

**AMAZON
CONSERVATION
ASSOCIATION**

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

FROM THE ANDES TO THE AMAZON: CONSERVING THE HEADWATERS OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST WATERSHED

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friend of the Amazon,

It has been over 15 years since we began this journey to protect, preserve, and better understand the Andean Amazon. With your support, we've come a long way.

We are so grateful for all of the ways you have put your passion into practice in southeastern Peru and northern Bolivia. Whether you've made a donation, shared one of our posts on social media, volunteered with us—however you have shown your support as a friend of the Amazon—your contribution has made an impact. Here are just a few ways your support has made a difference in 2015:

- launched a cutting-edge monitoring program that uses satellite imagery to alert authorities about deforestation threats in time to spur action;
- planted 84,000 trees in the Andes-Amazon to restore critical habitats;
- provided market connections and technical expertise to farmers, Brazil nut harvesters, and local artisans in 49 Peruvian and Bolivian communities who are seeking to improve their livelihoods through sustainable means;
- worked with local governments to start protecting 1.5 million new acres in the Amazon;
- hosted almost 2,000 students, researchers, and naturalists in the greatest forest on Earth—inspiring future generations of conservationists and supporting critical research projects.

ACA continues to be a laboratory for practical solutions for forests, species, and communities of the Andes-Amazon that are replicable in tropical forests around the world. And our resolve is still the same as it has been from day one: use cutting-edge science and innovative conservation tools to protect and conserve the most biodiverse forest on Earth. I invite you to join us in our fight to protect the Amazon.

Sincerely,



Hannah Stutzman

JOIN US: BECOME A CONSERVATION HERO

It's only with the support of individuals like you that we can continue to protect the greatest forest on Earth. Here's how you can get involved:



Make a donation

Through your financial contribution, we'll be able to continue to fund cutting-edge programs on the ground that are conserving the Amazon rainforest.



Visit our biological stations

Come see our conservation work in person and learn first hand about what it takes to protect the Amazon.



Spread the word

Let your friends and family know that you care about protecting the Amazon by sharing our website and content on social media.



Research or volunteer abroad

Join us on the ground in Latin America to conduct or support critical environmental research.

Join us now at www.amazonconservation.org



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Who We Are

The Amazon Conservation Association (ACA) works to **protect and conserve the biological diversity of the Amazon basin**. Since 1999, we have been pioneers in conservation, targeting our efforts to where the Amazon rainforest meets the Andes in southeastern Peru and northern Bolivia.

Our founding program provided support for Brazil nut harvesters in Peru, as an incentive for protecting the forest. We now work with **more than 100 communities** in the Andes-Amazon to help them make a living in ways that also sustain biodiversity in the forest. Moreover, we **protect over 3.8 million acres of Amazonian rainforest** through the creation of legally recognized protected areas and other conservation strategies; **plant tens of thousands of trees** every year to help restore damaged habitats; use cutting-edge satellite imagery to **monitor deforestation in near-real time** and alert key stakeholders of potential illegal activities; **host hundreds of researchers annually**, who advance our understanding about biodiversity, conservation methods, and the impacts of climate change; **partner with indigenous communities to develop forest-friendly livelihoods** and much more.

Our conservation projects in Peru are implemented by our partner organization, ACCA (*Asociación para la Conservación de la Cuenca Amazónica*), and in Bolivia, ACEAA (*Asociación para la Conservación e Investigación de Ecosistemas Andino Amazónicos*). Together, we focus our resources on ensuring that a thriving Amazon will be around for our generation and many more generations to come.

Our mission is to protect the world's most diverse landscapes, train the next generation of Amazonian conservationists, and partner with communities to support livelihoods that sustain biodiversity.

WHY THE AMAZON?

The Amazon region has long been recognized as one of the most biologically rich regions on Earth. It is home to millions of species of animals, plants and insects, essential not only to the indigenous communities living in the region, but also to the overall health of our planet. It stores 80 to 120 billion tons of carbon, helping to stabilize the planet's climate. Unfortunately, these forests are facing increasing threats from agricultural expansion, wildlife poaching, mining, illegal logging, oil prospecting, and large infrastructure projects. At current rates, more than half of the Amazon rainforest may be destroyed or severely damaged by 2030.

