



2024 Project Update

The Pontal Wildlife Corridors Project

Restoring the Atlantic Forest to bring back wildlife

Project management and M&E team



Main implementing partner:
Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológicas (IPÊ)



Dr Natalia Guerin
Brazil & Argentina Country Manager



Laury Cullen
Project and Research Director at IPÊ



Pontal do Paranapanema
Region, State of São Paulo, Brazil
Wildlife Corridors



Timeline:
2014 - 2025



Targeted ecosystem: **Atlantic Forest**
Biodiversity hotspot: **Atlantic Forest hotspot**

See the full team at:

www.weforest.org/about-us/#our-team

Project story

No other large tropical forest ecosystem has suffered as much loss as the Atlantic Forest, and it is now one of the most threatened biomes in the world. The remaining forest has been reduced to small, isolated small fragments, often separated by vast expanses of deforested land. As a consequence, many plant and animal species in this biodiversity hotspot are classed as endangered, vulnerable or near threatened.

Through activities to restore native species in this biodiversity hotspot, forest fragments will be reconnected, facilitating the movement of wildlife and creating larger habitats that can support an increased animal population. The animals, in turn, will disperse fruit seeds on the soil, creating ideal conditions for natural regeneration of the forest to take place.

Key challenges in the landscape

Reduced forest cover due to a long history of agricultural conversion resulting in a highly fragmented landscape.

High costs for forest restoration to take place within private land.

Our integrated approach

Improve forest governance and stewardship through:

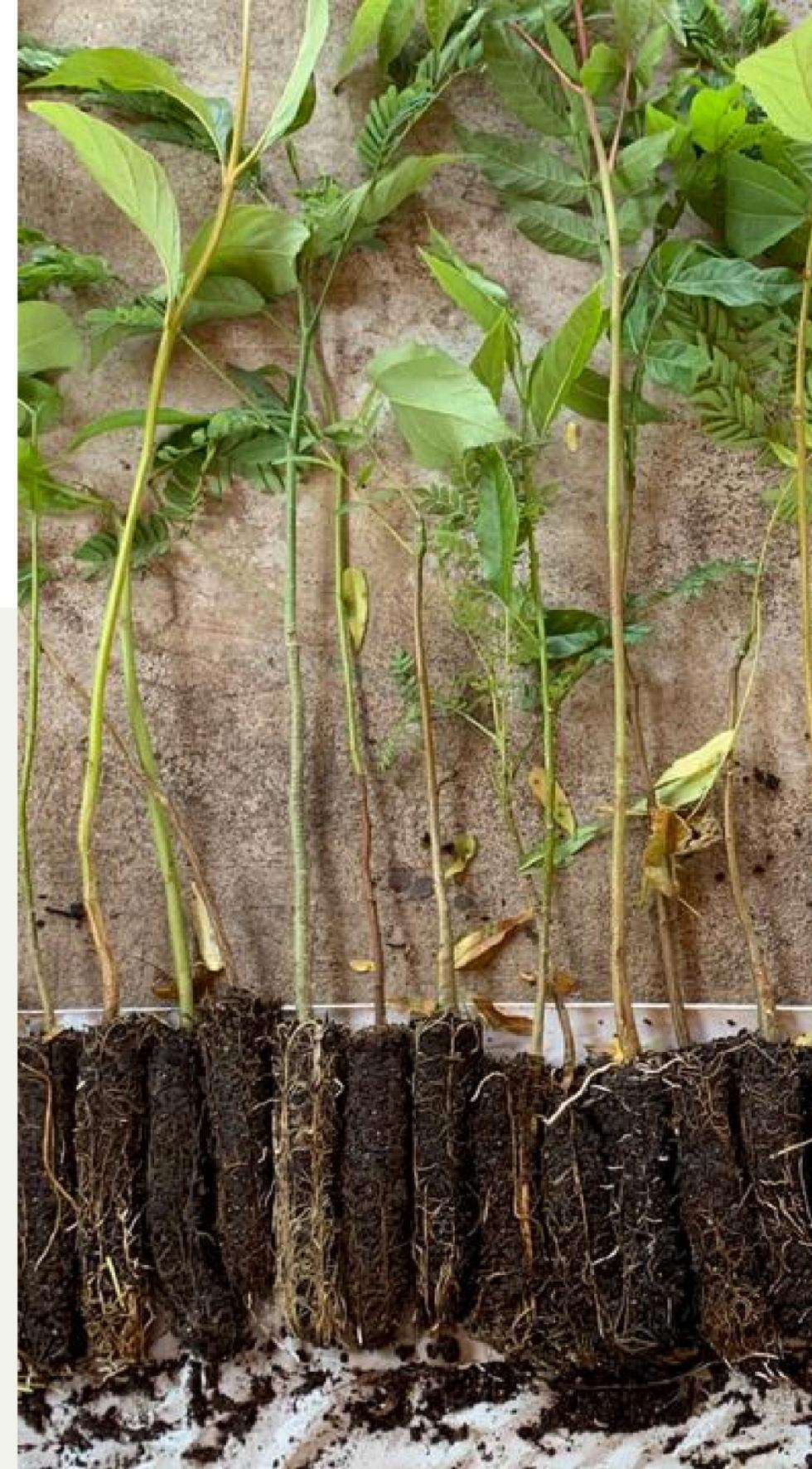
- Enabling and enhancing compliance with the Brazilian Forest Code (Native Vegetation Protection Law).

