

We Are Selva Maya

2018 has advanced significantly and now is a good time to evaluate if we are achieving our goals. For the Selva Maya Programme the greatest challenge remains to contribute to the conservation of this forest mass shared geographically by Belize, Guatemala and Mexico, and whose ecosystem services benefit the entire planet.

Recently the head of the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas of Mexico (CONANP) announced at the United Nations headquarters in New York, the aim to protect the emblematic species jaguar (*Panthera onca*), through the consolidation of a trinational protected area between Belize, Guatemala and Mexico. It would be great if in the course of the year we can take concrete steps to promote this initiative while, on the other hand, work together to reduce the pressures that threaten the Selva Maya. The challenge is to cooperate at local, national and international levels, while every one of us contributes their own "leaf of a tree".

During the first couple of months of 2018 climatic events, for example the period of abnormally high temperatures in the Arctic and unusually low temperatures in Europe showed the increasing evidence of impacts of climate change. It threatens the fauna and flora of the Selva Maya, as well as the humans that live in or around the region. Without a doubt, we are facing a complex and worldwide challenge, difficult to solve or manage. We wish that once we are aware of the importance of protecting the Selva Maya, we can inspire changes in our society and communities to develop a more sustainable life in this planet – the only one we have.

In this second edition of our newsletter **We Are Selva Maya** we share the events that took place between August and December 2017. Also included is the section "topics of interest" with information on SMART and the Ramón Value Chain. We hope you have a chance to read through it and, of course, are thankful for comments and recommendations for improvement. We sincerely hope that the subjects contained emphasize the relevance of the beautiful region we live in.

