 1.

### Scope and target audience

The current report brings together the experiences of five BirdLife Partners in the Americas in the field of buying land for conservation. The five countries (Bolivia, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, USA) represent a diverse set of conditions and different environments (legal, political, cultural, natural) under which the land purchase process takes place. It is hoped that drawing some general lessons learned from the experiences of these organizations a set of basic guidelines can be developed of the things to do or to avoid at each stage of this often time-consuming and complex process.

The document is aimed at conservation practitioners in America and elsewhere who are engaged in the process of purchasing land for conservation and establishing private reserves. Organizations who are thinking about embarking on this process may find the lessons learned helpful when searching for available, high conservation value lands to avoid some of the usual pitfalls of property negotiations. Organizations with more experience in this area might be encouraged to share their own lessons learned, either reinforcing or challenging the ideas presented in this report. Others might be interested to look for evidence under what conditions land purchase can be a viable tool for the conservation of critical sites and habitats for biodiversity. We hope that BirdLife Partners, other not-for-profit conservation organizations and state conservation institutions will all find something of interest in this report.

# Land purchase for conservation in the Americas

## Summary of the responses of the BirdLife Partners

### A. Financing issues for land purchase

**QUESTION:** What financial mechanisms were used to purchase land?

**ANSWERS FROM PARTNERS:**

- Donations
- Institutional grants
- Mitigation bank credit sales revenues (for acquisition and to create stewardship funds)
- Ministry of Agriculture (USA)
- Restricted funds
- Tax default
- Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) Act (USA).

Lessons learned regarding financing mechanisms:

- A long, strong history of acquisition success predisposes land acquisition funders to support you. Funders are impressed with collaborative enterprises so emphasize your partnerships and how they are contributing to success.
- Take into consideration the needs of long-term management and conservation of these areas. Self-sustainability is difficult to achieve and covering management costs depend on external donors. Include part of these costs in the funds available for land purchase, if possible.
- Relationship with potential donors must be personal.
- Prepare and distribute audiovisual materials showing the biological richness of the site.
- Demonstrate that the investment is part of a bigger concept and a long-term vision (e.g. through a business plan).
- Link biodiversity conservation to sustainable development and improvement in the quality of life of local people.
- It is important to diversify the sources of income.
- Only buy land in the name of a national institution/ organization.
- It is important to engage people at the emotional level, for example by offering them to be remembered for ever as the defender of the site (e.g. through a memorial plaque).

### B. Land purchase process

**Phase 1: Prospecting land for purchase: mapping, identification of land parcels for sale, identification of owners, etc.**

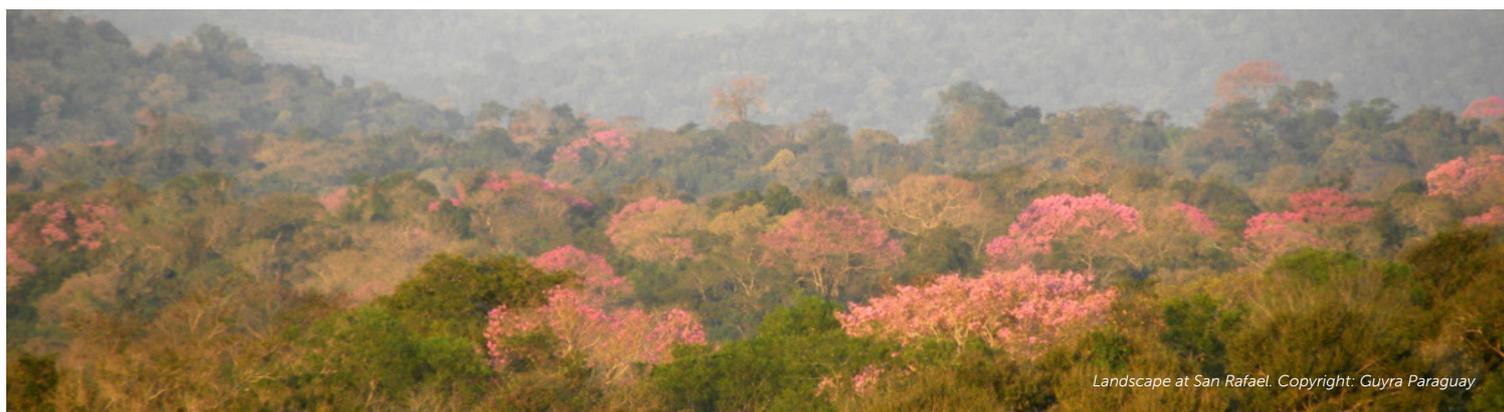
**QUESTION:** What are your criteria for identifying individual land parcels for purchase?

