

NATURAL PROTECTED AREAS OF MEXICO

INTERNATIONAL PROJECTION



MEXICO ON THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGENDA

Since the early twentieth century, the concern about the effects of industrial development on the environment has been expressed in many different ways, but it wasn't until the 1970s that scientific advances and intense social pressures in industrialized countries led to important initiatives for facing the problem of global environmental deterioration. These initiatives were presented in the United Nations, and the international community took them up in order to try to preserve our planet's ecological balance.

In the past three decades, the institutional and social milieu has produced many opportunities for cooperation on the global, regional, and bilateral scales. Thus, a great number of agreements have been adopted to attend to issues involving the environment and sustainable development, among which the following are outstanding: the United Nations Environment Program, multilateral environmental agreements, the declarations and implementation plans of the two Sustainable Development Summits held in Rio de Janeiro and Johannesburg, and the work programs related to the environment and sustainable development conducted by environmental, economic, and social forums.

Mexico has participated actively in international cooperation efforts for the purpose of helping to consolidate an agenda based on clearly defined principles and supported by solid institutions. The country has contributed to the development of the international environmental agenda, promoting the principles of equality, shared but differentiated responsibility, and precaution as the major traits of cooperation.

To date, we have signed nearly 100 international agreements related to the environment and sustainable development, and have made significant contributions to the development of international schemes, as well as schemes focused on attending to regional matters.

Cooperation in the area of Natural Protected Areas (NPA) is a priority in Mexico's international cooperation strategy, geared to complying with the strategies indicated in our National Program for the Environment and Natural Resources. Three of the most important of these strategies are: halting and reversing pollution of life-sustaining systems; stopping and reversing loss of natural capital; and conserving ecosystems and their biodiversity.

In the multilateral sphere, the topic of protected areas has been included on the work agendas of forums such as the diverse programs of the United Nations, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Forum on Forests, the

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and the International Whale Commission, among others.

At the regional and subregional levels, Mexico has fostered cooperation in NPAs mainly through the Work Program of the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation, the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management, the Forum of Ministers of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor, the Mesoamerican Coral Reef System, the Central American Commission of Environment and Development, and the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Northeast Pacific.

In addition, our country has promoted the inclusion of the topic of NPAs in bilateral cooperation agreements being negotiated with the United States, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, Australia, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Cuba, and Brazil, among others.

Mexico has strengthened the defense of marine NPAs as one of the most relevant policies, since it is one of the conservation aspects that was left pending in order to make environmental policies consistent, to a certain degree, with the legal instruments we have at present. The defense of NPAs by means of the application of current environmental legislation, as well as the updating of the Conservation and Management Programs for NPAs, are two of the most important actions that have been undertaken with an aim to strengthening and revitalizing conservation and sustainable management within marine protected areas which now have active inspection and supervision programs thanks to the coordination of governmental entities.

In the coming years, it will be necessary to continue to work with the international community in building new schemes for cooperation, coordination, and participation enabling us to give priority attention to the problems of global responsibility in keeping with national priorities, situating sustainable development as a transversal axis in environmental policy decision-making, promoting environmental improvement through the transformations required in the economic, financial, cultural, social, and technological spheres.

Víctor Lichtinger Waisman
Minister of the Environment and Natural Resources



Thus, life, born from the Earth,
is solidary with Earth.
Life is solidary with life.
Edgar Morin, *Tierra-Patria*

Mexico is going through a time of changes, of lessons learned and to be learned. For those of us who have been devoted to conservation for a long time, the best lesson has been to observe the way in which certain species, such as the mountain parrot, adapt and climatize themselves to short- and long-term environmental changes that can not be foreseen or modified. Yet this capacity has its limitations, and is often overtaken by a short-term vision of human development. So we can not leave them to their own resources. The only possible future for humankind is a sustainable one, but we must build it soon or there will be no future, either for species and protected areas or for us.

One path for ensuring that future, which was outlined in Mexico more than a century ago, came to be to a reality just a few years ago. Today, the commitment for the conservation of Mexico's natural wealth, assumed by the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP), goes beyond protecting our natural riches and acknowledges in such protection an essential tool for development and well-being, especially of rural and indigenous communities living in or near these vital areas. We should support these communities reciprocally due to the important role they play in maintaining the ecological goods and services on which we depend as a society. Protected areas should be converted, on the one hand, in true bastions against degradation and, on the other, in examples that demonstrate sustainability.

At the CONANP we are not alone in our task; within and outside the government and the environmental sector, we have indispensable allies: the National Ecology Institute and the National Commission for Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity, with their support in terms of knowledge; the Head Office for Wildlife of the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources, with which we are linked in a long tradition of joint efforts; the Federal Environmental Protection Agency, or PROFEPA, which guarantees the maintenance of a rule of law; and the National Forest Commission, or



CONAFOR, which supports sustainable forest development. We have different joint management schemes with local governments, and the growing participation of the nongovernmental sector enriches our work.

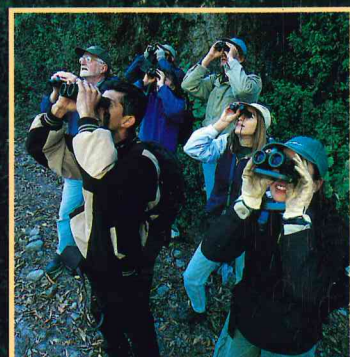
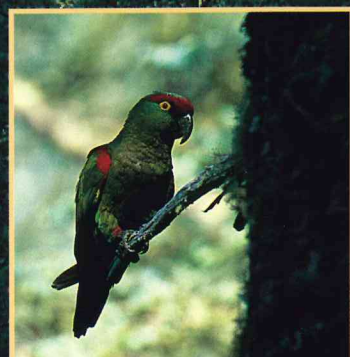
Protection is currently just one component of a complex conservation process. Restoration, management, and sustainable use of ecosystems and their biodiversity are modern premises of direct conservation. Moreover, conservation has an indirect component which includes knowledge and management, intertwined by the ribbons of a conservation culture that orients all our actions with ethical criteria towards human society as a whole. And that is where international cooperation plays a fundamental role. In this document, we describe Mexico's concrete projects with international agencies and organizations.

The growing awareness that our common destiny is the destiny of this planet offers new opportunities and poses new challenges: the responsibility for avoiding the degradation of our biological and cultural heritage, and the creation of new global development schemes that lay bridges between common objectives and cultural diversities.

Although it was established recently, the CONANP has had an increasingly active participation in international agendas and cooperation instruments. It has also consolidated initiatives stemming from institutions preceding or complementing it.

We are participants in profound changes in Mexico and in the world. That obliges us to be more purposeful in our actions and innovative in defining the agenda for conserving Earth's natural protected areas, and to commit ourselves to extend and consolidate that participation in a spirit of the widest possible collaboration. The nascent ecological conscience of our times should afford a new ethical and just light to the will to conserve our only source of subsistence, that tiny, minuscule, thin, and extremely fragile layer of life that envelops the Earth: the biosphere.

Ernesto Enkerlin Hoeflich
President of the CONANP



NATURAL PROTECTED AREAS OF MEXICO

Categories	Number	Hectares
Biosphere Reserves (BR)	34	10,479,534
National Parks (NP)	65	1,397,163
Natural Monuments (NM)	4	14,093
Natural Resource Protected Areas (NRPA)	2	39,724
Flora and Fauna Protected Areas (FFPA)	26	5,371,930
Sanctuaries (S)	17	689
	148	17,303,133



■ Natural Protected Areas of Mexico with International Cooperation

▲ World Heritage

■ Biosphere Reserves of MAB

● RAMSAR Convention

◆ Cooperation in North America

○ Mesoamerican Biological Corridor

□ Mesoamerican Coral/Reef System

△ Protected Areas Networks

Bilateral Cooperation:

◆ United States

◆ Japan

◆ Germany

◆ Cuba

◆ Guatemala

◆ Spain

▼ Global Environment Facility

■ Sistered Natural Protected Areas

* State Reserves

** Priority Regions for Conservation



WORLD HERITAGE

On Earth there are places of exceptional, universal value due to their natural features, their historical significance, or their spiritual importance, and the responsibility for their protection falls to the international community as a whole. Under this premise, one of the oldest environmental conventions, the World Heritage Convention adopted by UNESCO in 1972, has identified and inscribed on the World Heritage List, a total of 754 sites in 129 countries: 582 cultural, 149 natural, and 23 mixed, up to the year 2003. Mexico ratified the convention in 1984, and at present has 21 cultural sites and two natural ones.