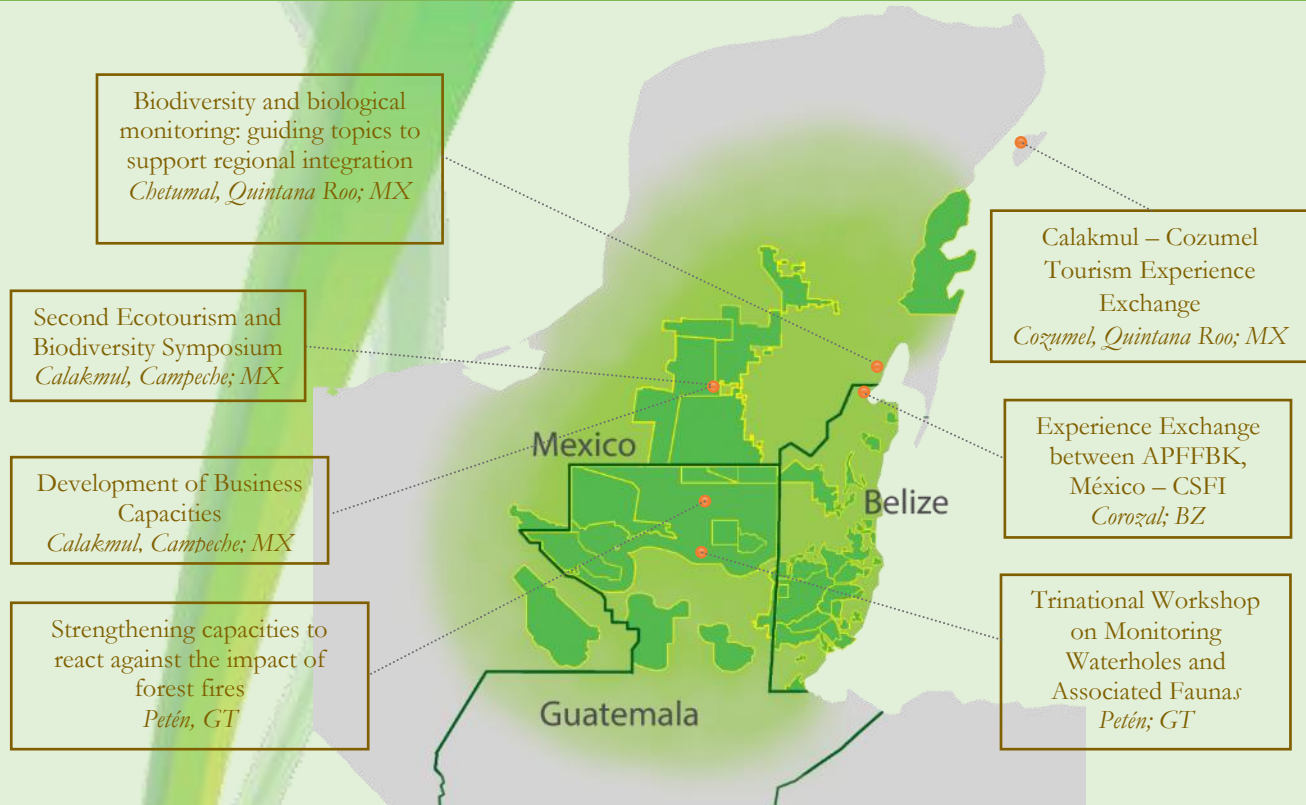
Editorial



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News



Biodiversity and biological monitoring: guiding topics to support regional integration

Unifying the agendas of the three countries that conform the Selva Maya is crucial in strengthening the regional integration and achieving the common goals of conservation of biodiversity and sustainable development in rural communities.

This is why in 2013 the directors and deputy directors of the protected areas of the Selva Maya started to meet to promote dialogue, reflection and activities that would encourage cooperation on an operational level. In 2015 a voluntary alliance called the “Operational Coordination Group” (GOC) was formed. Their main objective is to strengthen the trinational cooperation for the conservation of the Selva Maya.

In August and November of 2017 the third and fourth GOC-meetings took place in Chetumal, Mexico. During these meetings the main axes of cross-border cooperation were defined. The foci lie in developing a tool to administrate and manage shared protected areas, as well as promoting regional integration through a political agreement.



GOC meeting participants



Second Ecotourism and Biodiversity Symposium, Calakmul 2017

On October 20th and 21st, 2017, the 'Second Ecotourism Fest Calakmul 2017' took place. It is an event led by the City Council of Calakmul, institutions of the three levels of government and various civil society organizations to promote sustainable tourism with the participation of local service providers. Within the framework of this 'Calakmul 2017 Fest', the second Ecotourism and Biodiversity Symposium, organized by the Technological University of Calakmul, the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, the Directorate of Tourism and Environment of Calakmul and the GIZ Selva Maya Programme, was held on October 20th.

During this event three different conferences were held: *Calakmul and the biosphere reserve* by Dr. William Folan Higgins, archaeologist with a notorious career in Mayan discoveries; *Photography tourism, a new tool for conservation* by Daniel Garza Tobón, nature photographer; and *Sustainable tourism*

destination management by. Dino Alberto Aveleyra, expert in management of heritage tourism destinations. Mr. Aveleyra also gave two workshops on the design of touristic products targeted at providers of touristic services and local artisans.



From left to right, Anthropol. Dino Alberto Aveleyra, Biol. Daniel Garza Tobón, Dr. William Folan Higgins and MC. Héctor Martín Pinto, director UT

Trinational Workshop on Monitoring Waterholes and Associated Fauna

The first Trinational Workshop on Monitoring of Waterholes and Associated Fauna in the Selva Maya was held on October 26th 2017, in Flores, Petén, Guatemala; with the objective of promoting the exchange of experiences among actors who participate in initiatives that address these issues in the region, as well as the formation of the Trinational Monitoring Group of Waterholes and Associated Fauna in the Selva Maya.

Participants of different institutions attended, such as representatives of CONANP, ECOSUR, and CONBIODES from Mexico, CONAP, WCS and FDN from Guatemala as well as PANAT, CECON, FD and WCS from Belize.

During the workshop, technical and methodological issues of monitoring waterholes and bodies of water in the Selva Maya were discussed. The main common threats at the regional level were mentioned as well as the importance of conforming a waterhole monitoring group. The group's sustainability and the need for the definition of protocols which allow the analysis of data on a regional level which, in turn, is disseminated and used for decision making and public policy formulation, inside and outside natural protected areas, were addressed.