**ANSWERS FROM PARTNERS:**

- Conservation or Strategic Priority: protecting a Priority IBA (Global or Continental); a priority bird or other animal species and their habitats; identified in a conservation plan for a Priority or Incubator Project in the Strategic Plan of National Audubon; priority habitat type.
- Strategic Location: creating a new Center or adding critical land to an existing Center; Sanctuary or IBA or land that will help to improve the management of existing priority landholdings and other conserved lands; being in the buffer zone of protected areas; connection with land already purchased.
- Ecological conditions: vegetation which is in its natural state and has been little disturbed by human activities, especially by slash and burn agriculture, charcoal burning, establishment of cattle pastures; land serves as buffer against advancing agricultural activities; high conservation value forests.
- Leveraging Opportunities: engage key audiences in conservation goals, further critical partnerships, or provide legal or credible standing in important policy decisions.
- Best Manager: to protect the habitat and resources given Audubon's conservation goals, expertise, and proximity.
- Adequate Resources: funds exist for the acquisition and long-term stewardship of the property or conservation easement including transaction costs and a cost benefit analysis of these costs relative to the projected conservation outcomes or other viable options.
- Availability: land is for sale at reasonable prices.

Recommendations for things to do at this stage:

- Use a local person to carry out a low-key investigation within the community to identify land owners and their willingness to sell.
- A thorough revision of maps, satellite images (Google Earth) gives a first view of the terrain, especially regarding vegetation conditions. Then a first revision on the ground forms a basis to judge the condition of land



Landscape at San Rafael. Copyright: Guyra Paraguay

and defining exact location and approximate size and delimitation with GPS.

- Make a list of the parcels, identify them on a map, do field trips to them.
- It is possible to use participatory rural assessment to identify properties, their owners, size and forest cover.
- Let people know that the sole objective of the land purchase is to guarantee the protection of the land and its natural resources in perpetuity.
- Hire a person with relevant experience in land purchase and negotiations.

Recommendations for things not to do at this stage:

- Try to avoid letting a landowner think their land is the only land in which you are interested.

#### Examples:

Grupo Jaragua: In Fondo Paradí several plots were offered for sale where the criteria for conservation land purchase were not met and severe human impact on the land was detected during the ground survey with little hope for a good recuperation of the vegetation, although the price offer of the seller had been good. Criteria used for site selection included good natural vegetation cover or a good potential for natural recovery of the vegetation. Heavily grazed and eroded land was found to have limited conservation value as on these parcels dense stands of two pioneer species can often be found.



Photo: Camera trap photo of the endemic Rhinoceros Iguana *Cyclura cornuta*. Copyright: Grupo Jaragua

### Phase 2: Initial evaluation of the selected property (survey with land owner, mapping, etc.)

Recommendations for things to do at this stage:

- Enter into direct contact with land owner. S/he should be familiar with the boundaries of the property.
- Survey with land owner should provide the following information: the boundaries of the properties must be clearly identifiable, no conflict with neighboring land owners (to be verified by the neighbors), preparation of map based on GPS data to calculate size and show delimitation as well as neighboring properties. Boundary disputes can be expensive to resolve and cause ill-will with neighbors.
- Ensure that the map of the property coincides with the physical delimitation of the boundaries on the ground (boundary stones).
- Always check the size of the property. In case of differing measurements, agree with the owner about

an acceptable method of measuring the property (see example under Phase 5 below).

- Prepare a study of the land ownership.

US-specific recommendations:

- Secure a copy of the landowners survey as soon as possible, find the property in county real estate parcel data base and print a copy of the map of it, and get on the land with the owner or his/her agent and convince yourself that the land looks like what the survey plat (cadastral map) and parcel map says it should. Be absolutely sure you know what land the potential seller owns.
- When having a forest property surveyed, always require the surveyor to open (chop out) the survey lines, side chop trees on both sides of the lines and blaze witness trees for every corner monument.