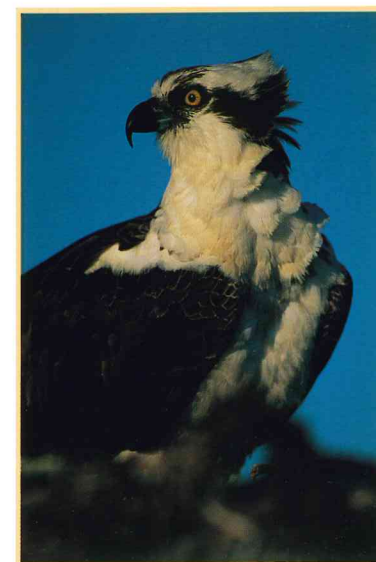
SIAN KA'AN BIOSPHERE RESERVE

"The origin of the sky" is the Mayan name of this first Natural Heritage Site inscribed by Mexico in 1987. Also considered one of the 39 most valuable sites in terms of wetland and marine zone resources, it covers 520,000 hectares in the State of Quintana Roo, has superlative natural phenomena and ecosystems and 17 different vegetation types, and includes part of the Caribbean Coral Reef Barrier, as well as tropical forests, mangroves, marshes and *petenes* exclusive of the Yucatán and Florida peninsulas. It is habitat to more than a thousand species of flora, and also threatened and endemic species. Home to five Mexican feline species, including the mythical jaguar, Sian Ka'an includes a rich variety of fauna species, as well as a large diversity of birds.

EL VIZCAÍNO BIOSPHERE RESERVE

In the area of the El Vizcaíno Biosphere Reserve, a World Heritage value concentrated mainly in two lagoons, Ojo de Liebre and San Ignacio, where the gray whale population migrates to reproduce, was nominated as a World Heritage Site in 1993, with the name of Whale Sanctuary of El Vizcaíno. The other site on the list, a Cultural one, are the cave paintings of the Sierra de San Francisco, also located within the reserve.

The coastal lagoons of Ojo de Liebre and San Ignacio cover a surface of over 65,000 hectares, and are located in the central part of the peninsula of Baja California, within Mexico's largest reserve. The lagoons are



extremely important for the longest migration known of all large mammals. Moreover, they have an extraordinary diversity of bird species on their shores and islands, as well as the majority of the most important and significant natural habitats, where plant and animal species of outstanding universal value still survive.

Maintaining the integrity of the sites since their inscription has been achieved thanks to a strengthened administrative and institutional frame-

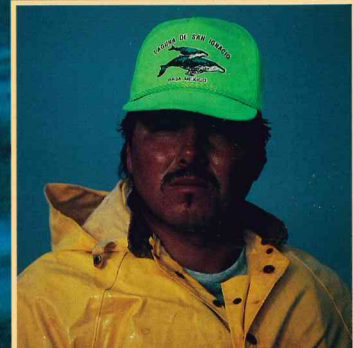
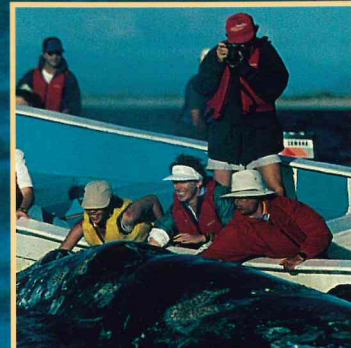
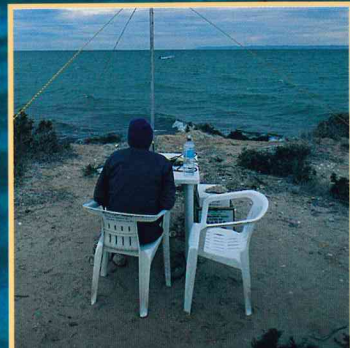
work and the participation of different entities, as well as environmental dissemination and education programs.

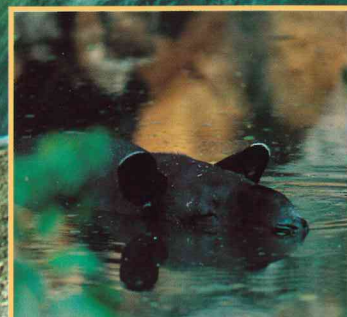
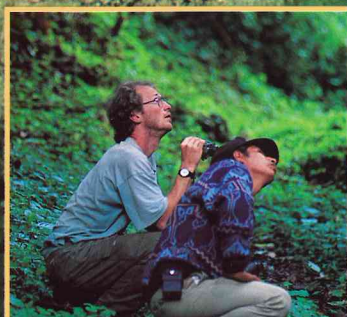
Conserving a balance among social, economic, and environmental realities is the challenge facing World Heritage Sites.

"Linking Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism at World Heritage Sites" is the name of the project that UNESCO is conducting in conjunction with the RARE Center for Tropical Conservation and with the Mexican counterpart, the CONANP and the administrations of the reserves to carry out, in Sian Ka'an, monitoring and evaluation programs of public use, development of microenterprises, environmental education, use of alternate technologies, and dissemination.

At the Vizcaíno, through this project, it has been possible to provide training courses for tourist guides, environmental education, and the management of ecotourism enterprises, with an aim to promoting low-impact tourism according to the capacity of landscape resources.

The CONANP is considering various natural protected areas for inscription as natural or mixed sites, such as the Calakmul, El Pinacate y Gran Desierto de Altar, Mariposa Monarca, Banco Chinchorro, and Sierra Gorda biosphere reserves; the Arrecife Alacranes National Park; Islas del Golfo de California Flora and Fauna Protected Area; and Cuenca Lacanha-Usumacinta, which includes the biosphere reserves of Montes Azules and Lacan-Tún, the Bonampak and Yaxchilán natural monuments, and the Chan-kin Flora and Fauna Protected Area. To that end, it has begun to take steps with the support of the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) and CONAL-MEX (Mexican Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO) of the Ministry of Public Education (SEP).





BIOSPHERE RESERVES OF MAB

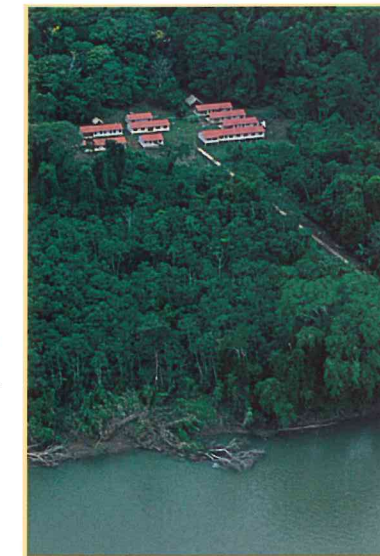
MAB, or the Man and the Biosphere Program of UNESCO, in 1974 worked out the concept of "biosphere reserve." In 1976, the World Network of Biosphere Reserves was established, and in 2003 this network is comprised of 440 sites in 97 countries.

Biosphere reserves are zones of terrestrial or coastal-marine ecosystems, or a combination of both, which have been designated to promote and demonstrate a harmonic relationship between human populations and nature. The network is an essential element for attaining MAB's main objective: to achieve a balance between the conservation of biodiversity, economic development, and the preservation of cultural values.

The reserves proposed by national governments that are admitted to the network meet various criteria including protection of genetic resources, ecosystems and landscapes, sustainable economic and human development, and logistic support for research and educational activities related to ones of local, national, and international interest.

Diverse activities ranging from protection, monitoring, research, recreation, environmental education, and ecotourism to agricultural activities and human settlements can coexist in biosphere reserves thanks to the definition of three zones: core zone, buffer zone, and transition or cooperation zone.

With the leadership of the Instituto de Ecología, A.C., in 1975, in the Michilía and Mapimí Biosphere Reserves in the State of Durango, the so-called "Mexican modality" was initiated. This modality involves relevant participation of research institutions in its operation, the inclusion of socioeconomic issues in research and of local inhabitants in the conservation of germplasm, which are just some of its priorities. The Mexican modality anticipated the proposal of the World Conservation Strategy in the sense that conservation is not only protection, but also maintenance, restoration, and sustainable use and management of the natural environment. The model of biosphere reserve has become one of the protection categories in Mexican legislation.



