

# THE TREE OF LIFE AND THE LIFE OF TREES

## A Rocha's Tropical Forests Programme

Say 'Tropical Forests' and most of us think of hot, steamy jungles, perhaps the rainforests of Brazil or Borneo. But tropical forests are incredibly varied: they can be rain-soaked or arid, deciduous or evergreen, montane or low-lying, coastal or a thousand miles from the sea. So what is a tropical forest? The simple answer is a forest roughly within 28 degrees of the Equator.

As we all now know, these forests are incredibly rich in plants and animals. Millions of people also live in or around them, so it's hardly surprising that much of A Rocha's work is in tropical forests. In Ghana, Kenya, India and Peru we're working with communities who depend on some of the most important and threatened forests, helping them to protect their land and their resources for future generations. We're planting new forests. And we're studying forest-dwelling birds and mammals so that we're better able to protect them.

### Four of A Rocha's tropical forest projects:

#### 1. PERU

**Location:** Ica

**Type of forest:** Huarango (*Prosopis*): restricted to coastal 'hyperarid' desert.

**Conservation significance:** One of the world's most threatened ecosystems, essential for the survival of the rare endemic Slender-billed Finch and Black-necked Woodpecker.



*PHOTO: The planting and nurturing of Huarango seedlings involves people of all ages, but we are especially encouraging 'Children's Forests'. (A Rocha Peru)*

**Action:** planting new Huarango forests to combat desertification, conserve endangered species and provide sustainable livelihoods.



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## 2. GHANA

### Ankasa National Park, SW Ghana

**Type of forest:** evergreen rainforest.

**Conservation significance:** the Guinean Forest of West Africa is one of the most critically fragmented regions on the planet and part of the West African Global biodiversity hotspot. Ankasa is especially important for Forest Elephant, Bongo (a large antelope), Leopard and Yellow-backed Duiker. There are well over 600 species of butterflies!



*PHOTO: Since 1990, Ghana has lost more than a quarter of its forest cover, but some of the surviving forests are remarkably pristine. (David McKay)*

**Action:** A Rocha is working in villages on the south west edge of the National Park to provide families with alternatives to bush-meat hunting. Fish ponds have been built, and training provided, so that the communities now have a reliable source of protein and can make a living by selling their produce.



*PHOTO: Patas Monkey  
(Daryl Bosu)*



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## 3. INDIA

**Location:** Bannerghatta National Park, Eastern Ghats, South India

**Type of forest:** Scrub and thorny forest.

**Conservation significance:** the park holds Asian Elephants at a relatively high density. Asian Elephant numbers have dropped drastically, so much so that they are classified as 'Threatened'. The park is also important for Leopard and Gaur (Indian Bison). It is just 20 km from Bangalore, one of the world's fastest-growing cities.



*PHOTO: Asian Elephants at work in the Eastern Ghats.*

**Action:** Each year, farmers around Bannerghatta National Park die, or get seriously maimed, as they seek to protect their crops from hungry elephants – and the elephants are sometimes killed or injured by desperate farmers. Since 2004, A Rocha's main aim has been to reduce conflicts. We've researched the seasonal movements of the animals, their population densities and their impact on crops at different times of the year. Various measures have been tried: the most successful being the introduction of strong-smelling chilli-tobacco rope barriers, offensive to elephants which have a sensitive sense of smell.



*PHOTO: Bannerghatta National Park, with the urban sprawl of Bangalore visible in the distance. (Dave Bookless)*



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## 4. KENYA

**Location:** Mida Creek, Kenya

**Type of forest:** 1,600 hectares of mangroves.

**Conservation significance:** An exceptionally productive ecosystem, holding seven species of mangroves. An Important Bird Area for waterbirds, including the Crab-plover which flocks here outside the breeding season to feed under the trees. Endangered Olive Ridley Turtles lay their eggs on the sandy beaches.

**Action:** Research, sustainable development and management.



*PHOTO: Each year A Rocha organises a big mangrove-planting event, involving schools and church groups, to restore degraded areas and increase awareness of the importance of mangroves for people and wildlife. (A Rocha Kenya)*

The team makes regular counts of the wader roost. Ringing (bird-banding) is part of the monitoring programme and also provides data on the birds' moult and migration strategies.

A Rocha has built a hide overlooking the roost, and a 260m-long suspended walkway to it through the mangroves, so that tourists can visit: their fees contribute to eco-bursaries for school children, thus increasing the value of the creek to the communities. The local guides, trained by A Rocha, have employment and take delight in educating local visitors, as well as tourists, about the importance of their creek for wildlife.



*PHOTO: Mangrove Kingfishers are common at Mida Creek. (Doug Harebottle)*



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*PHOTO: Mangrove forests can be found in inter-tidal areas throughout the tropics. Species have adapted to exploit different soil types and varying degrees of salinity and flooding. Both terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity is very high. The trees provide people with protection from storms and tsunamis, as well as fuel, timber, medicine, tannins and dyes. (Melissa Ong)*

### Love **Forests**, Love **People**, Love **A Rocha**!

These are just a few of the A Rocha projects which are successfully helping people to care for their own forests – and their own wildlife. We want to do so much more. We need your help to continue our urgent work!

A monthly donation would help us to plan with confidence. Or please make a one-off gift.

- **£10 a month** can help us plant more native trees.
- **£20 a month** can help us train men and women to identify and monitor plants and animals in their local forests.
- **£40 a month** can help us protect new areas of tropical forest.
- To support A Rocha's Tropical Forests Programme please donate via [www.arocha.org/11596-DSY.html](http://www.arocha.org/11596-DSY.html)
- You can also support A Rocha's Climate Stewards tree-planting programmes & offset your harmful emissions: [www.climatestewards.net](http://www.climatestewards.net).
- If you prefer to donate by cheque, please made payable to 'A Rocha', write 'Tropical Forests' on the back, and post to: A Rocha, 3 Hooper Street, Cambridge, CB1 2NZ, UK

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