#### Examples:

National Audubon: We once got way too far into an acquisition project before we realized that the owner did not know exactly where her land was, that she had a very defective survey and that the corners and boundary lines of her property were not fixed in the field.

Once we accepted a gift of land that had been recently surveyed but the boundary lines were not opened, side chopped or blazed, and it was difficult to locate the property's boundaries.

Grupo Jaragua: In two occasions border delimitation of properties was unclear. In the case of one of the owners, verification of the border took several months until finally doubts regarding the claims of a neighbor were cleared.

### Phase 3: Legal issues - checking land titles and associated documents, fees and charges, preparation of the legal agreement, etc.

Recommendations for things to do at this stage:

- Thorough review of the documents to avoid errors that may have legal consequences.
- Check if the property has any irregularities such as tax arrears, mortgage, title issues, etc. If the documentation of the land is not regular and correct do not purchase it!
- Check that the property is duly registered with the relevant authorities.
- Get to know the activities and reputation of the owners of the land.
- Put all the relevant details into the sale/purchase agreement or contract, don't act in good faith only.
- It is important to contract lawyers with relevant experience and good knowledge of the relevant legislation; although they may seem expensive they can save a lot of money if something goes wrong.
- It is recommended to sign a preliminary agreement with the land owner for the sale/purchase of the land. In the case of Guyra Paraguay, this agreement includes the agreed sales price and the period (40 days) for which the agreement is valid. This time period allows for the checking of the legality of the title any outstanding legal issues associated with it. This way, the owner receives guarantee of the purchase and Guyra obtains a price guarantee.
- Include all the legal costs in the land purchase budget.

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US-specific recommendations:

- Title Insurance is required, local counsel often hired to prepare legal documents.
- In offer letters and purchase options, always base the offer on dollars per acre, the final sales price subject to a survey paid for by the buyer. Obviously, the survey must be complete and approved for recording in the appropriate government office before the final price is determined. Be sure the landowner is aware that he or she will be responsible to the seller's share of the closing costs, unless buyer wants to assume them all.

### Examples:

Grupo Jaragua: At the time of preparing this report in the Dominican Republic there are two systems of property registration, one regulated by the Civil Code and the Law 2914 of May 21, 1890 and its modifications (Ministerial System), where the transcription is effectuated for transfers of properties which have not entered the national cadastral system. The second one, regulated by Law No. 1542 of 1947 November 7, and its modifications is the modern Torrens system (Cadastral System). In rural areas, especially in the south of the country, the cadastral system is still hardly applied and it is the ministerial system which is ruling property transfers. This holds especially true for the threatened forest, which are within the Jaragua Bahuco Biological Corridor.

The public notary prepares the legal agreement (acto bajo firma privada) which contains the personal information of the seller and the information concerning Grupo Jaragua as the buyer represented by its president. The document stipulates the amount of land, the sale's price and also the mode how the seller had originally acquired the land (usually by possession for 20 years, which has to be testified by witnesses, by inheritance, or by purchase, which will require a copy of the former sale's contract). The document also names the proprietors of the adjacent lands.

Notary fees are to be paid based on negotiation with the notary (around 2 to 5% of the value of the purchase); there are also fees for the registration in the Ayuntamiento (Municipality) of Oviedo. The first documents were originally prepared by the Juez de Paz (Justice of Peace). With the establishment of a public notary in Oviedo, things have improved considerably, since documents are now prepared on computer and any error can be corrected easily.

Marin Audubon (California): We have obtained appraisals, which are required for all government funding. We have a partner organization, Marin Baylands Advocates that has a donor advised fund at our local community foundation that accepts private donations for our purchases. These funds are used for appraisals and other fees as there may be.