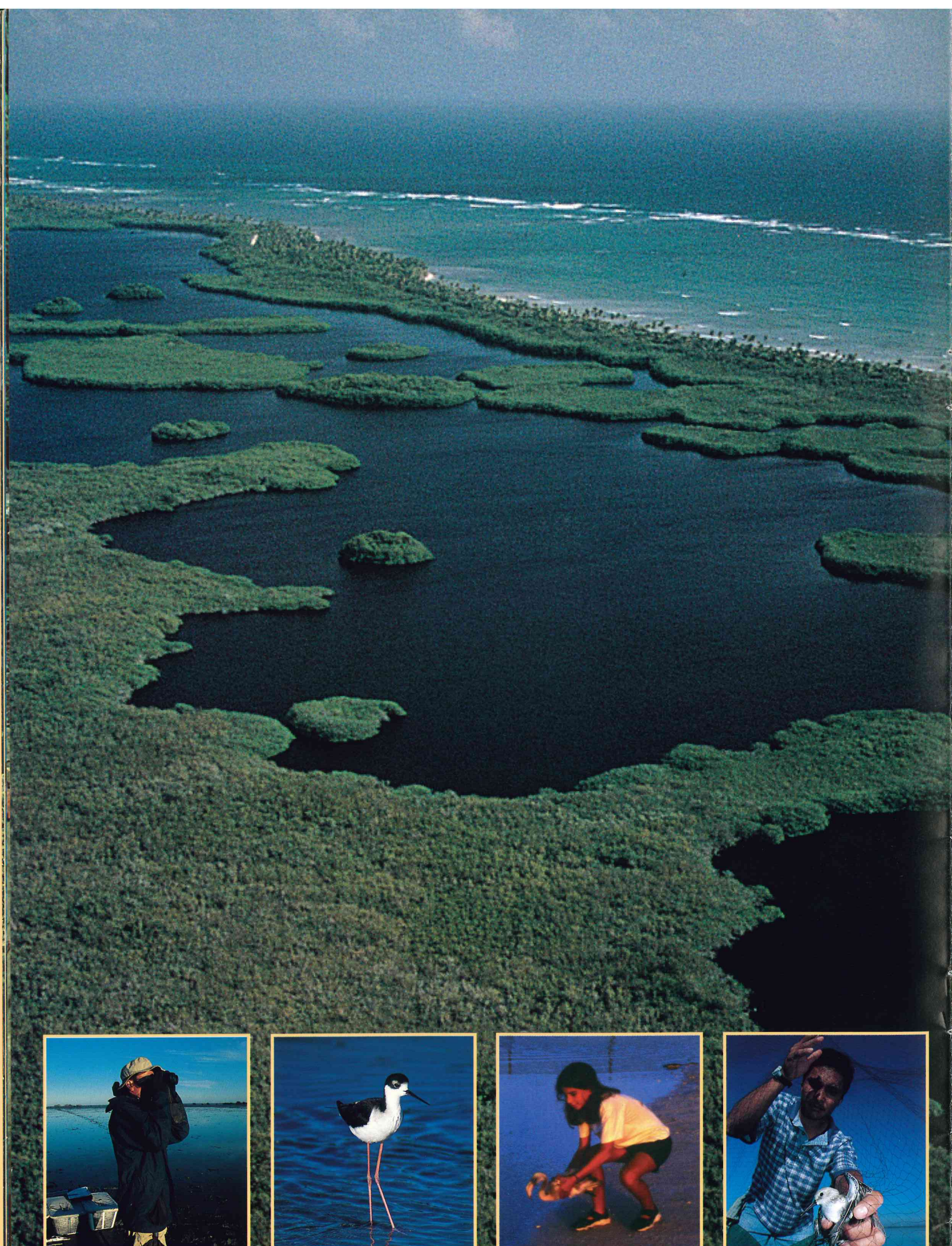
From 1977 to 2003, Mexico has inscribed 14 sites in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, including the following biosphere reserves: Mapimí, Michilía, Montes Azules, El Cielo, Sian Ka'an, Sierra de Manantlán, Calakmul, El Triunfo, El Vizcaíno, Sierra Gorda, Sierra La Laguna, and Banco Chichorro; and the Alto Golfo de California Biosphere Reserve, which was declared by joining the biosphere reserves of El Pinacate y Gran Desierto de Altar

with that of the Alto Golfo de California y Delta del Río Colorado, as well as Islas del Golfo de California. Being evaluated by MAB in 2003 are the Ría Lagartos, Ría Celestún, and Selva El Ocote biosphere reserves, and proposals will continue to be prepared, such as those concerning the Mariposa Monarca and Iztaccíhuatl-Popocatepetl reserves.

The activities conducted in Mexico's biosphere reserves are oriented towards implementing international strategies and conventions, since the context in which the reserves have developed has gradually been modified by different conventions. These conventions recognize as essential elements the close relationship between biodiversity conservation and local communities' needs for development, all within a framework of international cooperation. Mexico's experience has been to contribute significantly to the evolution of this concept: it has demonstrated the importance of setting up long-term research programs that are sensitive to the conditions of local inhabitants and involve them in conservation tasks. The most frequent lines of research are ecotourism, monitoring, community participation, and socioeconomic aspects.

Biosphere reserves are fundamental in cooperation with other conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar), and the World Heritage Convention.

However, for Mexico the key role played by the reserves is to demonstrate that ecosystems and their biodiversity can be conserved in a wider perspective.



RAMSAR CONVENTION

The year 1971 witnessed the signing, in the city of Ramsar, Iran, of one of the first modern, intergovernmental treaties for conserving natural resources: the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. The concern for the serious depletion of waterbirds and their habitats in the sixties, the initial motivation for this convention, has been extended to include all aspects involving the rational use and conservation of wetlands through national actions and international cooperation.

In Mexico, the administrative authority of the Convention is the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources, SEMARNAT. Mexico has actively participated in that convention. In terms of its administration, in the past decade the basis for enlarging and consolidating said participation was established through the Head Office for Wildlife. As of March, 2003, based on the new organization of Mexico's environmental sector and the evolution of the mandate of this Convention, its follow-up has been entrusted to the CONANP.

A wide variety of habitat types, including rivers and lakes, swamps, coastal lagoons, mangroves, peatlands, coral reefs, and even human-made wetlands, are part of the 1,305 sites of the 137 countries inscribed on the List of Wetlands of International Importance, seven of which have been inscribed by Mexico.

RÍA LAGARTOS, YUCATÁN (RAMSAR, 1988)

Courting and nesting site for major concentrations of the greater flamingo, which number over 18,000 individuals, this reserve, due to its geohydrological and climatic conditions, represents not only the main nesting zone of this flamingo in Mexico, but also a critical ecological zone for the reproduction of another 280 bird species, as well as one of the refuge areas for 30,000 migratory waterbirds that winter on the Yucatán Peninsula.

CUATROCIÉNEGAS, COAHUILA (RAMSAR, 1995)

A network of underground rivers with over 200 springs



creating ponds, lagoons and extensive areas subject to flooding, linked by a channel system, with a wide variety of endemic species, associated among themselves, such as mollusks, fishes, crustaceans, and other invertebrates, extends for over 84,000 hectares in the deserted landscape of the intermontane Valley of Cuatrociénegas.

Due to its value for maintaining the ecosystem and its high level of endemisms, particularly as regards fishes,

where 10 of the 17 species are endemic, this flora and fauna protected area is an internationally important wetland.

PANTANOS DE CENTLA, TABASCO (RAMSAR, 1995)

Over 500 vertebrate species, among which there are 256 waterbird and 60 fish species, have their habitat in this area containing one of the most important aquatic vascular floras of Mesoamerica. The reserve covers over 300,000 hectares and is located in the lower basin of the country's largest hydrological complex, the Grijalva-Usumacinta.

Aside from its important features as a swamp, Centla has 569 plant species, half of which are used by humans, and 12 of which are endemic.

MARISMAS NACIONALES, SINALOA AND NAYARIT (RAMSAR, 1995)

This is an example of the complex hydrological, biological, and ecological functions performed by a wetland that is vital for the operation of a coastal system. It is comprised of a vast, 200,000-hectare network of coastal lagoons, mangroves, swamps, and salt marshes fed by seven rivers and alternate streams that constitute valuable habitats for representative flora and fauna and maintain high fishing productivity. It is usually home to 20,000 waterbirds and, in addition, is an important corridor and winter refuge for more than 100,000 migratory waterbirds.

LA ENCRUCIJADA, CHIAPAS (RAMSAR, 1996)

Rivers, coastal lagoons, swamps, and marshes form the hydrological network of this reserve, and the largest area



of mangrove forest, considered the most productive and best developed in the Pacific coast of North America, where the four species of mangroves occur: red, black, button, and white. They grow as tall as 25 m and are the source of food for a wide variety of resident birds, some of which are threatened. Bird-watching constitutes one of the main sources of income for the reserve, where 294 species, 94 of them migratory, have been reported, along with colonial nesting sites of the great egret, the wood stork, and the whistling duck, among others.

WETLANDS OF THE COLORADO RIVER DELTA, BAJA CALIFORNIA AND SONORA (RAMSAR, 1996)

This is an interesting fragmented system covering 250,000 hectares of natural and artificial wetlands, upon which productivity in the Upper Gulf of California depends to a great extent. These wetlands consist of intertidal wetlands, brackish deltas, riverine environments, and permanent freshwater lakes and ponds.

These wetlands' extraordinary biological diversity and high productivity make them unique for the conser-



vation of endemic and endangered species such as the totoaba fish, the vaquita marina porpoise, bobcats, desert pupfish, and the Yuma clapper rail, and a temporary habitat for major concentrations of migratory waterbirds and terrestrial birds, mostly during the winter.

DZILAM, YUCATÁN (RAMSAR, 2000)

Transitional habitat of the greater flamingo and an exceptional area for migrating birds flying from the United



States to Central America along the Gulf of Mexico flyway, this state reserve is habitat to 20,000 waterbirds each year. Because of its importance as a site of major juvenile populations of different fish and crustacean species that are highly valuable for trade, which develop as adults in faraway places, such as cabrilla, or sea bass, shrimp, lobster, and dusky groupers, the municipality of Dzilam has become one of the three most important fishing ports in the State of Yucatán.

