

We Are Selva Maya

Foreword

The beginning of a new year means facing new challenges and fulfilling new purposes, whether at a personal or a collective level. On the national and, global level, by 2020 we face challenges that demand the coordination and cooperation amongst all actors. Issues such as the ravages of climate change, the widespread demand for justice and equity, and the waves of violence in different parts of the world, lead us to rethink what we can do better. Making synergies with common goals has gone beyond good will and moral demands.

Contributing to this fact, there is the international speech that advocates for sustainable development and leaving no one behind. For this reason, the 2030 Agenda, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) was signed. On the other hand, the significant advances that have been made in science, communication and technology can constructively be used to foster cooperation between nations, the public and private sectors, and even between generations.

The sixth edition of the newsletter **#WeAreSelvaMaya** shows the efforts to promote sustainable development and, in some way, the achievement of such SDG. We also present a message on the closing of the *Protection and Sustainable Use of the Selva Maya* project, which had been operating since 2011; and another message on the new project *Strengthening Regional Strategic and Operational Cooperation for the Protection of the Selva Maya*, which begins in 2020. Your comments and suggestions are welcomed at giz.selvamaya@giz.de

Jochen Quinten, Director of the Selva Maya Programme

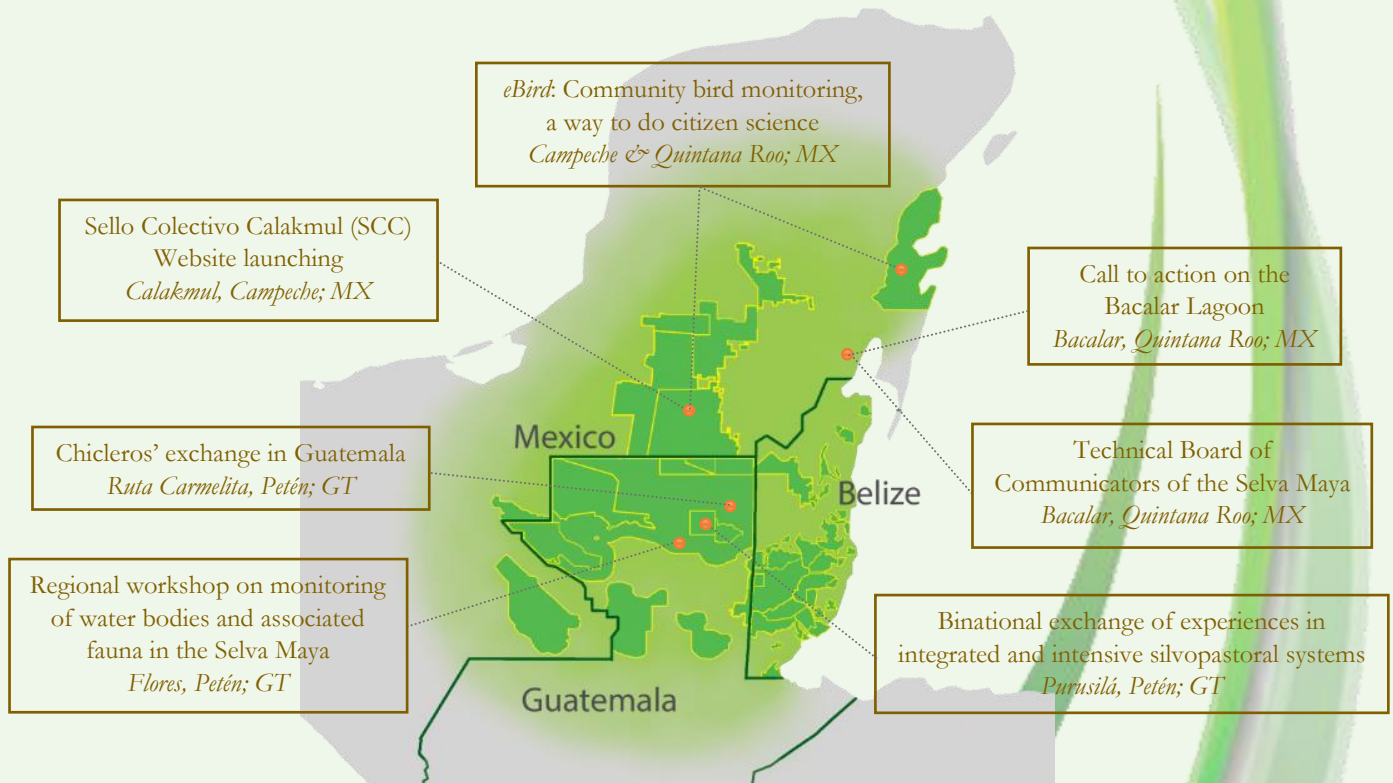


Images taken in the framework of Monitoring & Citizen Science in the Selva Maya

Above: painted bunting (*Passerina ciris*)
Zoh Laguna, Campeche, MX
© Frida Baños / CBR