ACA'S STRATEGIC AREAS



Protecting Habitat



Identifying Threats



Sustainable Livelihoods



Science and Education



Where We Work

Our on-the-ground conservation work for the past 15 years has been focused on this critical region in southeastern Peru and northern Bolivia. The headwaters region of the southwestern Amazon is a leading priority for the conservation of our planet's terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity. Millions of acres of forest harbor ~15% of all bird and butterfly species on the planet, as well as top predators such as harpy eagles, giant otters, black caiman, and jaguars. **This sweep of land contains the greatest known richness of species on the planet and offers millions of plants and animals a refuge from climate change.** Unlike flat terrain, the altitudinal relief from the Andes mountains to the Amazon allows plants and animals to readjust their distribution as the world becomes hotter and drier. In addition, dozens of indigenous cultures remain in the region living largely traditional, low-impact lifestyles, and rely on the forest for food, fiber and medicine.

This landscape is highly threatened by the expansion of resource extraction, road-building, and agriculture. To protect and conserve this region, we count on our three biological research stations in Peru (Los Amigos, Villa Carmen, and Wayqecha), strategically located across the altitudinal transect of the Andes-Amazon. They are not only places of research, but they also act as a buffer to major protected areas, such as Manu National Park and the Los Amigos Conservation Concession.



Protecting Habitat

Protecting habitat is central to ACA's mission. We protect landscapes with an eye toward the big picture of connecting tracts of protected areas over time, magnifying our impact for biodiversity conservation. We continue to expand the network of protected lands in southeastern Peru and northern Bolivia, building a living, ever-growing conservation mosaic.

Since our founding, we have **protected over 3.8 million acres of forest**, using a multipronged conservation approach. We create new conservation areas and contribute towards the sustainable management of existing ones. However, our impact goes beyond the boundaries of the conservation areas. We work in the buffer zones of major conservation areas (such as national parks) to strengthen their management and protect them against external threats. We also work in the vast land between conservation areas to ensure connectivity among them. In other words, we ensure animals can move across uninterrupted patches of tropical forests, which is vital for species preservation.

In 2015 we worked toward the **creation of 15 conservation areas and identified 9 new areas** that we will turn into legally protected areas in Peru and Bolivia for the purposes of conservation. These 24 areas together will constitute more than **1.5 million acres of newly protected rainforest** beyond the 3.8 million acres that are already being safeguarded by ACA.

MAKING DREAMS COME TRUE

Venecio Cutipa is a farmer in the Camanti district in southeastern Peru. He, his wife Lucila, and their three children have always lived peacefully, cultivating mainly yucca, bananas, papaya, and pineapple. Their property boasts beautiful forests that provide refuge for the vibrant flora and fauna that make this region one of the most biodiverse places on Earth. Illegal mining has long plagued this area, but Venecio and his family are committed to protecting it. We are helping the Cutipa family obtain legal authority from Peru to do just that. We know that the legal recognition of this private conservation area will be an important milestone in the lives of this family and the wildlife their property protects.



INSPIRING AND HELPING NEW CONSERVATIONISTS

Grimaldo Toledo has lived his whole life on his property in the Alfamayo district in Peru. His land encompasses more than 2,718 acres of intact cloud forest, a unique ecosystem that provides refuge to key species in the region, such as the Spectacled bear. Grimaldo proudly remembers how, many years ago, these forests were the site of a study conducted by famous ornithologist John O'Neill. O'Neill's work taught Grimaldo the value of his forest and inspired him to strive towards the conservation of this remarkable land. **Grimaldo has harnessed that excitement and is committed to obtaining official recognition of his land as a private conservation area. Thanks to ACA's support, his proposal is currently awaiting final approval by local authorities.**



“Everything we do is about protecting habitat in the Amazon. To us, there is no greater cause than this.”

DR. TAMIA SOUTO, ACA DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS

This year we also implemented the **first ever community monitoring project of freshwater aquatic resources in Peru**. This innovative project was put into action at the Amarakaeri Communal Reserve, an indigenous territory of 1 million acres where many rivers are born. Through a team effort with indigenous organizations and the local government, ACA and our sister organization Conservación Amazónica (ACCA) created a system that enables the local population to monitor the health of key aquatic resources, promoting understanding of this tremendously biologically and culturally diverse communal reserve. The indigenous communities of the region are now empowered to make informed decisions based on a combination of rigorous science and traditional ecological knowledge.

Water quality monitoring helps communities manage the region's rivers which provide both potable water and fish, a vital source of protein. This community water monitoring system based on local empowerment and partnerships with government and academic institutions is a model that can be replicated in watersheds throughout the Amazon.