The National Crusade for Forests and Water, one of Mexico's priority presidential programs, is another of the initial means for consolidating the topic of wetlands in our country. The first steps have been taken to create the National Ramsar Committee, which will have, among



its objectives, that of following up on the degree to which Convention resolutions are complied with, developing a national effort for training, carrying out the National Wetland Inventory, decreeing sites with underrepresented ecosystems, and designing national policies related to wetlands.

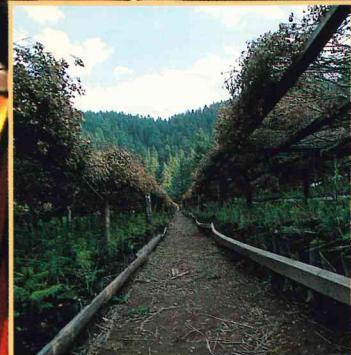
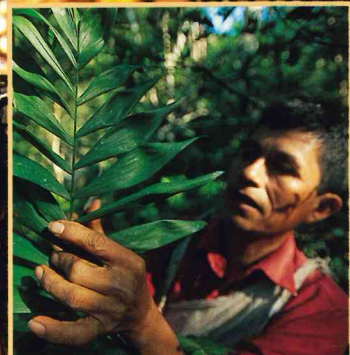
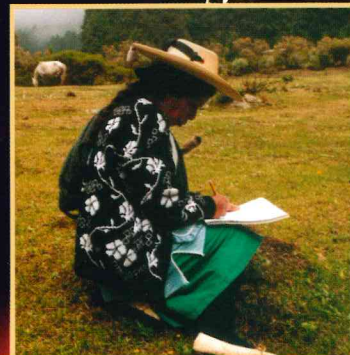
Aside from this effort, the Fund for Small Subsidies was set up at the Fourth Conference of the Parties of the Ramsar Convention to help undertake small projects.

The Wetlands for the Future Fund for the western hemisphere is supported by the Ramsar Office, as well as by the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This fund promotes the rational use of wetlands, and strengthens the ability of countries to manage their resources for and in the future.

The Mexican wetlands that obtained monies from this fund are: La Encrucijada, for projects involving training, sustainable use, and responsible fishing, as well as productive alternatives for conserving marine turtles; Pantanos de Centla, for non-formal environmental education; and Banco Chinchorro, Arrecife Alacranes, and Huatulco for the preparation of the Ramsar informative sheets that will enable them to be inscribed as Ramsar sites.

In the following two years, with the support of organizations, local governments, and other sectors of government, Mexico, through the CONANP, will be taking the necessary steps to inscribe additional sites among the many of international importance existing here, in line with its status as a megadiverse country.





COOPERATION IN NORTH AMERICA

Canada-Mexico-U.S. Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management

Mexico has participated in various cooperation instruments since 1975. In 1996, under the leadership of wildlife agencies in these three countries, the Trilateral Committee was established. This committee joined together the countries of North America in an unprecedented effort to conserve their wildlife and ecosystems. The committee promotes cooperation among wildlife agencies and other entities in the three countries. The Protected Areas Working Table set up in 2001, strengthened the CONANP's participation in areas such as: the sistering of protected areas, training, infrastructure, information, environmental contingencies, the monarch butterfly, and ecotourism.

Due to the success of the U.S. California Condor Recovery Program, its extension to Mexico was suggested, and the condor was reintroduced to its natural range in the sierras of San Pedro Mártir and Juárez in the State of Baja California. The return of the condor to Mexico, coordinated by the National Ecology Institute (INE) with the participation of the CONANP, came to be a reality in the year 2002, crystallizing the major efforts made by numerous institutions towards a common goal and conservation flagship: the California condor.

PROJECTS PROMOTED BY THE COMMISSION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION

In 1993, Canada, the United States, and Mexico signed the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC). This agreement is focused on protecting and improving the environment in North America for the well-being of present and future generations by means of diverse cooperation actions.

Environmental issues of common concern, as well as the solution of environmental conflicts arising from trade relations and the promotion of proper application of environmental legislation were entrusted to the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC). The CONANP has joined in the CEC's working groups that support the



International Affairs Coordinating Unit (UCAI) of the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources in a search for conservation alternatives, including sustainable use of ecosystems and their biodiversity in protected areas and their influence zones.

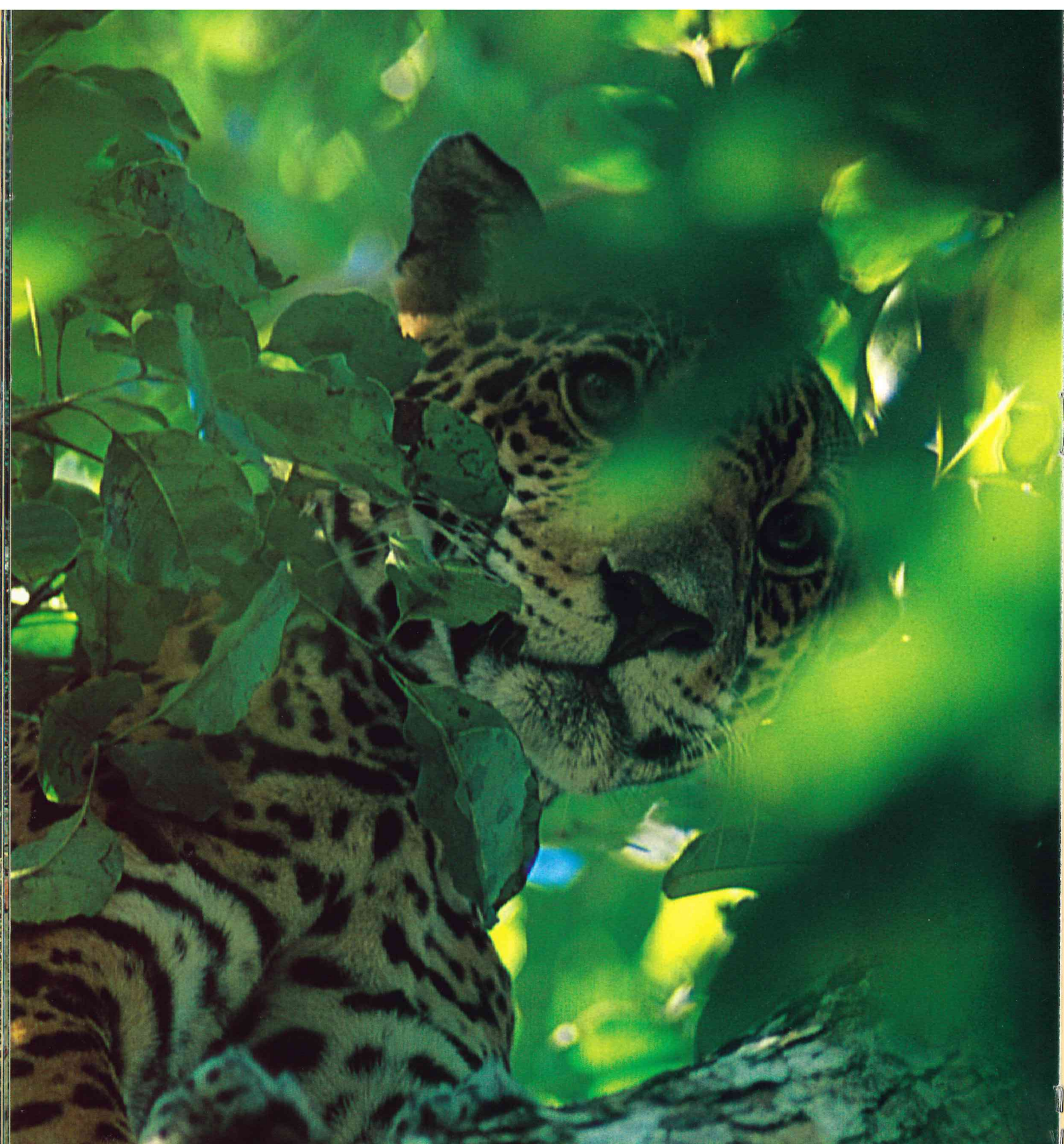
Among the projects geared to establishing sustainable practices and criteria in natural resource trade we find the camedor palm, shade grown coffee, and sustainable tourism. Work has centered

fundamentally around the camedor palm project. This species was selected for the purpose of conducting a basic study that will make it possible to develop a pilot project on this species in the future.

The integration of the Strategic Plan for North American Cooperation in the Conservation of Biodiversity serves as a new landmark in trilateral cooperation for our shared natural wealth. The plan includes the bases for consolidating concrete projects such as the conservation of species of common concern, mapping of marine and estuarine regions, the network of marine protected areas, control of invasive species, and information networks.

NORTH AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVATION INITIATIVE (NABCI)

Launched in 1997 with the support of the CEC and coordinated in Mexico by the National Commission for Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO), this initiative includes different approaches in favor of birds and their habitats. Three national committees and one trilateral committee guide the implementation of this initiative, and have approved the first six attention sites including the natural protected areas of Ría Lagartos, Cozumel, Sian Ka'an, El Triunfo, Mapimí, Marismas Nacionales, Chamela-Cuixmala, and El Cielo. In coordination with other institutions, NABCI works on the preparation of the National Strategy for Bird Monitoring. To this end, an initial group of staff of the CONANP have been trained as leaders for implementing this initiative in an initial package of ten areas in 2004.