Below: Lineated woodpecker (*Dryocopus lineatus*)
Calakmul Biosphere Reserve
© Eric Ecker / IUCN

News



eBird: Community bird monitoring, a way to do citizen science

Citizens can monitor biodiversity. One example is the **Community bird monitoring**, through the eBird tool or *AVerAves* in Spanish, promoted by the Mexican National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO), through the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI-Mexico). Thanks to the records of this community network, data on the behavior of birds are registered. Amateurs from all over the world and ornithologists can also enter and consult information.

With the aim to give continuity to the initiative of monitoring birds in the Mexican Selva Maya, NABCI-CONABIO, in coordination with the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit / GIZ* (German Cooperation), held workshops in May and July 2019 to strengthen birding capacities, formalize the use of eBird, promote productive and conservation projects, and strengthen the integration and identification of groups of "birders" that were formed since 2018.

A final workshop is planned for the first half of 2020 to strengthen the implementation of the PROALAS Protocol (Latin American Program for Wild Birds). The purpose of the workshop is to ensure that there is an integrated and homogenized monitoring system that allows more accurately define the most vulnerable species, the human activities that most affect them and, above all, to establish measures for their protection.



Field activities with community bird monitors
© Selva Maya Programme / Ameyalli Nares

Regional workshop on monitoring of water bodies and associated fauna in the Selva Maya

On September 25, 2019, the annual workshop of the **Regional Monitoring Group of Water Bodies and Associated Fauna in the Selva Maya** was held in Flores, Guatemala. The objective of the workshop is to use standardized methods for the monitoring of water bodies and associated fauna as an indicator on the status of biodiversity conservation, and the impact of climate change in the region, and then generate management and conservation recommendations.

During the workshop, those who work in the Selva Maya, shared by Guatemala, Mexico and Belize, presented their experiences. From the discussions, it was concluded that between 2018 and 2019, the waterholes are presently in a critical state. It was registered that more than 90% remain dry compared to past years which corresponded to the increase in the number of animals found dead in the region (i.e. tapir and white-lipped peccary).

On the other hand, the threats on the reduction of water and humidity in the Selva Maya may provoke, among them, the increase of fires caused by illegal and agricultural activities, the raising of conflicts between wild animals and humans, and the decrease of income from sustainable activities, such as ecotourism, beekeeping, and agroforestry, among others. At the end of the event, the group issued an official statement available [here \(Spanish version\)](#).



Dead tapir, found with dehydration evidence, in the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, April 2019
© David Simá / CBR

Technical Board of Communicators of the Selva Maya

Some may think that environmental conservation has little to do with social communication, yet at times when everything is happening quickly, including the degradation of ecosystems, there is no effort or resource that can be spared. Those of us who live in the Selva Maya are concerned about what would be the benefit from getting involved in such efforts.

Recognizing the potential of communication to raise awareness about the threats facing the region, to warn the perseverance of conserving species and to motivate actions that mitigate the impact of climate change, the **Technical Board of Communicators of the Selva Maya** was formed with the objective to influence public opinion, decision makers and society in general at the regional level.

Between June and September 2019, the first meetings took place between the directors of the communication areas of the National Council of Protected Areas

(CONAP) and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) of Guatemala; the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) and the National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO) of Mexico; and the Forest Department and Department of Environment of Belize. Areas of synergistic work were identified, with concrete actions focused on environmental awareness and education.



Communicators of the Selva Maya, at the closing session
© Selva Maya Programme

Binational exchange of experiences in integrated and intensive silvopastoral systems



Review of techniques on grazing systems
© Selva Maya Programme / Enzo Solari

The *Inter-Institutional Livestock Board* promotes capacity building for livestock committees in the communities of El Caoba, Purusilá and El Remate in Petén, Guatemala. The Board is comprised of the Vice Ministry of Peten Affairs of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA), the municipality of Flores, Pastoral Social, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and Rainforest Alliance.