Conserve and restore the forest through:

- Ecological restoration of degraded land by Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR) and full planting.

Strengthen forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviors through:

- Promoting the restoration supply chain by supporting community nurseries and partnering with local companies engaged in restoration activities.



A long-term vision



Climate

The restoration of the landscape will contribute to both climate mitigation and adaptation: increasing tree cover to sequester carbon while improving water retention and soil stability to help communities adapt to droughts and erratic weather.



Nature

Restoring the project area will protect biodiversity and secure critical ecosystem services like water and soil health. Improved land management will enhance habitat resilience, ensuring the forest continues to sustain both people and wildlife.



People

Strengthened governance and forest-friendly livelihoods will ensure communities see the forest as an asset: one that provides resources while being sustainably managed. By improving forest-friendly supply chains in the landscape, the project reduces deforestation-driven income reliance while securing long-term economic stability.



Outcomes

By integrating these interventions, the project will:

- **Restore** forest corridors to support and sustain wildlife and to protect soil and water resources, while promoting the restoration value chain in the landscape.
- The **long-term** impact of our work will benefit people, nature and climate.

Theory of Change

Existing problems in the landscape

 **Reduced forest cover**

 **Habitat fragmentation**

 **Forest fires**

 **Low environmental compliance**

Risks

 Biodiversity loss

 Climate change

 Decline in ecosystem services

WeForest Interventions

Project outcomes

Long term impact

Improved forest governance and stewardship

 Community engagement on environmental legislation compliance

→

Increased compliance of private properties with the forest code in the project landscape.

Restoring and conserving at-risk forests

 Assisted Natural Regeneration

 Tree planting and Enrichment planting

→

Increased forest cover across new wildlife corridors, connecting forest fragments in the landscape.

Introducing forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviours

 Supporting local community nurseries and restoration companies

→

A strengthened restoration supply chain, contributing to an improved regional forest-based economy.

Climate



Stored and sequestered carbon

Nature



Thriving biodiversity and intact ecosystems

People



Sustainable and resilient communities



2024 Major Achievements

2024 marks the first time a jaguar has been recorded in one of the restoration polygons.

A third-party evaluation conducted in 2024 assessed the partnership's impact, highlighting the Wildlife Corridors project as a benchmark for integrated conservation, and the key achievements included:

Biodiversity and Development Synergy:

Successfully merged ecological restoration with community development, improving both forest connectivity and local livelihoods.

Multi-Stakeholder Model:

Engaged farmers, NGOs, and government actors to create jobs and enhance climate resilience.

Ecological Gains:

Restored critical habitat corridors despite challenges like seedling mortality and landscape fragmentation.



Case study

Restoration site at Estrela Farm: Two-year-old native vegetation growing (left) contrasts with poorly managed pasture land along an unprotected riparian zone (right). This side-by-side view captures both the region's 'business-as-usual' degradation and the transformative impact of large-scale ecological corridors on agricultural landscapes.

2024 activity update



Improved forest governance and stewardship

- **429 participants** attended quarterly “Sexta ConsCIÊNCIA” events, held to inform, educate, engage and empower the project communities.