MESOAMERICAN BIOLOGICAL CORRIDOR

The Mesoamerican Biological Corridor (MBC) is a cooperative initiative between the Central American countries (Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Belize) and the southern-southeastern states of Mexico (Campeche, Chiapas, Quintana Roo, and Yucatán) to agree upon and carry out, in a joint fashion, a series of activities geared to conserving biological diversity and promoting sustainable human development in their territories. The MBC initiative is inspired by the conviction that long-term conservation of ecosystems and their biodiversity can not be achieved without also working, at the same time, on reducing rural poverty and on strengthening the economic feasibility of the countries in this region.

Between 1993 and 1994, an initiative was developed that culminated in a document proposing the creation of the MBC. This initiative was designed by a consortium of international conservationist organizations called Paseo Pantera. That idea was taken up again by the Central American Commission of Environment and Development (CACED) until it led to a request for financing from donors to implement the MBC.

The MBC is a system of territorial ordering subject to special administration, which offers a series of environmental goods and services to society by providing spaces for social participation for the purpose of promoting investments in conservation and the sustainable utilization of resources.

CACED presented a financial proposal to the Global Environment Facility, or GEF through the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in order to conduct the project "Establishment of a Program for the Consolidation of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor." The project began to operate in April, 2000.

The MBC's regional initiative proposes to achieve

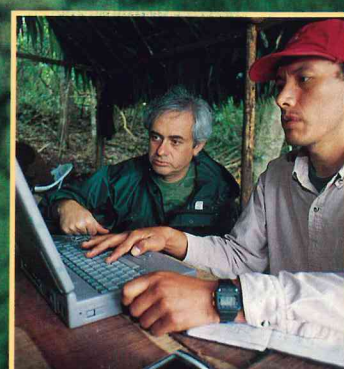


various objectives in the short, medium, and long terms: to improve the quality of life of the population, transforming the MBC into a catalyst for sustainable development and an instrument for decreasing the vulnerability of the region in the face of natural disasters; to foster collaboration among the countries in this region so as to achieve environmental sustainability; to protect one of the richest biodiversities on Earth; to contribute to the global environmental agenda, supplying a

new integral model for facing issues such as deforestation, the protection of forests and watersheds, and climate change; and to establish a new way of understanding environmental protection, integrating conservation with increases in economic competitiveness.

The Mesoamerican Biological Corridor in Mexico (MBCM) is the Mexican component of this regional project, and is concerned with the biological corridors of the southeastern portion of the country. Part of its financing comes from GEF and is administered by CONABIO. The implementation of this project includes four components: participative design and monitoring of corridors with the definition, by the communities themselves, of plans for conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity; the integration of criteria for conserving these corridors in federal, state, and municipal development plans; fostering and supporting sustainable use practices for biodiversity; and coordination and management of the actions included in this project.

The CONANP participates in this initiative in the states of Campeche, Chiapas, Quintana Roo, and Yucatán, where four major biological corridors have been identified: Sian Ka'an-Calakmul, Calakmul-Sian Ka'an, the North of Yucatán, and a corridor in the State of Chiapas that has been divided into two components, Maya-Zoque tropical forest and Southern Sierra Madre.



MESOAMERICAN CORAL REEF SYSTEM

The largest coral reef in the Atlantic and the second largest in the world, the Mesoamerican Coral Reef System (MCRS) stretches for 700 kilometers from Contoy Island in Mexico to the mouth of the Aguán River in Honduras.

It ranges from Mexico southward, along the Belizean and Guatemalan coasts, and includes the coral reef itself and the islands near the coast, up to the Gulf of Honduras, where it extends towards the east along the northern coast of Honduras, including the Bahía Islands.

With more than 600 species of coral and the largest population of manatees, from 300 to 700, in Central America, the region covered by the MCRS is one of the most diverse in the Western Atlantic. In Mexico, the Manatee Sanctuary Ecological Protected Zone is a priority area for the MCRS project.

In the Tulum Declaration, signed in 1997 by the governments of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico, these four MCRS coastal countries and their associates in the region were encouraged to unite for the purpose of developing the Action Plan for Management and Sustainable Use of the MCRS. This plan was developed subsequently with financing from the Global Environment Facility of the World Bank and the support of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

This initiative will enable the four countries to join in efforts aimed at conservation and sustainable development of the coral reef system, as well as to strengthen legislation, national policies, institutional regulations and capabilities in a common objective, that of protecting the unique marine ecosystems of the MCRS and recognizing it as an invaluable biological heritage.

The approved components of the plan are: management of marine protected areas, regional system for environmental information, promotion and sustainable use, public awareness and environmental education, and regional coordination and management of the project.



Located in the State of Quintana Roo and off its coasts, Mexico's natural protected areas in the region of the MCRS are the Sian Ka'an, Banco Chinchorro, and Arrecifes de Sian Ka'an biosphere reserves, and the Arrecifes de Cozumel, Costa Occidental de Isla Mujeres, Punta Cancún, y Punta Nizuc, Arrecifes de Puerto Morelos, Xcalac and Isla Contoy national parks, with a total surface of 1,146,121 hectares.

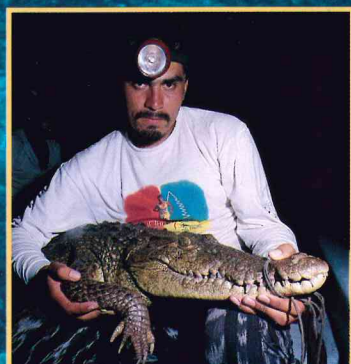
Nearly one hundred people, including the staff, volunteers, students, and social service personnel work in the areas thanks to funds contributed by the Mexican government, NGOs, private trust funds, donors, and fishing cooperatives.

Different actions such as publishing management programs, purchasing equipment, vehicles, and boats, a system for buoys, signals, and geographic information and the establishment of advisory councils are conducted in each of the areas. Moreover, the creation of the National Coral Reef Council is being promoted.

Internationally, Mexico has participated in various meetings and workshops. It took part in the preparatory meetings for the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) and signed an agreement for joint collaboration among the national coordinating offices of the MCRS and the Central American Environment and Development Commission (CCAD).

The National Coral Reef Scientific and Technical Advisory Council, an advisory group of the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources, composed of scientists from different fields relating to conservation, was formalized by a Ministerial Agreement in the year 2000. That same year, the Ecoregional Planning Workshop of the MCRS was held.

The Program for Synoptic Monitoring and the Regional Network of the Project for the MCRS, whose central node is the Center for Geographic Information of the University of Quintana Roo, are the projects that are being conducted in 2003.



PROTECTED AREA NETWORKS

The benefits of the creation of protected area networks have been fundamental for the CONANP in the area of exchange of experiences, knowledge of new conservation schemes, donations to specific projects, and the application of regional policies. Direct contact among the Directors/Managers of each of the countries enhances their work, while there is a central office that functions as a liaison and coordinator.

The principal networks in which the CONANP participates are as follows:

NORTH AMERICAN MARINE PROTECTED AREAS NETWORK

For the conservation of biodiversity in marine and coastal areas, various lines of action have been taken: valuation of the economic benefits of marine protected areas (MPA), mapping of ecosystems, evaluation of the MPAs, integral management, applied research, monitoring, development of a maritime ethic, and protection standards.

In the Triennial Work Program of the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation, it is expected that the strategy in this network will be concluded in 2003. This strategy has been prepared since 1999, with the participation of more than 250 individuals.

While some of the objectives of this network are global in their approach, others are focused on the region of the Pacific coast of North America known as Baja to Bering (B2B). The CONANP has participated in this project for the purpose of identifying priority areas for conservation and establishing a network of marine protected areas in this region of the Pacific.

In 2002, a meeting was held among the directors of national MPAs, covering the topics of exchange and collaboration, and also a general overview of the following participating MPAs: For Mexico, Costa Occidental de Isla Mujeres, Punta Cancún, y Punta Nizuc National Park and the Arrecifes de Cozumel and Bahía de Loreto

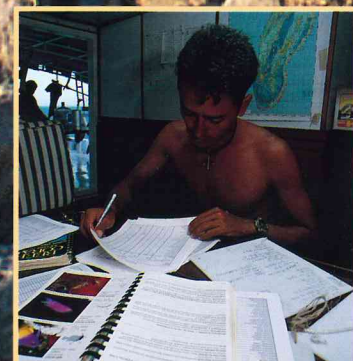
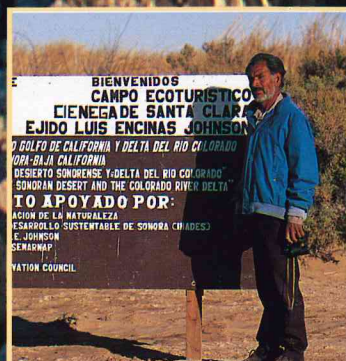
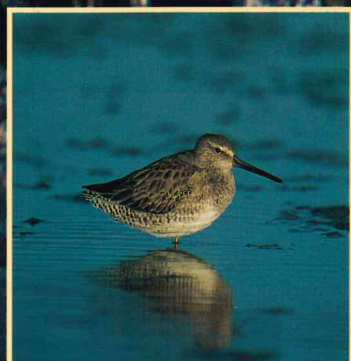


national parks; the Sian Ka'an and Alto Golf de California y Delta del Río Colorado biosphere reserves; and Islas del Golfo de California Flora and Fauna Protected Area. For the United States, the Florida Keys, Flower Garden Banks, Everglades, and Monterey Bay national marine sanctuaries, as well as the Channel Islands, Olympic Coast, and Dry Tortugas national parks. For Canada, the region of Quebec; the Gwaii Haanas and Pacific Rim national park

reserves; the Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park; the Race Rocks or XwaYen Marine Protected Area; and the Eastport Peninsula, an area of interest.