From November 13 to 15, 2019, an exchange of experiences in integrated silvopastoral systems took

place with farmer groups from Belize and Guatemala, facilitated by the *Protección de Recursos Naturales de la Selva Maya* Project, implemented by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), with funds from KfW (German Financial Cooperation). On behalf of Belize, representatives from the Forest Department, Friends of Vaca Forest Reserve and San Antonio Mayan Green Growers participated. From Guatemala, representatives of the Department of Agrotourism and Natural Resources of MAGA attended the meeting.

The exchange was focused on the socialization of the inter-institutional silvopastoral proposal that includes, among others: mixed fodder bank, improved drinking trough, paddock capacity for calculating biomass production and grazing system techniques. The *Farmer's School* methodology and the *Jaguares para Siempre* program were presented and the workshop on fodder conservation through the silage technique was given. This opens up the opportunity for future regional exchanges and the expansion of areas with integrated intensive silvopastoral systems.

Call to Action on the Bacalar Lagoon

Agua Clara Ciudadanos por Bacalar A.C., in collaboration with the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit / GIZ* (German Cooperation), coordinated the first Binational Meeting on water quality monitoring in Lake Petén-Itzá (Guatemala) and Bacalar Lagoon (Mexico); which took place on November 19 and 20, 2019.



Electric catamaran on the peaceful Lagoon of Bacalar
© Selva Maya Programme / Saul George

Activities such as this, foster the dissemination of water quality monitoring data, with the final goal of improving the management of both lagoon bodies. Academics, civil organization and representatives of governmental institutions in Mexico exchanged experiences with collaborators of the *Plataforma Territorial del Diálogo* from Petén, Guatemala.

This first meeting promotes the advance of inter-institutional collaboration and **calls for action** from the public, decision-makers and academics who are experts in the field, to join in this important project. The next step is the meeting *Compartiendo conocimiento: hacia el manejo efectivo de la Laguna de Bacalar*, on May 22, 2020, with the expectation to generate the terms to conform a platform of dialogue, to compile monitoring data and investigations referring to the environmental problems of the Bacalar Lagoon, and to expose the first petition to protect the lagoon in an integral way.

Sello Colectivo Calakmul (SCC) Website launching



For more than three years, the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) and the Selva Maya Programme of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit / GIZ* (German Cooperation), developed a certification model called **Sello Colectivo Calakmul**. This certificate is granted to local companies that offer products and/or services that have been developed under sustainability criteria, that is, having good governance practices, activate the

local economy and act with environmental co-responsibility. With this, it is sought that the small companies that offer products or provide services, contribute to the sustainable development of the region and are in harmony with the conservation objectives of the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, considered a Mixed World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

The consumption of products and services that have the Sello Colectivo Calakmul contribute to the protection of endangered species such as the jaguar or the ocellated turkey.

The promotion of regional development through initiatives such as this could not be possible without the participation of the community, local productive sectors, municipal government authorities, academia, civil society organizations, among others.

We invite you to revise our achievements. Visit sellocolectivocalakmul.org

Come visit Calakmul. Get to know this amazing place!

Chicleros' exchange in Guatemala

The Association of Forest Communities of Petén (ACOFOP) and the Selva Maya Programme of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* / GIZ (German Cooperation) led an exchange of experiences between expert chicleros*, amateur chicleros and aspiring chicleros, on December 17-19, in Petén, Guatemala. Chicleros from the Organization Management and Conservation of Uaxactún (OMYC), the Forestry Association of Cruce La Colorada community (AFICC) and the Carmelita Cooperative, participated.



Field experiences in the use of chicle (chewing gum)
© Selva Maya Programme / Irene Manrique

The meeting began with a presentation on the history of *chicle* and its importance. Followed by a discussion on the Chewing Gum Law in Guatemala, its implications and the initiative to repeal it. Finally, it was remarked about the political incidence within the current context of the activity in the Selva Maya region.