Workshop participants



Strengthening Capacities to reduce the Impact of Forest Fires in Petén

Forest fires threaten life in all its forms. The effort to prevent, control and/or extinguish them has to be complemented with good technical preparation and awareness by the population. The Guatemalan CONAP with support from the Selva Maya/GIZ Programme and partner NGOs, conducted a training series throughout 2017 to reduce the impacts of forest fires in Protected Areas of Petén.

The following capacity development measures were implemented: a) Training of 18 forest-firefighters and 25 extension workers who raise awareness regarding the prevention of forest fires and the protection of biodiversity; b) Workshops on environmental legislation and basic principles of biological monitoring, basic techniques for the control of forest fires and analysis and monitoring of the early warning system for the prevention of forest fires; c) Study tour for strategic actors to learn about replicable agroforestry systems in PAs; d) Support to clean

paths to prevent the spread of fire in the Maya Biosphere Reserve; e) Support in environmental education, awareness and training activities; f) Training for decision makers on activation protocols of the Emergency Operations Commission and g) Socialization of the Pocket Guide for park rangers.



Workshops and training courses in Petén

Calakmul – Cozumel Tourism Experience Exchange

Tourism development is linked to the management of the land, so it is necessary to address issues such as carrying capacity, water management, waste management and urban development. To promote this development, in November 2017 a delegation of officials from the City Council, CONANP and tourist services providers from Calakmul, visited the island of Cozumel to exchange experiences on tourism. The group was received by representatives of the City Council of Cozumel and was supported by CONANP.

The challenges Cozumel had to face in terms of logistics and mass reception of visitors, management of environmental impacts and attractive tourist products, have led to the municipality acquiring a great expertise in the field. This experience is now used in developing a responsible, sustainable tourism and distribution of local benefits.

The reason for the exchange lies precisely in this transfer of knowledge and experiences that encouraged the visitors to rethink aspects of organization and planning. Considering the increasing number of tourist arrivals in Calakmul, the municipality is working on the development of a strategy to consolidate the tourist destination.



Visitors from Calakmul at Puerta Maya, Cozumel



Workshops for Business Capacity Development in Calakmul

The *Sello Colectivo Calakmul* initiative encourages regional businesses to implement a continuous improvement system that contributes to sustainable development. In this sense, the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve of the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas of Mexico (CONANP), the Haciendas del Mundo Maya Foundation (FHMM), the State Institute for the Promotion of Handicraft Activities of Campeche (INEFAAC) and the Selva Maya Programme of GIZ, developed and implemented a Cycle of Workshops for the Development of Business Capacities.

From April to November 2017 fourteen groups attended eleven workshops to acquire knowledge, skills and abilities that contribute to the development of their company. The topics were taught by specialists and staff of the convening institutions and each workshop lasted between three and four hours, on topics such as: calculation of final price of products and services, fair trade and value chains, introduction

to business administration, accounting and the tax administration system, among others.

On November 20th, at the closing session, attendees shared how they put into practice what they learned. Together they also drafted the common strategy for business development 2018, which includes forming a network of services providers and producers that contribute to strengthening the tourism offer of Calakmul.



Closing Ceremony of workshop cycle

Experience Exchange between APFFBK, México – CSFI, Belize

From December 11 to 15, 2017, eight members of the Muuch Kanan K'aax Community Surveillance Network of the Bala'an K'aax Flora and Fauna Protection Area (APFFBK) participated in an exchange visit to the Corozal Sustainable Future Initiative (CSFI), in Corozal, Belize. The objective of the visit was to get to know the CSFI governance system and exchange experiences on the management of protected areas.



Participants during the exchange

During the visit, knowledge and experiences were shared regarding the following topics: 1) monitoring of birds, bats and felines; 2) management of forest nurseries and 3) control and patrol in protected areas. Among other activities the CSFI team showed the applications they use, such as ebird (birdwatching) and SMART (monitoring and management of protected areas). The group also reforested a mahogany plot and observed / counted birds.

As part of the follow-up activities, CSFI will visit the APFFBK in March 2018 to learn about the activities carried out by the Muuch Kanan K'aax Community Surveillance Network in terms of inspection and surveillance, biological monitoring and production of organic honey, all of which are supported by CONANP and the Selva Maya Program. Within the framework of international cross-border cooperation CSFI and APFFBK are looking to generate a collaboration agreement to continue the exchange of experiences and knowledge.