### Phase 4: Checking claims of indigenous communities' over the land

Recommendations for things to do at this stage:

- Sign agreements with public institutions and local communities in favor of protecting the land. In the case of Guyra Paraguay, a letter is sent to the highest national authority on indigenous affairs (National Institute of Indigenous People – INDI) with the details of the property to be purchased, including the objectives of the land purchase and any limitations to the future use of the land.
- Agree with the communities that the land to be purchased will be preserved in perpetuity. The title document of the lands purchase by Guyra Paraguay highlights that the land is to be conserved in perpetuity and that the only permitted activities apart from conservation are investigation and restoration. These issues are also covered in an agreement signed with the indigenous community for the long-term conservation and management of these territories.

### Phase 5: Negotiating and signing a deal with the land owner

Recommendations for things to do at this stage:

- Offer a down payment to the owner to secure the land while the funds are obtained for the purchase.
- Very often the following problems have to be confronted: overestimation of actual size of property and/or exaggerated perception by land owner. In such cases, agree with the land owner to measure the property using a reliable and objective method.
- If there are existing fees, penalties, taxes or mortgages on the land, negotiate the reduction of the final price in proportion to these.
- Define clearly the deadlines, forms of payment, possession and final transfer of the land.
- It is preferred to employ a professional with relevant experience in land purchase and negotiations, depending on the anticipated difficulties involved with the purchase.

### Examples:

Grupo Jaragua: Negotiations with the local land owners have been difficult. On the one hand we have felt stiff competition from cattle ranchers who have great economic and political power. On the other hand the expectations of possible sellers have risen regarding prices, since the tourism fever has hit the local real estate market. In addition things are made more complicated by the fact that most owners are not well aware of the actual size of their properties and tend to overestimate grossly the actual size. This tendency is even reinforced and aggravated by the common practice in the region to measure terrain with the "soga" (Spanish for rope). This method, mainly used by local agronomists, consists of simply measuring the circumference of any plot using a rope of a defined length (often 50 m) and then calculating the area based on a formula which adds opposing sides of width and length dividing the sums by two and then multiplying the two results. This crude method may work for simple



Photo: Dry forest at Fondo Paradí, Dominican Republic. Copyright: Grupo Jaragua

## Phase 6: After purchase issues (e.g. registration of the property, delimiting boundaries, etc.)

Recommendations for things to do at this stage:

- Always delimit the boundary of a property. Fencing is a convenient although expensive way of showing possession and to keep out grazing animals.
- Register deed and plat (cadastral map) with appropriate authorities.
- Maintain good relationship with the ex-property owners as there are always legal issues where their assistance might be needed.
- Set up control systems (e.g. regular patrols) to avoid trespassing and illegal activities on the property.
- Prepare a management plan for the area.
- Get the area declared under relevant legal systems to give it official recognition (e.g. official nature reserve).
- Organize visits of donors, VIPs, representatives of authorities, etc. to the site.
- Inform local community that the land became a private reserve through signs, basic infrastructure, employing a local caretaker and direct contact.
- Have a financial plan to cover the operative costs of protecting the site.

### Examples:

Marin Audubon: Our major after purchase issues are restoration of the habitats, monitoring and enforcement. We have included funding in our grant applications for restoration/enhancement where possible. Funding for monitoring of the restorations is a major problem. Management including enforcement of dog leash and hunting laws is a problem. Ongoing funding for parcel (special district) taxes is also a challenge. Non-profits are exempt from property taxes in California.

### Examples cont'd:

rectangular-shaped terrains but is useless for plots with more complicated dimensions, since it leaves the decision to what belongs to width and length to the whimsy and subjective opinion of the person doing the calculations. In the case of land owner Luis Gomez estimates made by this method ranged from 1,400 tareas to 2,000 tareas, while the measurement made by us with GPS resulted in 1,100 tareas. In the case of the owner Chiche the calculations of different agronomists (the plot was measured by different people several times) came up to 1,400 tareas and the GPS results were 702 tareas. Rumors were spread that our measurements with GPS were false, with the intention of undermining the credibility of the method. This was an effort by several agronomists to keep the "soga" method alive. In the cases of Luis Gomez and Chiche we were able to come to the conclusion with the selling party to secure the services of the land surveyor from Pedernales in order to resolve the differences between the "soga" method and GPS measurements. It was agreed that the results of the work of the surveyor would be accepted by both parties. Using the services of the surveyor implied an additional substantial cost which was split between seller and Grupo Jaragua. In the case of Luis Gomez the result was 1,124 tareas and regarding the plot of Chiche it was 714. In both cases the surveyor's results were very close to our GPS measurements and confirmed the method.