The practical part included activities such as preparing tools (sharpening machetes, hollowing bags, putting belts on spurs). Cutting and climbing practices were carried out in the forest, showing the minimum safety measures that should be used. Latex was also collected and cooked. In the exchange, older chicleros (50-70 years old) shared their experience with young chicleros (35-40 years old) and young aspirants (19-22 years old). The exchange was an opportunity to disseminate graphic materials on CONAP's regulations and FSC and organic certifications. In Guatemala, there is great potential for the use of chicle, a sustainable activity that benefits the forest and its people.

* *Chicleros* is the local name for people that extract latex (chewing gum), from the chicle tree (*Manilkara zapota*).

Closure of the Project “Protection and Sustainable Use of the Selva Maya”

In November 2019, the *Protection and Sustainable Use of the Selva Maya Project* was officially closed by events in the different countries that share this forest massif. The messages shared by those responsible of Protected Areas agreed on the importance of protecting and conserving the Selva Maya, the largest tropical forest in Mesoamerica.

With the aim to protect biodiversity and sustainable use natural resources, the project sought to strengthen capacities and platforms for participation. Commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), it was implemented by the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* GIZ (German Cooperation), in conjunction with the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD). The national partners were the Forest Department of Belize (FD), the National Council of Protected Areas of Guatemala (CONAP) and the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas of Mexico (CONANP).

Among the impacts of the project, it is worth mentioning that:

- Five protected areas in the Selva Maya implement sustainable management plans
- With an environmental planning approach, instruments of territorial management were developed, strengthening social participation
- To better conserve the Selva Maya, several management tools were implemented

- At least 30 target groups in the three countries have increased technical, managerial and organizational capacities
- In southeast Mexico, forest fires were fought on more than 10,000 hectares, thanks to the training of 200 community rangers. In Guatemala, agricultural fires were prevented by implementing the Forest Fire Early Warning System (SATIF)
- The area of protected tropical forest in Calakmul, Mexico, increased by almost 100,000 hectares through the certification of Voluntary Conservation Areas
- With the business strengthening of honey and Ramon seed value chains, more than three thousand families benefited, in the three countries
- In Belize and Guatemala more than 300 families diversified their vegetable gardens, growing them in an agroecological way, reducing the use of chemicals and agricultural field burnings
- More than 90 cross-border activities were carried out between 2012 and 2019, including training and exchanges of experiences, resulting in various agreements and inter-institutional cooperation.
- Regarding regional environmental governance, there are currently two work platforms, the Strategic Coordination Group (GEC) and the Operational Coordination Group (GOC), which seek to influence the political and technical-operational levels, respectively.

The project ends its activities; however, the conviction prevails that safeguarding the Selva Maya is a perennial task and commitment.



Top left, distinguished participants at the closing event at Technological University of Calakmul

Top right, visit to successful models of integral silvopastoral systems in Petén, Guatemala

Bottom left, exhibit of social enterprises incorporated to Sello Colectivo Calakmul

Bottom right, closing event in Belmopan, Belize.

© Selva Maya Programme / Sabeth Bayer

Strengthening regional strategic and operational cooperation for the protection of the Selva Maya

Name	Strengthening regional strategic and operational cooperation for the protection of the Selva Maya
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Belize Peten, Guatemala Campeche & Quintana Roo, Mexico
Lead executing agency	Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD)
Duration	01.2020 – 12.2022

The Selva Maya, located in the border zone between Belize, Guatemala and Mexico, is the largest area of continuous tropical forest in Mesoamerica with more than ten million hectares, 40% of which are protected areas. The 23 ecosystems present in the Selva Maya make it a biodiversity hotspot.

Its ecosystem services of supply and storage of water, as well as its role as a carbon sink, are threatened by unsustainable land use, population growth and migration, illegal logging and illegal wildlife trade, ecosystem degradation and climate change. On the other hand, transboundary cooperation and coordination for the effective protection of Selva Maya resources requires additional efforts to implement joint strategies to mitigate such threats.

Through the Selva Maya Strategic Coordination Group (GEC), created in 2015 and made up of the heads of the institutions responsible for the protection and conservation of the protected areas in the three countries, a platform for political advocacy and decision making. Likewise, the Selva Maya Coordination Operating Group (GOC), made up of Directors and Sub-Directors of protected areas in the Selva Maya, is

a technical-operational action platform that coordinates and implements transboundary cooperation activities.

However, the GEC cannot reach agreements that are formally binding on all three countries. Also, the GOC relies on the voluntary commitment of protected area managers and there are no formal local cooperation mechanisms in place to jointly address threats.

