

Protecting the Cloud Forests of Sierra Caral –Guatemala



Keel-billed Motmot - Larry Wan

Gulf Coast Bird Observatory has partnered with American Bird Conservancy, Global Wildlife Conservation, Conservation International, IUCN, World Land Trust-US, and FUNDAECO to purchase 5,449 acres of forested habitat along the Caribbean slope of Guatemala for the protection of endangered species, and for Neotropical birds. Located on the Caribbean slope of Guatemala near the Honduran border, the Sierra Caral is a unique and isolated massif rising from sea level to 3,800 feet that is exposed to moisture-laden Caribbean trade winds that support both wet rainforests and pine-oak forests. The region is a critical refuge for more than 120 neotropical migratory species (33 of which have already been identified at Sierra Caral, including six WatchList species).

Sierra Caral hosts wintering Golden-cheeked and Kentucky Warblers, and is one of the most important spring stopover sites for Cerulean and Canada Warblers in Central America. Here the combination of topographical and climatic conditions have created an unparalleled center of endemism for amphibians and reptiles and thus is one of the most biodiverse forest remnants in Central America. Seven endemic species of amphibians and reptiles have recently been discovered here. No less than 35% of the amphibians of Sierra Caral are listed as threatened by IUCN, with five Critically Endangered and five Endangered species. Sierra Caral is an Alliance for Zero Extinction site triggered by two salamanders that are found nowhere else on earth. Sierra Caral also harbors 13 range restricted bird species and 3 threatened species, including the Great Curassow and Highland Guan.

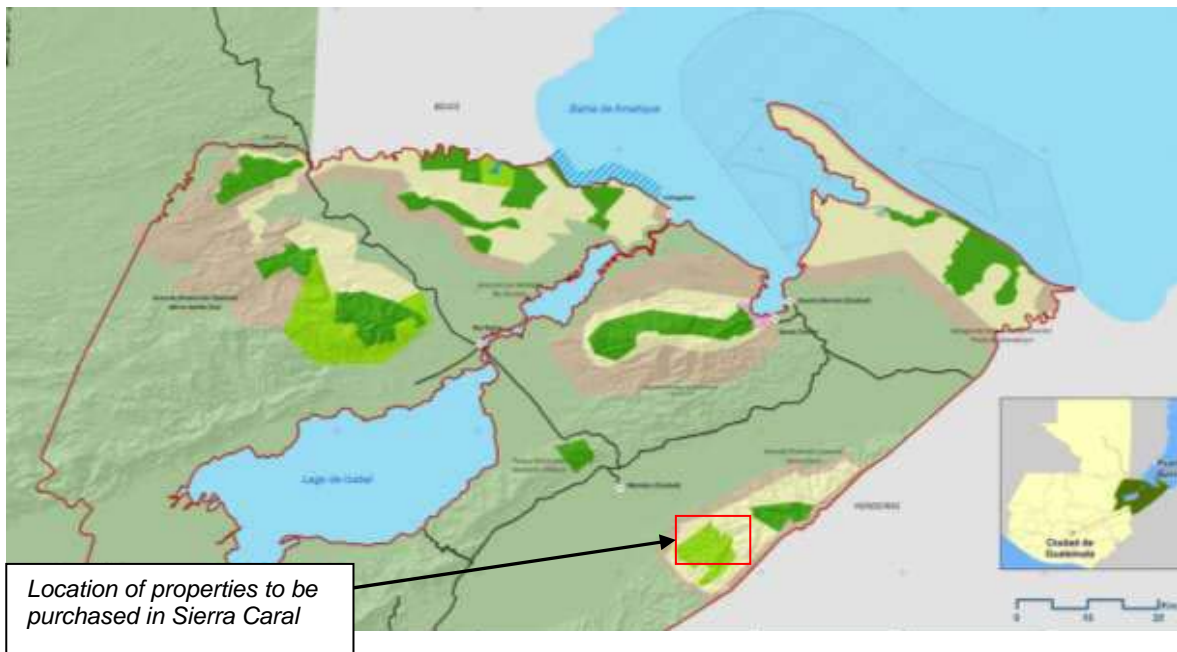


Golden-cheeked Warbler - Michael L. Gray

The majority of the Sierra Caral region is unprotected and the remaining forest is being actively deforested for cattle ranching, thus GCBO is proud to have made a

Tropical Forest Forever Fund grant of \$25,000 towards its permanent protection ensuring that FUNDAECO, Guatemala's leading conservation NGO, can purchase this property before it is lost to a competing buyer who will use the properties for timber extraction and cattle production.

The Fundacion para el Ecodesarrollo y la Conservacion (FUNDAECO) is one of the strongest environmental non-profit organizations in Guatemala. The 20 year old organization has established eight project areas where it owns or helps to manage reserves for the protection of wildlife. This includes two biological field stations (The Chandler Robbins Biological Station in Carboneras San Gil and Lagunita Creek at Rio Sarstun), one urban ecological park (Parque Ecologico y Deportivo Cayala) and five ecotourism areas. Over the years FUNDAECO has purchased and protected over 27,000 acres. Additionally, FUNDAECO works with the Government of Guatemala to protect approximately 12,300 acres of federal lands, and works with municipal governments to protect an additional 5,000 acres. FUNDAECO develops and implements management plans for all of these areas.



Location of Sierra Caral in Guatemala

Located in the Department of Izabal in the Caribbean Region of Guatemala, the Sierra Caral is the most important segment of the Merendón Mountain Range for biodiversity.

See this habitat on Google Earth. Coordinates for the two tracts purchased are:

Tract II: 15°23'41.00"N - 88°41'30.78"W

Tract III: 15°24'24.91"N - 88°41'42.43"W