



News Release

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Zamora Chinchipe Provincial Reserve Protects Nearly 1.1 Million Acres of Critical Habitat in Southern Ecuador

Nature and Culture International plays leading role in protecting wildlife, habitat and ecosystem services in an area rapidly losing its forests.

Del Mar, Calif. – Jan. 4, 2019 – Nature and Culture International celebrates the declaration of Zamora Chinchipe Provincial Reserve in southern Ecuador. Zamora Chinchipe will protect 1,098,611 acres of forest, shrub and grasslands in a region threatened by rapid deforestation and burgeoning mining concessions, safeguarding wildlife and clean water for nearby communities.

Zamora Chinchipe lies within the Huancabamba Depression of the Andes, a transition zone from the humid north to the drier central Andes. Due to the area’s diversity of geological features and environmental conditions, the reserve harbors an enormous variety of habitats, from high-elevation páramos to lush foothill forests. Species abound including the red-faced parrot (*Hapalopsittaca pyrrhops*), endangered white-bellied spider monkey (*Ateles belzebuth*) and vulnerable spectacled bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*). The province’s dramatic altitude changes encourage the evolution of diverse species and provide a critical escape valve for climate change – an upward migration path to cooler temperatures to help species survive as the Earth warms.

The Cordillera del Cóndor along the Peru–Ecuador border, part of which is included within the reserve, is extremely high in plant diversity. It may have the “richest flora of any similar-sized area anywhere in the New World” (according to a rapid bio-assessment done by Schulenberg & Awbrey in 1997), and one of the highest concentrations of vascular plant species still unknown to science. The area is home to a wealth of fauna as well – almost every scientific expedition to the Cordillera del Cóndor records a number of new species.

An estimated 91,000 people rely on water that flows through Zamora Chinchipe for drinking, irrigation and agriculture. Protecting the area will safeguard water supplies from threats such as mining – Zamora Chinchipe Province currently has the highest density of mining concessions in Ecuador – as well as mitigate droughts and flooding, both of which are becoming more common with climate change. The reserve will also preserve the home and ancestral practices of a significant indigenous population, principally members of the Shuar Nationality.

“Whether celebrating the chonta palm harvest with the Shuar community of Kiim or hiking the magnificent tepui table mountains of Nangaritza, my family and I came to know and love Zamora Chinchipe Province during our three years in Ecuador. It means a lot to us personally to know that its natural and cultural beauty is safeguarded via this provincial reserve,” said Matt Clark, Nature and Culture President.

Nature and Culture worked with the Zamora Chinchipe Provincial Government and the nine municipal governments within the province to establish the reserve, providing legal, technical and logistical support. Special recognition is due to Zamora Chinchipe’s Prefect, Salvador Quishpe for his environmental leadership. Zamora Chinchipe is the third provincial reserve in Ecuador, after Carchi and Pastaza, establishing permanent protection for an area previously devastated by deforestation. The province loses approximately 29,400 acres per year to deforestation, the second highest rate in Ecuador.

“The declaration of Zamora Chinchipe is the result of the efforts of the Provincial Government, the municipal governments and local communities,” said Felipe Serrano, Nature and Culture’s Andes and Amazon Program Coordinator. “In our citizen perception surveys, 98% of respondents supported the establishment of protected areas, and the consultation process with indigenous organizations was largely favorable. Local conservation initiatives must continue to be supported.”

Zamora Chinchipe Provincial Reserve was created with the generous financial support of Andes Amazon Fund.

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About Nature and Culture International. Founded in 1997, Nature and Culture International conserves biological and cultural diversity in some of the world’s most diverse ecosystems, primarily in the Andes and Amazon of South America. Over the last 20 years, Nature and Culture has helped local governments and communities conserve more than 16 million acres and designate an additional 6.4 million acres as UN Biosphere Reserves. natureandculture.org