



## How ACA and Indigenous Communities are Protecting Morpho Butterflies



With a wingspan of almost eight inches, blue Morpho butterflies are some of the largest in the world. Unfortunately, these butterflies, known for the vivid blue color of their wings, are threatened by habitat destruction and unsustainable collection and are on the verge of being classified as an endangered species. In order to protect these creatures, the Amazon Conservation Association is working with the indigenous Queros Wachiperi community to create a market for ecotourism in southeastern Peru where these butterflies reach their peak of diversity.

Morpho butterflies of numerous species are in abundance at ACA's Los Amigos Conservation Concession, Hacienda Villa Carmen, and the Haramba Queros Wachiperi Conservation Concession; the conservation of these magnificent butterflies and other threatened species is of great importance to the ACA.

ACA's Research Manager, Dr. Adrian Tejedor, recently visited the Queros Conservation Concession and was stunned by the diversity of butterflies, observing over eight different species along the Blanco Chico River. The Queros Conservation Concession, the world's first conservation concession managed by an indigenous group with support from ACA, is a critical place to study and protect blue Morpho butterflies because it is here where the piedmont and lowland species meet. The result: one of the richest Morpho communities in existence,



found along this narrow strip of land situated between the lowlands and the highlands.

The high price the Morphos demand in international trade, selling for as much as \$95 apiece, is a testament to its beauty. With their intimate knowledge of Morpho butterfly diversity and biology, the indigenous Queros Wachiperi people are ideally positioned to make the important change from selling butterfly corpses to marketing live sightings of these unique creatures to butterfly enthusiasts from all over the world.

ACA is currently working in cooperation with the with the indigenous Queros Wachiperi community to create and market an ecotourism enterprise for butterfly-watching, especially of the magnificent blue Morpho. This project will provide a sustainable source of income for the Queros Wachiperi community, provide an opportunity for outsiders to experience this immense species richness, and promote long-term preservation of these rare, threatened butterflies.

To visit the Queros Wachiperi Reserve and see the Morphos yourself, contact [reservascusco@conservacionamazonica.org](mailto:reservascusco@conservacionamazonica.org). To help support this effort, please donate at <http://www.amazonconservation.org/getinvolved/index.html>.

*The Amazon Conservation Association (ACA) and the Asociación para la Conservación de la Cuenca Amazónica (ACCA) work together for the ecological and social viability of the Amazon Basin, by promoting science, sustainable resource management, and sound land-use policy.*