Guyra Paraguay: In one case the land owner changed his mind after the funds for the purchase had already been transferred and sold the land to another buyer. The funds needed to be returned to the donor which implied extra costs without actually concluding the purchase.

## C. Long-term purchase strategies

**QUESTION:** How to avoid escalating land prices following the initial land purchase?

### ANSWERS FROM PARTNERS:

- Make a real good deal (low price) on the first purchase to establish the expectations of other potential sellers. In addition, know the relative values of all of the properties you hope to acquire so that you can explain why one parcel is worth more or less than another. And, know the market and the people from whom you hope to buy.
- The best moment to buy land is when an owner is in need to sell because of financial difficulties. This situation is of course advantageous, because it leads to a strong buyer position.
- It is good practice to avoid negotiations during periods of high expectations of rising land prices in the region due to rumors or promotion by interested parties of mass tourism or other types of development. A periodic influx of funds of politically and economically influential persons in the region provokes stiff competition at certain intervals.
- It is advantageous to have a seed fund for land purchase, which can be applied opportunistically when opportunities pop up. Usually there is a time limit of the funds to be spent up to a certain date which has disadvantages in case of protracted negotiations.

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- Buy land at the local rates.
- Promote economic alternatives, incentives and benefits to local communities.
- Price increases often reflect socio-economic realities of the local area or region and are therefore difficult to influence.

**QUESTION:** How to manage relationship with other land owners and communities?

### ANSWERS FROM PARTNERS:

- Both as an individual and institutionally, be a good neighbor and treat others the way you want them to treat you, and be consistent. Manage the lands under your control in ways that will lead owners who find themselves needing or wanting to sell their land, to explore selling to you first. If owners love their rural lands and hope to see them remain largely as they are, you are likely their best hope.
- Agree to payments in lieu of taxes if property exemption obtained.
- The great respect of private property is upheld within the communities and any transfer of property from one owner to the other is usually common knowledge.
- It is good common practice to clear up any inconsistency regarding border lines of property or actual ownership at the beginning of negotiations to avoid conflicts after the purchase. Occasional problems with free roaming cattle entering properties should be resolved by addressing the owner of the animals directly in a diplomatic way.
- Consider implementing low impact sustainable usage (bee keeping) in some suitable areas within the bought properties. On one hand this will serve for demonstrative purposes to entice others within the communities to follow the example, on the other hand it gives "usage" to the areas bought, which in the eyes of the community gives additional sense to the organization's buying activities.
- Maintain an open and cordial communication with the neighbors.
- Involve as much as possible neighboring land owners in conservation activities and projects so that they can also benefit from them.

financing for the management of private reserves after purchase?

### ANSWERS FROM PARTNERS:

- Guyra Paraguay has been successful in creating an endowment fund for the long-term conservation and management of its reserves at San Rafael and in the Chaco. The aim is to have \$7 million in this fund and to cover the necessary activities at these reserves from the interests of this fund. Financing for this fund will come from a diverse range of sources: carbon mitigation credits, the Global Conservation Fund of Conservation International and private donors. The fund is expected to be operation for 20 years and to generate interests after the first five years.
- Eco-tourism lodges at the reserves can help contribute to ongoing management costs and also to benefit local communities.
- In general, the donors who donate money to purchase the land do not donate money for reserve maintenance. Getting money just to maintain the reserve is very difficult, so it is necessary to frequently find new approaches and ideas for projects. It is not bad, but many times the only thing really necessary is to cover the costs to maintain the reserve.

## D. Any other important issues

### ANSWERS FROM PARTNERS:

- To be successful at land acquisition, have an ambitious, well-articulated and constantly expanding vision and plan, learn how to write and talk about it compellingly, make it easy for other individuals and organizations to join you and give everybody who helps you, even a little, credit for all successes.

### Examples:

Grupo Jaragua: Escalating prices were noted during the last national election process, when the expectations were nurtured that mass tourism would be installed in the Bahía de las Águilas area (near the site of the land purchases). The relationship with other land owners and the communities has been without any great conflicts. Some minor incidents of intruding cattle have been resolved.