Restoring and conserving at-risk forests

- **15 new hectares** of tree planting.
- **29,400 seedlings** of 212 native tree species were planted in restoration areas.
- **482 hectares** planted since 2020 underwent maintenance, including grass control and replanting.



Introducing forest-friendly livelihoods

- **13 nurseries** local community-based nurseries and 15 local rural enterprises contributed to the forest restoration economy.
- **Around 1.7 million USD** of local income was generated from restoration service contracts with local associations across the whole project area.
- **Around 385,000 USD** of local income was generated from production agreements with local associations and families leading the nursery operations across the whole project area.
- **169 professionals** and community members attended three training courses in forest conservation and related themes.

The Wildmon team concluded their **3-year** Ecoacoustic Biodiversity Monitoring research in the project area. Their main findings included:

- **219 species** in 120 survey sites, including 205 bird species, 9 amphibians, 3 mammals, and 2 insects across the three survey years.
- **Three of the detected species**, 1 mammal and 2 birds, are endemic to Brazil. The presence of the Endangered black lion tamarin and 6 Near Threatened species (IUCN Red List; bare-throated bellbird, solitary tinamou, turquoise-fronted amazon, rusty-marginated guan, ornate-hawk eagle, and black-horned capuchin) underscores the conservation importance of the area and the need for its protection.
- **Soundscape** analyses revealed significant shifts in acoustic composition and increased acoustic space use (ASU) in restored areas, suggesting a positive trajectory toward ecological recovery. Over time, the soundscapes of restoration sites became more similar to those of native forests, indicating that restoration areas are progressively supporting richer and more complex biological communities.

Progress tracker

See end of report for our progress tracking methodology



Anticipated CO2 sequestered in the future from project activities



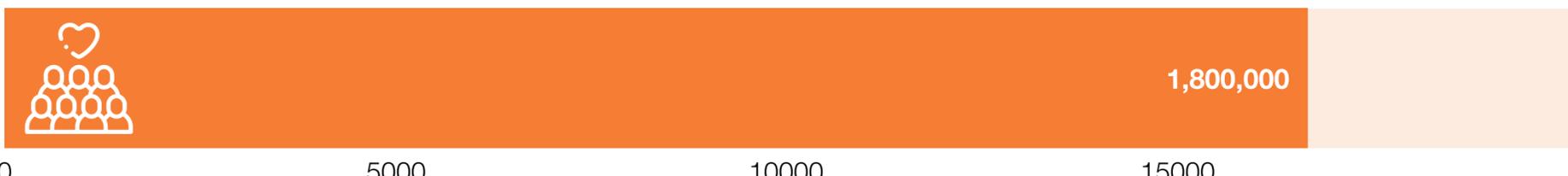
Hectares planted, conserved and restored



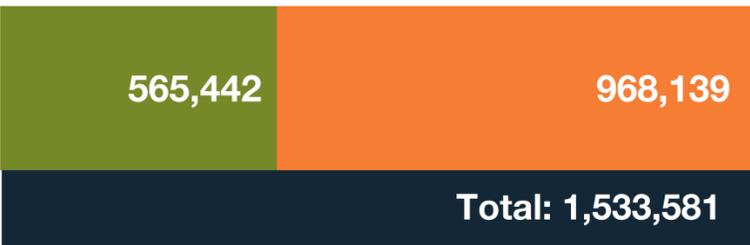
Number of trees conserved and restored



Number of households positively impacted



Trees planted to date



Woody species in project to date



■ For forest conservation and restoration ■ For forest-friendly livelihoods



Case study

Marcela and her team at work in Mata Nativa Nursery. The nursery has a production capacity of 700,000 seedlings annually and provides full-time employment for six people. For Marcela's family, it has become their primary source of income while contributing to regional reforestation efforts.



Case study

IPÊ's team preparing paper tubes for seedlings using specialized machinery. With this efficient system, they can produce over 12,000 substrate-filled paper tubes—complete with fertilizer—in just three hours. Paper tubes boost forest restoration by providing biodegradable, nutrient-rich containers. Their eco-friendly design eliminates plastic waste and simplifies planting, making them ideal for large-scale reforestation.

! 2024 Challenges

To enhance restoration outcomes, IPÊ expanded its local team to intensify maintenance efforts, including grass control and seedling replacement for up to five years post-planting—addressing survival rate challenges in early-stage restoration.