IBERO-AMERICAN NETWORK ON NATIONAL PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS (RIPANAP)

The reason why the managers of protected areas in Ibero-America decided to establish the RIPANAP was the importance that this region represents for the conservation of biodiversity, and its valuable contribution in terms of environmental goods and services. The intention of this network is to improve technical communication among national park systems and other protected areas. The establishment of the network, as a cooperation instrument favoring biodiversity conservation, was agreed upon as of the First Ibero-American Encounter for the Development of Cooperation in National Parks and Other Protected Areas, held in 2000. Its objective is to serve as a technical forum promoting multilateral cooperation in Ibero-America within the framework of the complex role to be played by national parks and protected areas in the twenty-first century, following the principles of conservation, sustainability, territorial integration, social justice, the promotion of peace, and solidary cooperation. Up to 2003, the RIPANAP has worked to create a wide-scope Action Plan allowing for the realization of specific actions. Other activities for this year include: the Third Encounter of the RIPANAP and the meeting for working out a financial strategy for RIPANAP in Spain.

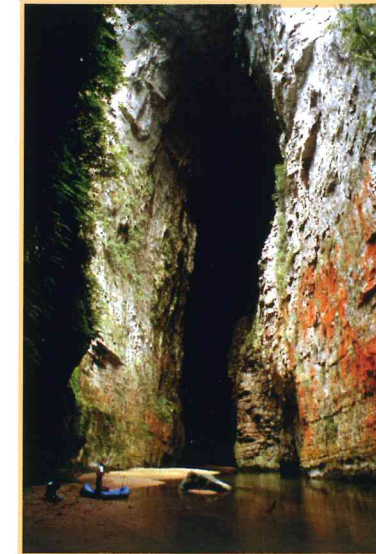


BILATERAL COOPERATION UNITED STATES

In 2002, the 2002-2003 Work Program between the U.S. National Park Service and the CONANP was established. Subsequently, in March, 2003 a work meeting was held for the purpose of defining and initiating activities involving sistering, exchange, training, and the monitoring of natural protected areas (NPA).

- The NPAs of Mexico and national parks of the U.S. that were sistered are as follows:
- Sierra de San Pedro Mártir National Park and Constitución de 1857 National Park with Saguaro National Park
- Sierra de Álamos-Río Cuchujaqui Flora and Fauna Protected Area with the Chiricahua National Monument
- El Pinacate and Gran Desierto de Altar Biosphere Reserve with Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument
- Cañón de Santa Elena Flora and Fauna Protected Area and Maderas del Carmen Flora and Fauna Protected Area with Big Bend National Park
- Sierra de Ajos-Bavispe Flora and Fauna Protected Area with the Chiricahua National Monument, Coronado National Monument, and Fort Bowie Historical Site
- Cuatrociénegas Flora and Fauna Protected Area with the White Sands National Monument
- El Chico National Park with the Coronado National Monument
- Lagunas de Chacahua National Park with the Padre Island National Seashore
- El Cielo State Biosphere Reserve with the Padre Island National Seashore

In 1993, Mexico joined the Sister Forests International Program of the U.S. Forest Service, with training opportunities to enhance staff capabilities. The relationship has been very productive in terms of training, studies, exchange of experts, and donation of equipment, as well as the issues of forest fire prevention and management,



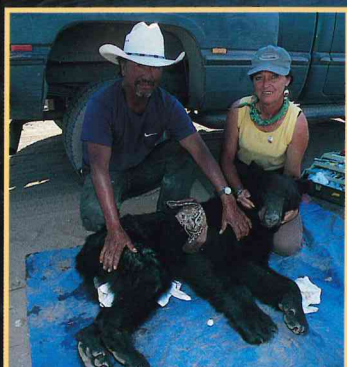
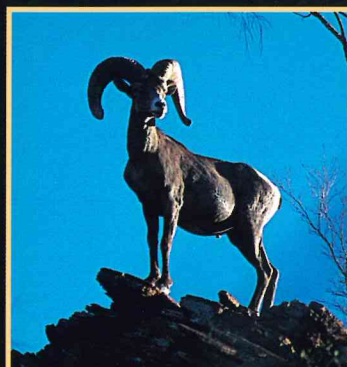
studies on the role of fire in ecosystems, the integral management of watersheds, and the restoration of sites affected by fire.

The spheres of cooperation between the SEMARNAT and the U.S. Department of Agriculture were detailed in a Memorandum of Understanding for Environmental Cooperation signed in July, 2003. The following issues are of interest to the CONANP: sustainable rural development projects,

integrated watershed management, forest fires, forest management and conservation, soil restoration and conservation, and the sistering of NPAs and forest reserves, among others. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has had a long history of cooperation with Mexico in the sphere of protected areas. Among the projects approved for 2002 to be conducted in NPAs are the following: biodiversity conservation in the Mariposa Monarca Biosphere Reserve; proposal for a reserve of the Islands of the Pacific (Islas del Golfo de California); conservation of marine diversity of the Gulf of California in the Bahía de Loreto National Park; and ecosystem management and monitoring in Quintana Roo. In 2003, the following were approved: the project for strengthening supervision at the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve; a training program in sustainable management of natural resources; and a monitoring program for the Sierra de los Ajos-Bavispe Flora and Fauna Protected Area.

A close relationship has been established for joint work in the NPAs on the U.S.-Mexican border, such as between the Alto Golfo de California y Delta del Río Colorado Biosphere Reserve and the Imperial National Wildlife Refuge.

The CONANP has participated in several workshops and work meetings organized by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in order to collaborate in defining their Strategic Cooperation Program for the next five years in the fields of biodiversity conservation, water, energy, and climate change. The projects will be selected on the basis of priority watersheds and the existence of NPAs.



BILATERAL COOPERATION UNITED KINGDOM, JAPAN, GERMANY, AND CUBA

UNITED KINGDOM

In 1999, an agreement was reached with the British Department for International Development (DFID) regarding a project entitled "Strengthening of Institutional Capabilities, Monitoring, and Evaluation." One of the lines of this project was a study structuring the bases for establishing a deconcentrated administrative agency named National Commission of Natural Protected Areas, which was founded in June, 2000. Other activities were to develop a participative monitoring and evaluation system that would strengthen, foster, and generate the necessary capabilities so that the regional and community actors participating in the Regional Sustainable Development Programs can have technical and methodological instruments in order to take part in evaluation and feedback of planning processes. The participating regions were Calakmul, Manantlán, and the southern part of the State of Sonora.

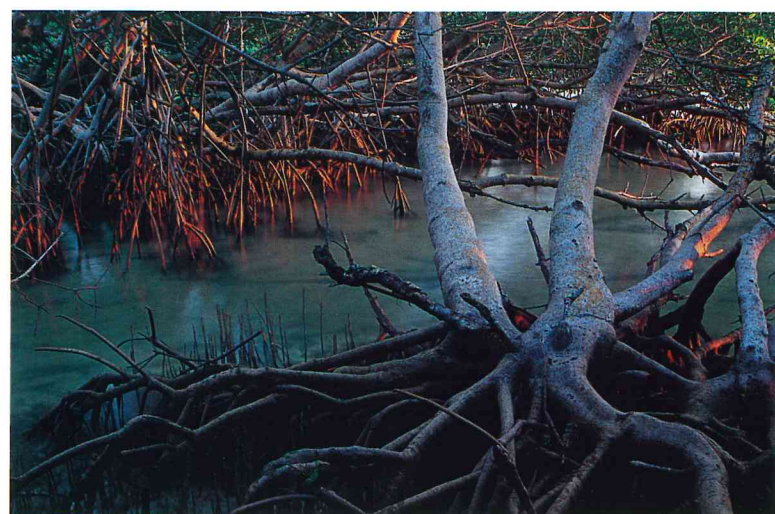
JAPAN

In 2002, a cooperation agreement was signed between the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the CONANP for the project "Conservation of Wetlands on the Yucatán Peninsula." The project began in March, 2003. Its main objective is to improve the conservation of wetlands in the Ría Celestún Biosphere Reserve.