Photo: Ecological station at the Guyra Reta reserve, San Rafael, Paraguay. Copyright: Guyra Paraguay

### Examples cont'd:

The land purchases made by Grupo Jaragua were registered under the ministerial system. To give the property the ultimate security it will be necessary to transfer the land to the cadastral system through the process of "saneamiento" (clearing of title), so it will not be only registered on a local basis but integrated in the national register.

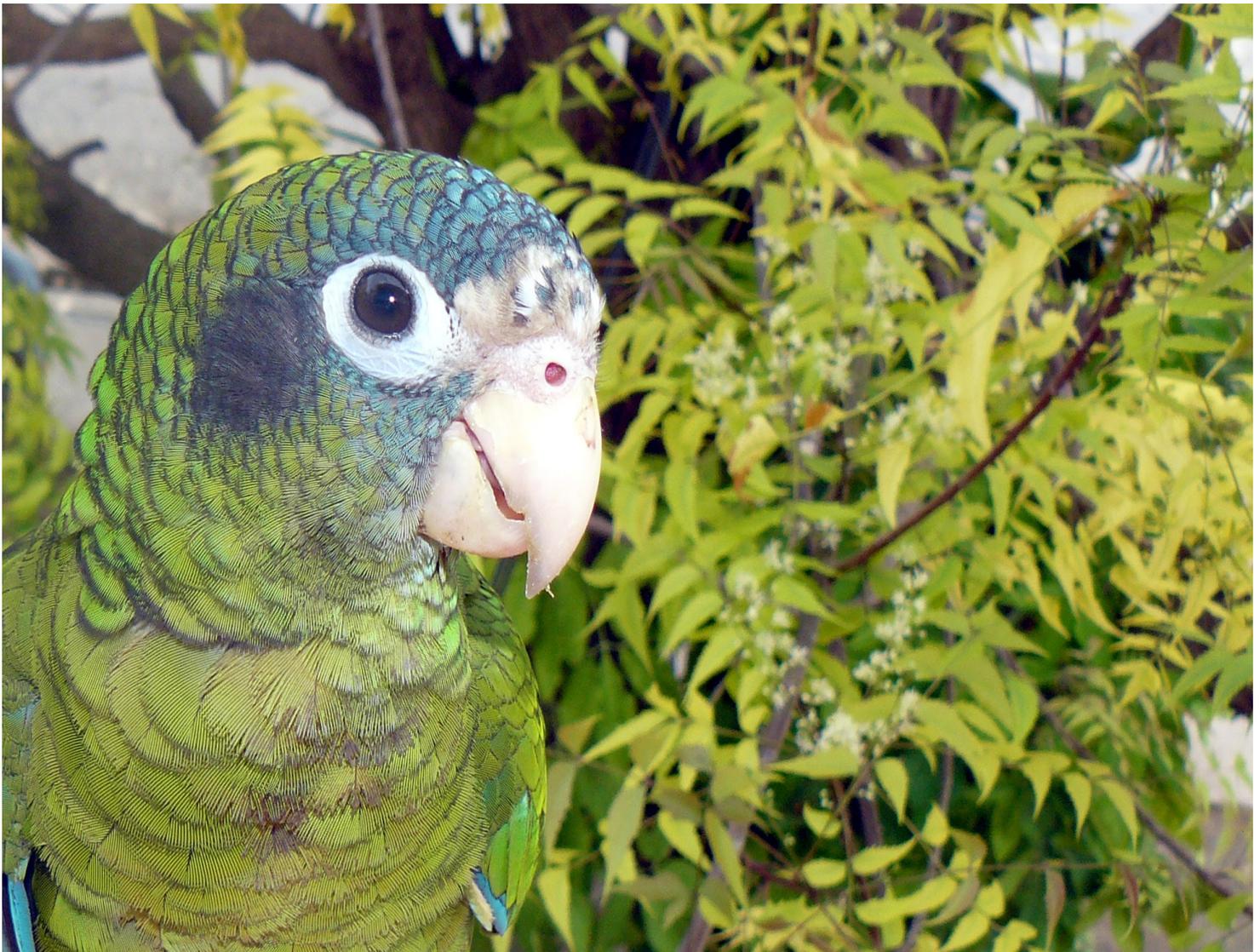
Marin Audubon: One of our long-term strategies is to donate properties to state and county agencies for long term management. We have so donated maybe close to 600 acres. Governmental Agencies are not interested in many of the properties we own because they are isolated and difficult to manage for them. We believe we are providing a service protecting these properties.

