



Photo: Daniel Ariza Cruzatty/Fundación Jocotoco

Las Balsas- Lilacine Amazon Project

In early 2019, GCBO had the opportunity to assist the American Bird Conservancy in the purchase of 210 acres at the Las Balsas community in southwestern Ecuador. Home to the endangered Lilacine Amazon parrot, this region is threatened by ongoing rapid habitat destruction and wildlife trafficking. The protection of this land, combined with the collaboration between the local community and our two partners in this project, will protect a key ecosystem in the region, home also to neotropical migrants like the Broad-winged Hawk, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Blackburnian Warbler, and American Redstart. The area is also home to the Great Green Macaw, Capuchin Monkey, jaguars, and most likely more just waiting to be discovered.

Project title: Las Balsas- Lilacine Amazon Project

Location: Las Balsas, southwestern Ecuador

Size: 210 acres

Grant amount: \$25,000

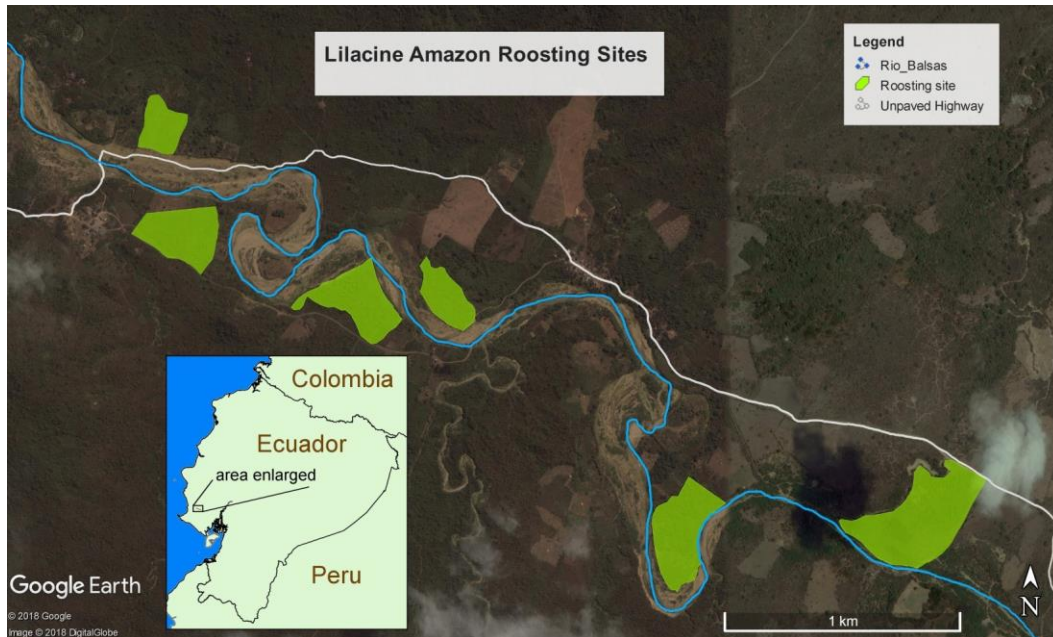
Date: 2019

Partners: American Bird Conservancy and Fundación Jocotoco

Summary and Background:

Beautifully-colored. Mild-mannered. Easy-to-capture. The Endangered Lilacine Amazon is a parrot endemic to Ecuador, and its very small and fragmented population is in on-going decline due to a combination of threats that are, unfortunately, well-known to parrots: rapid habitat destruction and wildlife trafficking. The biggest population of the species, numbering around 600 individuals—and their preferred roosting sites—has been located at the Las Balsas community in southwestern Ecuador. The area consists of six patches of Carob Forest along the Rio Piedras river valley. These forest fragments are unprotected and heavily threatened by habitat destruction, specifically by the production of charcoal and agricultural expansion, and therefore, require urgent and immediate protection.

This grant enabled American Bird Conservancy to help Jocotoco purchase 99-year usufruct rights of land within Las Balsas, totaling 210 acres that will be managed by Jocotoco in collaboration with the community, essentially as a conservation concession or easement. Opportunities like these are unusual, but are needed in Ecuador since the sale of communal lands is illegal in the country.



Area map. In green, the six roosting sites of the Lilacine Amazon in Las Balsas. These parcels total 210 acres of land that we are targeting the purchase of 99-year usufruct rights.

At Las Balsas, communal lands are divided into parcels amongst community members. With the purchase of usufruct rights, each parcel owner will be paid a negotiated amount of the land value. The remaining portion will be divided to cover legal fees and other administrative costs. This is particularly important because it allows us to directly engage community members and educate them on the endangered status of the species. By supporting the management of the land for conservation, we will be able to stimulate an ethic of environmental stewardship to protect a key ecosystem in southwestern Ecuador, and work with the community to curtail poaching and trafficking of the Lilacine Amazon.