The Japanese will contribute with experts, the necessary equipment, training, and part of the implementation costs. The CONANP will provide the infrastructure and staff for project implementation. Some of the activities planned are:



- To conduct basic research
- To set up an information system aimed at promoting the digitalization of existing data, to have a data analysis system, and to make it available to users
- To achieve an adequate monitoring system, to do research into monitoring methods applied in other



NPAs, to prepare a monitoring plan, and to improve the quality of monitoring

- To conduct a suitable management program for the Ría Celestún Biosphere Reserve
- To establish measures for strengthening the system for regulating illegal activities
- To promote the sustainable use of natural resources
- To provide technical assistance in order to combat negative impacts to the environment
- To implement environmental education programs in local communities and the tourist industry

GERMANY

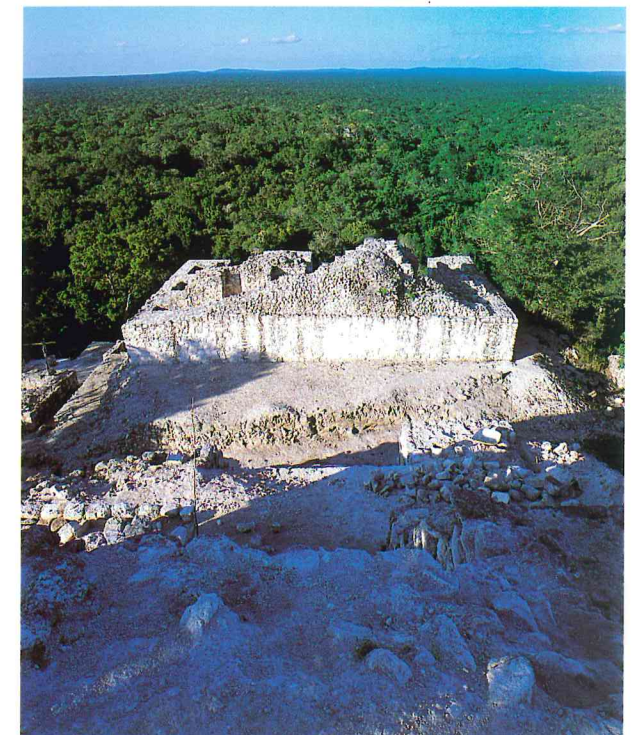
Mexico and Germany have worked together to define a strategy for bilateral cooperation in the priority areas of the environment and the protection of natural resources. The main objective is to contribute towards the improvement of Mexico's environmental situation, attending to priority issues for bilateral cooperation. Within the cooperation strategy between Mexico and Germany, the Conanp will include the project "Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and Development in the Mexican Southeast", called PROSURESTE. This project will be carried out in the La Sepultura, Calakmul, and Sian Ka'an biosphere reserves and will last for twelve years. The main aim of the project is for the population in selected natural protected areas and their influence zones to be able to manage natural resources in a sustainable way and to improve their living conditions.

This project will help regional programs like the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor.

CUBA

The natural protected areas which, by means of sistering, initiated cooperation actions between Mexico and Cuba were: on the part of Mexico, Isla Contoy National Park and the Sian Ka'an, Montes Azules, Ría Lagartos, and Sierra de Manantlán biosphere reserves; for Cuba, the Caguanes and Ciénaga de Zapata national parks and the Guanahacabibes, Cuchillas del Toa, and Sierra del Rosario biosphere reserves.

Aside from reaffirming interest in continuing to work in protected areas, there are plans to sister the Banco Chinchorro Biosphere Reserve in Mexico with the Los Caimanes National Park and Jardines de la Reina area in Cuba.



The principal lines of cooperation are as follows:

- Specific cooperation schemes among protected areas
- Planning and management of protected areas
- Public use
- Alternate sources of funding
- Monitoring and supervision in management
- Protection of natural resources
- Participatory management
- Monitoring of species and ecosystems
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- Restoration of ecosystems
- Environmental training and education
- Fishing management



BILATERAL COOPERATION GUATEMALA AND SPAIN

GUATEMALA

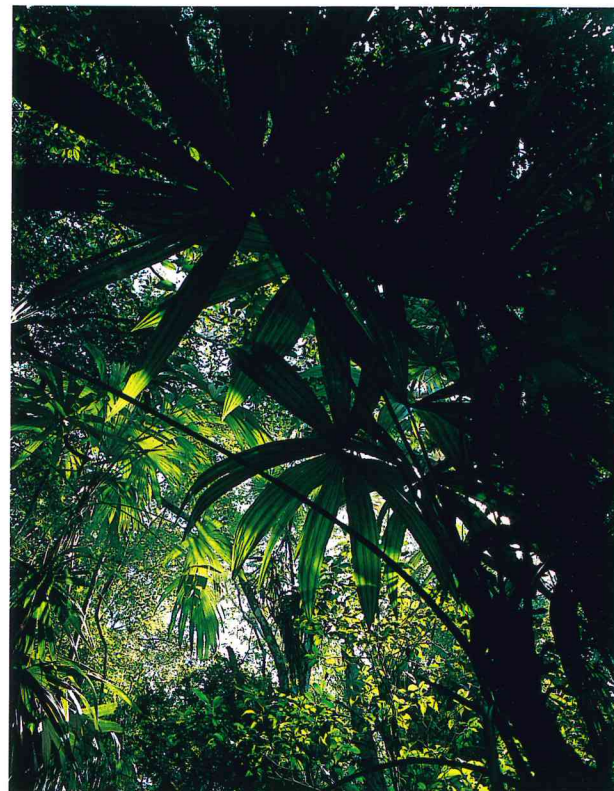
In May, 2002, the Mexican and Guatemalan Ministries of the Environment and Natural Resources agreed, within the framework of their interinstitutional program, to establish a bilateral working group in the sphere of environment and natural resources, which was formed in June, 2003. In preparation for that group, in December, 2002 the Bilateral Cooperation Workshop was held between Guatemala's National Council for Protected Areas and Mexico's CONANP, for the purpose of defining protected areas to be sistered between Mexico and Guatemala. At the June meeting, the sistering agreement was established, as well as actions for the 2003 Work Program between these two institutions.

The areas in Mexico which are sistered with Guatemalan ones are:

- La Encrucijada Biosphere Reserve with Laguna del Tigre National Park
- Calakmul Biosphere Reserve with Mirador Río Azul National Park, Dos Lagunas Protected Biotope, and Multiple-Use Zone of the Selva Maya Biosphere Reserve
- Naha and Metzabok flora and fauna protected areas, Bonampak and Yaxchilán natural monuments, and Montes Azules and Lacan-Tún biosphere reserves with the Sierra Lacandón National Park

These areas share species and ecosystems, as well as common problems. Some of the areas are contiguous. The cooperation themes for this sistering are as follows:

- Conservation management
- Research and monitoring
- Social development



- Exchange and training
- Financing and fund-raising
- Inspection and supervision
- Legal aspects

SPAIN

In 1999, the Mexican Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources signed an agreement with the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, from which arose the Integral Project for Sustainable Development in El Vizcaíno Biosphere Reserve. The general objectives of this project are: conservation of the natural resources of El Vizcaíno, the presentation of alternatives for sustainable use of natural resources for the population in this zone, and an increase in social participation in the reserve.

In accordance with a modified agreement signed in July, 2001, the project came to be included within a sustainable development strategy in collaboration with the Public Participation and Transparency Unit of SEMARNAT, based on the plans and programs existing in this regard, both at the federal, state, and municipal levels. Thus, the intention was for the lines of action proposed by the Executive Unit of the project to be interconnected and for each of them to reflect the principles of development, sustainability, and gender equity. These lines of action were:

- Sustainable tourism, whose main aims are training for attending to tourists and the promotion of eco-tourism activities, as well as support for the construction of the necessary infrastructure for the development of this activity and the ordering of sustainable tourism in selected zones
- Sustainable use and management of natural resources, whose main objectives are the sustainable use of water resources, the introduction of tech-

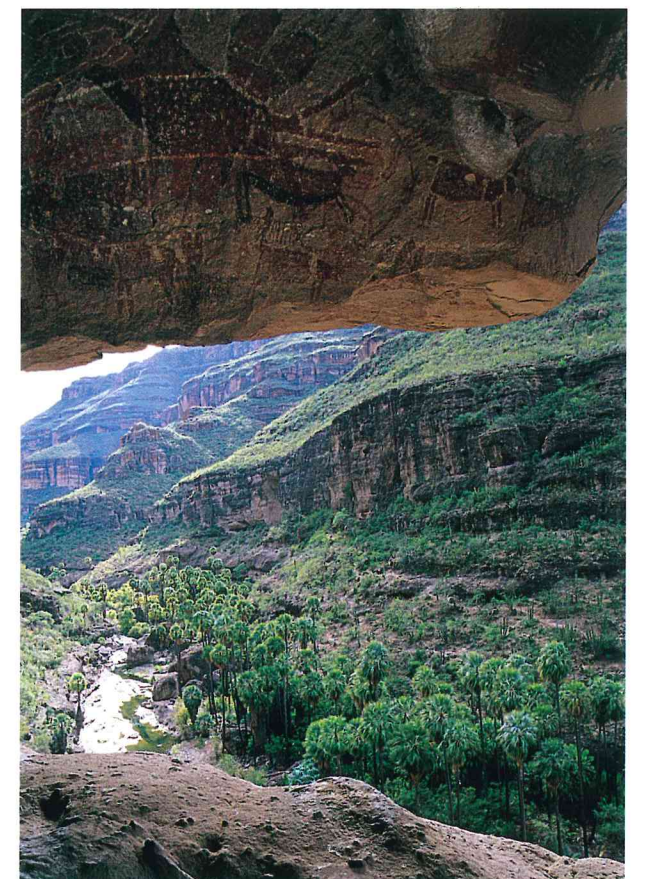
niques for water-saving alternate crops and organic farming, as well as offering sustainable alternatives for goat raising.