Worth noting perhaps is that as it as we have become known in the community that we were acquiring properties (along with the tax benefits) four properties have been donated to us. Some of our properties are very small that we have been able to purchase through the county's tax default listing. We have a relationship with our tax collector office and they let us know so we can purchase those we want before they go public. We purchase tiny parcels with the intent of stopping development or future restoration.



Photo: Blue-throated Macaw *Ara glaucogularis* reserve in Bolivia. Copyright: Daniela Añez

Photo: Hispaniolan Amazon *Amazona ventralis*, an endemic and threatened Parrot of the Dominican Republic. Copyright: Yolanda León



## Land purchase for conservation in the Americas

### Annex: Land purchase lessons learned questionnaire

Organizational information	
Country	
Name of the organization	
Main contact (name, telephone, e-mail)	
Organization's experience with land purchase	
Year when organization started land purchase activities	
Number of land parcels bought to date	
Total area of land purchased to date (ha)	
Private reserves established to date through land purchase (please provide the following information for each reserve separately)  Name Area (ha) Locality (coordinates, state/ province, nearest settlement) Does the reserve have an official status (i.e. declared as a private reserve?) Is the long-term goal of conservation included in the title deeds of the land purchased for the reserve?	
Financing issues for land purchase	
What financial mechanisms were used to purchase land?	
What are your lessons learned regarding obtaining finances for land purchase?	
Examples (both positive and negative experiences)	
Land purchase process - Lessons learned	
1. Prospecting land for purchase: mapping, identification of land parcels for sale, identification of owners, etc.	
What are your criteria for identifying individual land parcels for purchase?	
What would be your recommendations for things to do/ not to do during this step?	
Examples (both positive and negative experiences)	

2. Initial evaluation of the selected property (survey with land owner, mapping, etc.)	
What would be your recommendations for things to do/ not to do during this step?	
Examples (both positive and negative experiences)	
3. Legal issues: checking land titles and associated documents, fees and charges, preparation of the legal agreement, etc.	
What would be your recommendations for things to do/ not to do during this step?	
Examples (both positive and negative experiences)	
4. Checking claims of indigenous communities' over the land	
What would be your recommendations for things to do/ not to do during this step?	
Examples (both positive and negative experiences)	
5. Negotiating and signing a deal with the land owner	
What would be your recommendations for things to do/ not to do during this step?	
Examples (both positive and negative experiences)	
6. After purchase issues (e.g. registration of the property, delimiting boundaries, etc.)	
What would be your recommendations for things to do/ not to do during this step?	
Examples (both positive and negative experiences)	
7. Long-term land purchase strategies	
How to avoid escalating land prices following the initial land purchase?	
How to manage relationship with other land owners and communities?	
What are your experiences in securing long-term financing for the management of private reserves after purchase?	
Other lessons learned?	
Examples (both positive and negative experiences)	
Any other important issues	
Please, feel free to mention other important lessons learned regarding land purchase for conservation	



# Together we are BirdLife International

## The global Partnership for **nature** and **people**

BirdLife International is the world's largest nature conservation Partnership. Together we are 120 BirdLife Partners worldwide – one per country or territory – and growing with 13 million members and supporters, more than 7,000 local conservation groups and 7,400 staff.

BirdLife's vision is a world rich in biodiversity, where people and nature live in harmony. We are driven by our belief that local people, working for nature in their own places but connected nationally and internationally through our global Partnership, are the key to sustaining all life on this planet.

This unique local-to-global approach delivers high impact and long-term conservation for the benefit of nature and people.

BirdLife is widely recognised as the authority on the world's birds and the world leader in bird conservation. Rigorous science informed by practical feedback from projects on the ground in important sites and habitats enables us to implement successful conservation programmes for birds and all nature.