AT A GLANCE



More than
275,000

trees planted to date to restore damaged areas

Over
3.8
million
acres

of rainforest protected to date

In addition to the 3.8 million acres, in 2015 alone, we worked toward the legal establishment of over

1.5 million acres of additional conservation areas

Every year, we continue to protect habitat that harbors key species in the region, most notably:

spectacled bear
cock-of-the-rock
jaguar
agouti
harpy eagles
vicuñas



ACA established the **first Conservation Concession in the world**, the 360,000-acre Los Amigos Conservation Concession

A photograph of a lush tropical rainforest. The scene is dominated by large, thick tree trunks, some of which are heavily covered in green vines and epiphytic plants. The forest floor is a dense thicket of various green plants, including broad-leafed species and hanging mosses. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating a dappled light effect on the forest floor. The overall atmosphere is one of a vibrant, ancient ecosystem.

**Protecting the greatest
forest on Earth** for over 15 years.

OUR PERSPECTIVE

“What is so innovative about MAAP is that we can track deforestation that is happening on the ground right now - not a year or two ago - so we can stop deforestation before it gets to a point of no return.”

DR. MATT FINER, ACA SENIOR RESEARCH SPECIALIST



The Amazon is under attack. The region still maintains vast tracts of intact, megadiverse, and carbon-rich forests, but faces escalating threats from illegal gold mining, illegal logging, illegal drug plantations, unsustainable agriculture (industrial or small-scale), cattle pasture, and road construction. Deforestation in the Andean Amazon has been steadily intensifying, and new tactics are needed to address the problem.

In response, ACA and our sister organization **Conservación Amazónica (ACCA)** developed **MAAP - Monitoring of the Andean Amazon Project**. MAAP merges a number of cutting-edge technologies to monitor deforestation in the Amazon in real-time: deforestation alerts created by the University of Maryland and high-resolution satellite imagery obtained from Digital Globe (courtesy of an agreement with USAID) and Planet Labs (courtesy of the Ambassadors Program). ACA analyzes the images and translates this technical information about deforestation into an accessible, easy-to-understand format in order to inform policy makers, civil society, the media, and the general public in a timely manner.



Through sharing crucial information on the increasing threats affecting the Andean Amazon with key actors, we hope to contribute to changes in policy and practice that minimize future deforestation and promote conservation. Learn more about MAAP at maaproject.org

AT A GLANCE

Launched
MAAP in April 2015



21
threat alerts
sent in 2015

59
press articles done
in response to threat alerts



Over 50,000
views of breaking
information on our MAAP
website with only
grassroots outreach



Built key
partnerships with
local agencies in the US and
Peru to track and respond
to deforestation threats



Sustainable Livelihoods

From Brazil nuts to community agroforestry projects, ACA seeks out and supports initiatives that serve the dual purpose of protecting biodiversity while improving the well-being and economic stability of local peoples. We support sustainable livelihoods in their full cycle, from growing and harvesting to strengthening organizational and business skills to making market connections. This holistic approach enables us to ensure the process is truly sustainable.

In 2015, we continued our highly successful Brazil nut programs in Peru and Bolivia which have to date helped **establish over 470 Brazil nut concessions and trained more than 200 indigenous harvesters** in best practices for collecting, processing, and selling Brazil nuts. Our supporters helped communities build **20 drying sheds** (payoles) which increase quality of the nuts produced through better post-harvest management. Brazil nut harvesting is the main source of income for the several indigenous peoples, and activities like these offer a sustainable economic alternative to illegal gold mining, one of the major threats and most common economic activities in the region.

We also help small-scale farmers in Andean highlands and tropical lowlands cultivate and market sustainable products that help protect biodiversity. In 2015, following several years of field technical support for small-scale cacao producers, ACA and our sister organization Conservación Amazónica (ACCA) organized producers across Madre de Dios for the region's **first ever large scale sale of cacao**. By selling together to a national-scale company, producers of sustainable cacao obtained much better prices than by selling to middlemen as they had previously. This was a huge win for local cacao-producing families! Fish farming in Amazonian lowlands also now provides many families with a profitable alternative to destructive farming methods and in 2015 our programs helped communities **construct and manage 36 additional fish ponds**.



In addition to these two successful programs, ACA provided educational workshops to hundreds of individuals on conservation methods and helped local communities explore alternative economic activities such as producing oil extracts and selling them to gourmet restaurants and establishing tourism enterprises.



HEAR THEIR VOICES

"The Brazil nut program has improved the entire community. I am proud of my dedication to the Brazil nuts and of my community."

REINA VALENCIA, PRESIDENT OF THE PUERTO ARTURO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY IN PERU



"Before [the Program Manejo de Castañas], we were paid less for our Brazil nuts and we did not have a place to store the product, but now... we have storage space and the value of our nuts is higher because we can guarantee that the product is well preserved. In addition, trees that did not produce now do because we know how to take care of them. We didn't know how to do it before, but now we do thanks to the guidance of ACEAA and ACA."

