

Tropical Forest Forever Fund Helps Expand Narupa Reserve, Ecuador



Green Honeycreeper, Ecuador, photo by Michael L. Gray

In April 2006, World Land Trust-US partnered with Fundación Jocotoco to purchase about 494 acres of tropical forest near Narupa in Napo Province. The ensuing Narupa Reserve—having now grown to 1,265 acres—protects some of the remaining foothill forest at an altitude of 3,600 feet on the east slope of the Andes, just above the Amazon lowlands. This is an endemic-rich zone, where several globally threatened bird species are found. The project site provides habitat for range-restricted Andean endemic bird species and vulnerable Neotropical-Nearctic migrants including Olive-sided Flycatcher, Western and Eastern Wood-Pewees, Swainson's Thrush, and Blackburnian and Canada Warblers. The reserve is close to the Rio Hollin, between the Antisana and Sumaco volcanoes. Plans are being developed to provide visitor facilities in the future, and to increase the acreage and altitudinal range protected.

Amazonian foothill rainforest is the most threatened forest type on the east slope of the Andes, and is poorly protected in any of the Andean nations of South America. Around the Narupa Reserve, forest is frequently cleared for cultivation of Naranjilla, or “little orange”. This crop soon exhausts the forest soils and the land is then further cleared, burned, and grass seeded for cattle pasture. The reserve is bordered by the Loreto Road, constructed in the 1980s with the intention of providing an alternate route from the central highlands to the eastern lowlands. Colonization soon followed and a series of small towns now line the road. The government repaved Loreto Road in 2008, which substantially increased traffic. The improved access has also increased the pressure to clear forest. The opportunity for conservation intervention at Narupa is ripe; land prices are still low and the landscape is still mostly forested.

With over 80% of the tropical rainforests already destroyed, time is of the essence to save this threatened ecosystem. Thus GCBO was honored to approve a TFFF Grant of \$29,636 for the acquisition of 166 acres that will extend the reserve towards Sumaco-Napo-Galeras National Park, ultimately forming a biological corridor from the higher elevation forests of the National Park to the foothill forests of the Narupa Reserve.

See this reserve on Google Earth: coordinates **0° 38' 04.19" S, 77° 42' 12.45" W**.