In this context, accepting the challenge of protecting and conserving the Selva Maya through the long-term sustainable use of its natural resources, the project **Strengthening Regional Strategic and Operational Cooperation for the Protection of the Selva Maya**, seeks to consolidate tri-national cross-border coordination and cooperation.

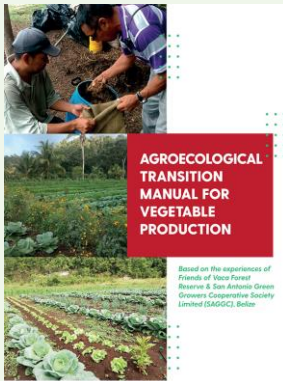
The project cooperates in Belize, Guatemala and Mexico with the institutions responsible for the management and administration of protected areas in the Selva Maya. The national partners are the National Council of Protected Areas in Guatemala, the Forest Department in Belize and the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas in Mexico. To achieve their objective, activities are focused on three areas: 1) improving strategic coordination; 2) enhancing regional operational cooperation; 3) implementing local cooperation mechanisms.

The challenges are: 1) to develop coordination mechanisms between selected adjacent areas; 2) to reinforce cooperation mechanisms between protected areas administrations and other relevant actors, through capacity building and awareness raising measures; 3) to strengthen the capacities of the Selva Maya's Strategic Coordination Group and Coordination Operating Group.



Left: the Selva Maya Coordination Operating Group (GOC)
© Selva Maya Programme
Right: Exchange of forest rangers from Belize, Guatemala and Mexico
© Selva Maya Programme / Jorge Uribe

Publications



HANDBOOK

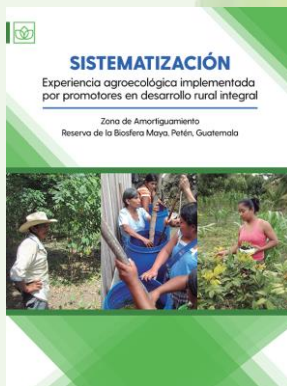
Agroecological transition manual for vegetable production

Productive experiences from San Antonio Green Growers Cooperative & Friends of Vaca Forest Reserve

Published by: *Selva Maya Programme / GIZ*

Available on:

http://selvamaya.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Manual_Agro_Ingles_Web-2.pdf



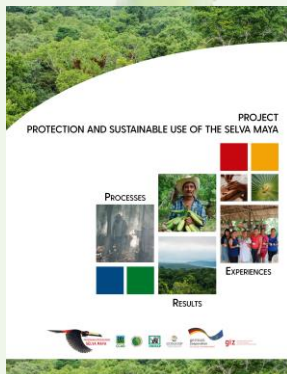
HANDBOOK (Spanish version)

Sistematización de experiencia agroecológica implementada por promotores en desarrollo rural

Published by: *Pastoral Social from Peten & Selva Maya Programme / GIZ*

Available on:

http://selvamaya.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Sistematizaci%C3%B3n-Pastoral-Social_Web.pdf



SYSTEMATIZATION FOLDER

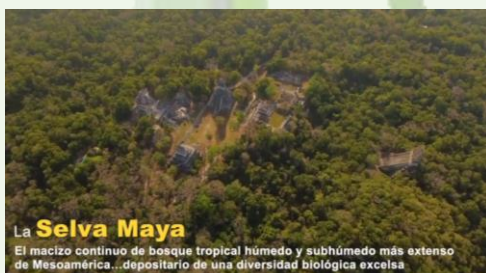
Protection and Sustainable Use of the Selva Maya

Selection of the systematized cooperation initiatives developed during the project

Published by: *Selva Maya Programme / GIZ*

Available on:

<http://selvamaya.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Sistematization-of-processes-experiences-and-results-of-the-Selva-Maya.pdf>



VIDEO CLIP (Spanish version)

Protección y Uso Sostenible de la Selva Maya

An overview upon the impacts of the project, in terms of environment conservation and sustainable development

Published by: *Selva Maya Programme / GIZ*

Available on:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLxixv0o_el

Important dates and commemorations



**WORLD
WILDLIFE DAY**
3 MARCH

March 21



International
DAY OF FORESTS



**WORLD
WATER DAY**
MARCH 22



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