GILMAR, MEMBER OF THE TACANA INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY IN BOLIVIA



"Through trainings and workshops, ACA has taught us about the management of our forests. Now all of us in the community are more united. The community continues to prosper every day."

NICOLAS VARGAS MUNDEZ, MEMBER OF THE PUERTO ARTURO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY IN PERU



AT A GLANCE



133 households

trained in Brazil nut best management practices in 2015.

20
drying
sheds

built this year to support indigenous communities harvest processing.

Over 50
fish farms

created and maintained to date.



In 2015 alone, **36 families** sold **82 tons** of high-quality Brazil nuts through connections built.

Some communities saw a **27% increase**

in the value of their Brazil nut due to improvements made by ACCA and ACA.



Working closely with indigenous communities representing some of the **world's most valuable cultural diversity.**



Science and Education

DID YOU KNOW?

Anyone can visit our biological stations to experience the Amazon! We host hundreds of ecotourists, scientists, naturalists, birders, students, and adventurers every year! Make your trip plans at: birding.amazonconservation.org

Integral to our conservation approach is the use of cutting-edge science to inform projects on the ground, promote rational discourse on tough policy questions, and educate and inspire the next generation of conservationists. To this end, we manage some of the best biological research stations in the tropics where each year we host hundreds of scientists and students from all over the world, conduct biological monitoring, and provide workshops and educational opportunities for local communities.

In 2015, **science was booming at our three biological research stations** in Peru, with over 30 research projects on amphibians, primates, birds, butterflies, orchids and fish. These studies enable us to understand how the Amazon is responding to climate change and human activities and what we can do to minimize negative impacts and protect biodiversity in the region. And we weren't just supporting scientific discoveries in 2015. We were **educating others about them, on the ground**. Just this year, we conducted several courses and workshops to train local communities and key organizations on priority conservation issues. Of note, we conducted a course on neotropical birds, held several community sessions on human-jaguar conflict management, co-hosted an international workshop on the soil-enriching material biochar, and taught a field course as part of Peru's primate symposium.

In addition, with your help, we **awarded 12 scholarships** to Peruvian students this year to conduct research at one of our three research stations, located deep within the heart of the Amazon. Most Peruvian university students lack access to funding for the fieldwork required to obtain a biology degree. Scholarships fill a critical gap and help build a local community of active conservation scientists and practitioners.

HEAR THEIR VOICES

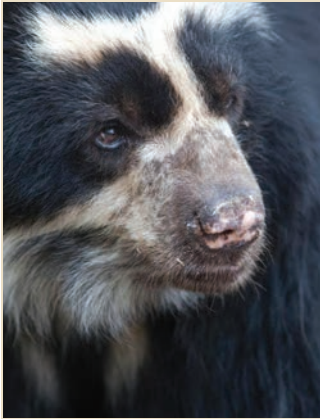
"ACA's scholarship program enables young researchers to start their career and build a profile for themselves as future scientists in Peru. Personally, I think the scholarship will be of monumental importance to my professional future."

HÉCTOR CHUQUILLANQUI, STUDENT AND ACA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

"ACA's field stations are our laboratories and windows into the future of Earth's highest biodiversity area. They are important not only to understand biodiversity now, but how it will survive in the future."

DR. MILES SILMAN, PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR AT THE CENTER FOR ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT, AND SUSTAINABILITY AT WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY, AND ACA BOARD MEMBER

SAVING THE AMAZON WITH SCIENCE



Protecting the Spectacled Bear

Our **Wayqecha Cloud Forest Biological Station** is located high in the Andes on 1,450 acres, and serves as a protective buffer for Manu National Park. In this unique ecosystem, the Spectacled bear, the only bear native to South America, thrives. Considered a vulnerable species, its population is expected to decrease by 30% in coming years due to habitat loss. In 2015, ACA hosted a field workshop at Wayqecha that brought together students, researchers, and decision makers to focus on strategies to protect this important species, and share information about research and monitoring techniques. The workshop provided valuable information to the conservation plan being developed by Peru's forest service.



Discovering New Beetles

Scientists weren't sure how many beetle species were in Peru until the recent series of scientific papers titled "Beetles of Peru" identified the number as more than 10,000. The project reflects a decade of work, led by Dr. Caroline Chaboo of the University of Kansas who along with 40 beetle experts from around the world believe that they have discovered more than 1,000 new species at ACA's biological stations and around Peru. The first to be described was discovered at our **Villa Carmen Biological Station**, located in the Andean foothills. Named Paddington, in reference to the Spectacled bear from the movie and children's books, Dr. Chaboo hopes the new beetle will raise awareness about biodiversity and conservation in Peru.