Topic of interest

Strengthening the Ramón-Nut Value Chain

“Ramón” (*Brosimum alicastrum*) occurs naturally in Mesoamerican forests. It is widely known as the tree of life for the nutritional properties of its seeds: high content of minerals, dietary fibre, proteins, vitamins, folic acid and it is gluten-free. The seeds (which are also referred to as nuts) are collected, dried and processed to flour, which can be used to produce cookies, tortillas, drinks and other dishes. All of these tasks are mainly carried out by women. The use and commercialization of Ramón-seeds generates income for the local population, thus motivating the protection of the forest.

In Petén, Guatemala the Ramón-Nut value chain is promoted since 2012. In order to unite efforts and work in a coordinated manner, the Ramón Committee was formed, composed of community organizations that produce Ramón seeds, support organizations and regulatory entities. In the last five years the Ramón Committee has become a recognized platform for coordination between internal and external actors.

The four founding community organizations of the Ramón Committee were joined by another five since 2012, increasing the number of people directly benefiting from the Ramón value chain to over 500.



Processing the Ramón-nut

The Ramón seed production areas in natural forest, which have management plans authorized by the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP), amount to 120,780 hectares. Thanks to the efforts of the Committee, in 2017 an organic group certification was obtained for the first time. In addition, the construction of a drying plant was completed as well as a new image for the end-user products and a promotion campaign for the consumption of Ramón seed was developed. These activities do not only attract the interest of the international market, but also contribute to a healthier and nutritious diet in Guatemala.



From left to right: Ramón-tree, woman collecting Ramón-nuts and Ramón-based dishes



Topic of interest

SMART

The Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) is a software, designed for monitoring, reporting, evaluation and improvement of control and surveillance activities in Protected Areas (PAs). SMART was developed by world-class conservation organizations, in close collaboration with protected area authorities and other relevant stakeholders. It represents a great step in the management of the PAs due to the urgent need to improve the protection of biodiversity. It is easy to use and adaptable to the local context, with the practicality of always being improved. However, what stands out most are its benefits to conservation:

- ✓ Improves transparency and governance in PAs
- ✓ Helps decision makers
- ✓ Motivates control and surveillance staff
- ✓ Allows the evaluation of biodiversity threats

SMART in PAs allows:

- Monitoring surveillance efforts
- Monitoring time/length of surveillance
- Planning surveillance patrols and motivating park rangers and /or community brigades
- Monitoring of illegal activities
- Monitoring poaching and other threats to PAs

SMART does not require that successful management practices are in place, but it is important that there is a basis for adaptive management in the protected area. Without this foundation, SMART is unlikely to succeed in improving management effectiveness and may cause conservation resources to be misused or wasted.

Through the project Promotion of Monitoring of Biodiversity and Climate Change in the Selva Maya of the German Cooperation/GIZ, the implementation of this system is supported in the PAs of the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, Belize and Petén, Guatemala. In the medium term, the aim is to strengthen the use of this tool.



One of the first activities was the SMART Data Model Construction Workshop, held from December 4 to 5 in Chetumal, Mexico, with the objective of defining the structure of the SMART database and the parameters to be recorded by the personnel of the PAs. The workshop was attended by executives and technical staff of the Yucatan Peninsula and Mexican Caribbean Regional Directorate of the National Commission of Protected Natural Areas (CONANP), the Secretariat of Environment of Quintana Roo, the Regional Coordination in the Yucatan Peninsula of the National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and SMART experts of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).



SMART Workshop participants, Chetumal, México.



Upcoming dates and celebrations

May 3rd, 2005	Publication of the <i>Declaratoria del Área de Protección de Flora y Fauna de Bala'an K'aax</i> (Mexico)
May 4th, 1994	Publication of the Declaration of Aguas Turbias National Park (Belize)
May 23rd, 1989	Publication of the <i>Declaratoria de la Reserva de la Biosfera Calakmul</i> (Mexico)
May 26th, 1955	Publication of the <i>Declaratoria del Parque Nacional Tikal</i> (Guatemala)
June 1st, 1988	Publication of the Declaration of Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area (Belize)



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