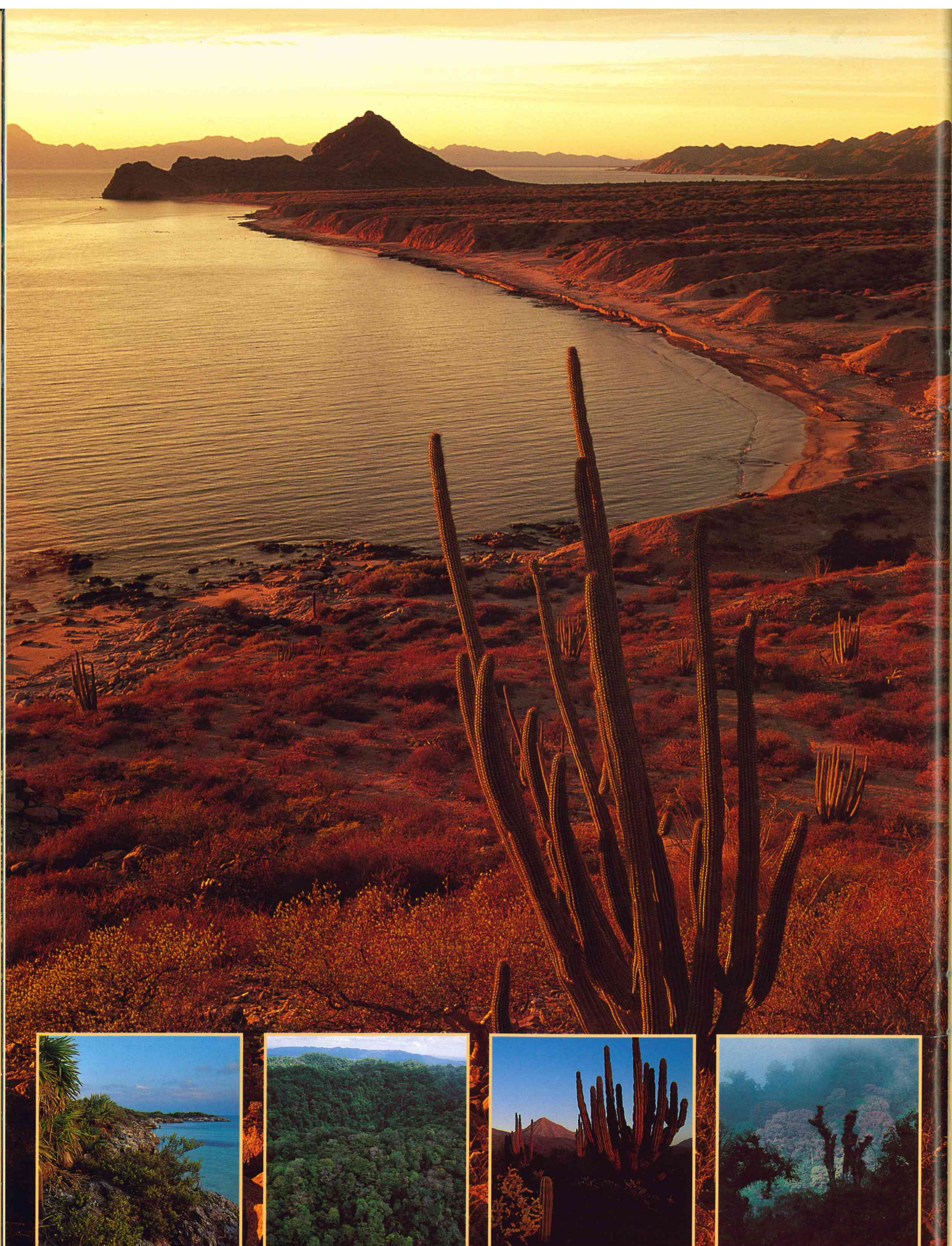
- Solid waste management, whose aim is to promote the participation of the different actors who produce waste and reduce the environmental impact caused by waste
- Promotion of gender equity, whose main aim is to contribute to the sustainable development of the El Vizcaíno Biosphere Reserve by promoting equality of opportunities between men and women
- Integral dissemination and communication strategy, whose main objective is to educate, raise the awareness of, and train the population so that it can participate in the sustainable use of resources, while at the same time promoting coordinated actions by the institutions involved in sustainable development schemes

This cooperation project concluded in May, 2003.

OTHER AGREEMENTS

At present, cooperation instruments in the area of NPAs are being formalized with other countries such as Brazil, Costa Rica, Belize, and Australia.





GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

CONSOLIDATION OF THE SINAP

In 1992, the Global Environmental Facility of the World Bank granted 25 million dollars to support Mexico's natural protected areas. The remainder of these funds was used to set up, in 1997, the Fund for Natural Protected Areas (FANP) in the Mexican Fund for Nature Conservation (FMCN) to support the National System of Natural Protected Areas (SINAP) in 1998.

The areas included within SINAP-1 were: Isla Contoy National Park, Islas del Golfo de California Flora and Fauna Protected Area, and the following biosphere reserves: Calakmul, El Triunfo, Sierra de Manantlán, Mariposa Monarca, Montes Azules, Ría Lagartos, Sian Ka'an, and El Vizcaíno.

The Program for Natural Protected Areas is responsible for managing and applying the interests generated by the FANP, as well as obtaining additional financing. The CONANP is responsible for managing natural protected areas and is in charge of project execution, while the World Bank acts as an executive agency for the monies donated.

In 2002, a second donation was approved, this time for 22.5 million dollars as endowment funds within the SINAP-2 program for another 12 natural protected areas: the Cuatrociénegas and Sierra de Álamos-Río Cuchujaqui flora and fauna protected areas and the Corredor Biológico Chichinautzin, which includes the Lagunas de Zempoala and El Tepozteco national parks and the Tehuacán-Cuicatlán, Alto Golfo de California y Delta del Río Colorado, La Encrucijada, Pantanos de Centla, Banco Chichorro, La Sepultura, El Pinacate y Gran Desierto de Altar, and Sierra La Laguna biosphere reserves.

INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF ECOSYSTEMS IN THREE PRIORITY ECOREGIONS

The purpose of this cooperation project is to reinforce work in the areas of conservation and sustainable development in priority regions in Mexico. In an initial stage, the GEF supported this project with funds for conduct-



ing exploratory studies. Subsequently, a second sum was approved in order to carry out thematic studies on biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, which were the basis for the project "Integrated Management of Ecosystems in Three Priority Ecoregions (MIE)," as a proposal for joint investment between the GEF and the Mexican government. At the start of this project, the regions involved were: Chi-

nantla in the State of Oaxaca and Montaña de Guerrero and Los Tuxtlas in the State of Veracruz. The total investment was 76.9 million dollars, of which 15.3 million were from the GEF.

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

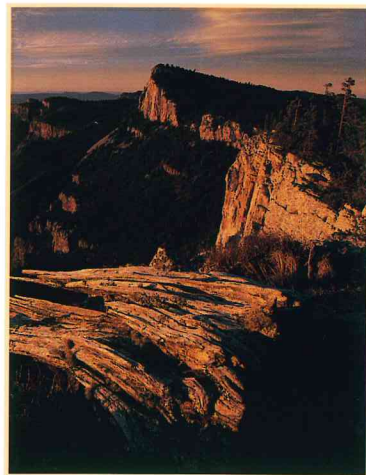
AT THE SIERRA GORDA BIOSPHERE RESERVE

The Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve is subject to several threats due to inefficient productive activities and pollution. The project for conserving this reserve was included in the MIE in 2002, with a total investment of 19.7 million dollars, of which the GEF will donate 6.7 million and there will be joint financing by the Mexican government and the Sierra Gorda Ecological Group, an NGO. This project will contribute to reducing threats to biodiversity by means of alternate management models that promote shared responsibility between an NGO and the CONANP.

FUND FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE MONARCH BUTTERFLY

In 1999, a proposal was made to widen the decree and change the management category of the Mariposa Monarca Biosphere Reserve. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Mexican Fund for Nature Conservation applied for 6 million dollars to establish, in the year 2000, the Fund for the Conservation of the Monarch Butterfly. The interests earned by these funds are contributed to a trusteeship that issues annual payments to owners who have not utilized their permission for forest use and to those who participate in conservation activities in the reserve.

DIRECTORY OF NATURAL AREAS WITH INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION



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