Defending the Amazon with Drones

Tracking deforestation and illegal activity across vast and remote expanses of the Amazon is resource intensive and often dangerous. ACA-collaborators at Wake Forest University sought to find out how to ease this task with the use of lightweight drones. The pilot program, conducted at our **Los Amigos Biological Station** and adjacent 360,000-acre conservation concession, trained local staff members and enforcement officials on how to build and program drones and interpret data results to monitor threats. The program is an example of the important role of our biological stations as living laboratories where practical conservation solutions can be tested for broad application.

AT A GLANCE

3 Biological research stations in Peru
spanning from 755 to 9,875 feet above sea level 

 **12 scholarships awarded** in 2015 to Peruvian students to conduct biological research at our stations

271 articles in peer-reviewed journals published on research conducted at our stations

Almost **2,000** visitors to our stations in just 2015, including 407 researchers, and students from 23 university courses.



32 research projects took place in 2015 at our biological stations.

Financials

REVENUE AND SUPPORT

Grants and donations from organizations	\$3,073,630	65.2%
Contributions from individuals	892,774	18.9%
Research station income	506,556	10.7%
In-kind contributions	110,593	2.3%
Other income	128,821	2.7%
Total Income ACA 2015	\$4,712,374	

EXPENSES

EXPENSES		
<i>Program services</i>		
Protecting habitat	\$682,933	13.3%
Science and education	1,871,253	36.4%
Sustainable livelihoods	960,024	18.7%
Threats and solutions	885,662	17.2%
<i>Total program services</i>	\$4,399,873	85.5%
<i>Support services</i>		
Fundraising	\$99,011	1.9%
Management and general	647,195	12.6%
<i>Total support services</i>	\$746,206	14.5%
Total Expenses ACA 2015	\$5,146,079	100.0%

Please note: At the time of printing, ACA's 2015 financial audit was not yet complete. For updated, audited financial information, please see our webpage at www.amazonconservation.org/about/financials.html, where we will post the final numbers once they are available

All information on this page refers to ACA's 2015 fiscal year ending December 31, 2015 and includes income and expenses for ACA's sister organizations in Peru and Bolivia (Conservación Amazónica-ACCA and ACEAA, respectively).

OUR SPECIAL THANKS

We are incredibly grateful to the many generous individuals and institutions whose contributions to ACA continue to help us protect the Amazon. This work would not be possible without you. The generous donors listed below (in alphabetical order) contributed \$100 and up in 2015. Thank you.

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“Every individual matters. Every individual has a role to play. Every individual makes a difference.”

JANE GOODALL, CONSERVATIONIST

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Executive Director,
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STAFF

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: HANNAH STUTZMAN

TOTAL STAFF: 115 (ACA, ACEAA, and
Conservación Amazónica - ACCA)

OFFICES:

- WASHINGTON, D.C., USA (ACA) - 8 staff
- LIMA, PERU (Conservación Amazónica-
ACCA) - 4 staff
- CUSCO, PERU (Conservación Amazónica-
ACCA) (includes Wayqecha, Villa Carmen
& Challabamba) - 52 staff
- MADRE DE DIOS, PERU (Conservación
Amazónica-ACCA) (includes Los Amigos)
- 34 staff
- BOLIVIAN PARTNER IN LA PAZ (ACEAA)
- 17 staff

PHOTO CREDITS

COVER: *Richard C. Hoyer*

INSIDE FRONT COVER: *Gabby Salazar*

PAGE 1: *Gabby Salazar*

PAGE 2: *from left to right: Adrian Tejedor, ACA, Walter Wust, Adrian Tejedor*

PAGE 3: *Thomas Haney (top left), Jessica Suarez (top right), ACA (bottom left), Tino Aucca (bottom right)*

PAGE 4: *Gabby Salazar (top), Sean Williams (bottom)*

PAGE 5: *ACA (box), ACCA (bottom)*

PAGE 6: *Adrian Tejedor*

PAGE 7: *Yngrid Espinoza*

PAGE 8: *Yessenia Apaza (bottom left), Porfirio Zegarra (top right), Jessica Suarez (bottom right)*

PAGE 9: *ACA*

PAGE 10: *Javo Farfan (top left), aca (bottom)*

PAGE 11: *Gabby Salazar (top left and middle), ACA (bottom left), Daniel Huaman (bottom right)*

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