Uniting diverse stakeholders demanded skilled mediation to align interests and prevent conflicts. To tackle this, IPÊ has expanded its team and hired specialists to address these challenges.

Standardizing production and scaling up high-quality seedling supply was a major challenge in 2024. To address this, IPÊ developed tailored contracts with nurseries and planting partners—aligning with their specific capacities while providing targeted capacity-building and financial support to ensure long-term viability. Additionally, a shift to sustainable practices, such as using “ecopots”, eco-friendly seedling containers, improved efficiency, enabling high-volume production of native species seedlings.

Since 2021, IPÊ's carbon project (conducted independently from WeForest) has driven stricter governance, advanced monitoring, and greater transparency—addressing prior gaps in inconsistent tracking and oversight. Before this initiative, monitoring systems were insufficient, leading to unreliable data and accountability issues. These reforms have now elevated reporting standards, ensuring robust, verifiable results.

>> Looking ahead to 2025

In 2025, the WeForest-IPÊ partnership marks its 10th anniversary. Following completion of the project's impact assessment, both organizations will reevaluate next steps for collaboration.

IPÊ has now established a certified carbon project with larger-scale objectives, having successfully built both its internal capacity and the required restoration supply chain in Pontal region. This achievement demonstrates WeForest has fulfilled its role in strengthening IPÊ's institutional development.

Throughout 2025, we will release videos showcasing the partnership's significant impacts. Additionally, a final 5-hectare planting under this partnership will complete this decade-long cycle of collaboration.

Supporters & Partners

2024 project partners

Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológica (IPÊ) defined the project strategy, developed partnerships, negotiated with landowners, and implemented conservation and restoration activities.

Community-based nurseries and companies provided restoration services related to planting and maintenance activities.

Wildmon conducted a three year bioacoustic monitoring in the project area.

With thanks to our supporters in 2024, including:



Contact us

Visit www.weforest.org or for more information or email: contact@weforest.org

How we measure and forecast our impact

Baseline

For the sake of simplicity, the progress bars in this report show a baseline of zero. This represents the concept that the area covered by WeForest forest and landscape restoration (FLR) activities was zero; thus the associated trees conserved and restored, carbon stored and households impacted through WeForest intervention was also zero.

In reality, when a WeForest project begins, our Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning team undertakes a detailed survey on forest structure and regeneration through establishing Permanent Monitoring Plots, and conducts an extensive questionnaire on livelihoods, to establish meaningful baseline values. You can read more about our full MEL activities [here](#).

Hectares planted, conserved and restored

Progress up to 2024

Verifiable cumulative total since the project began of all mapped intervention sites, also known as polygons, of:

- 1) Conservation forest areas, such as forest reserves
- 2) Restoration forest areas, such as Assisted Natural Regeneration and planting areas
- 3) Agroforestry areas on community/farm land

End of Project Target

Target number based on the potential area of land able to be conserved, restored and planted in the project area under the known and expected conditions at project start. However, it is subject to change based on unforeseen opportunities or challenges that may arise.

Anticipated tons of CO2 to be sequestered through project activities

Progress up to 2024

Extrapolated tons of CO2 calculated from the measured areas of different types of land use (for example forest or agroforestry) under “Hectares of forest planted, conserved and restored” to date, and the average amount of projected long-term CO2 per hectare provided from literature review for each land use type in their locations. Although totalled, please note the methodology for calculating these CO2 projections are specific to land-use type, and span a period corresponding to the expected time taken for the trees to reach maturity, which varies between locations.

End of Project Target

As above, but using the target (and not current) number of hectares planted, restored and conserved and their respective area totals as a parameter for calculations. As this parameter is subject to change, the associated CO2 target may also change over time.



Number of trees conserved and restored*

Progress up to 2024

Extrapolated number of trees calculated from the measured areas of different land use types (for example conservation areas, restoration areas or agroforestry) under “Hectares planted, conserved and restored” to date, and the average tree densities observed for each land-use type when mature, known through our MEL activities or scientific literature.

End of Project Target

As above, but using the target (and not current) number of “Hectares of forest planted, restored and conserved” and their respective area totals as a parameter for calculations. As this parameter is subject to change, the associated trees conserved and restored target may also change over time.

*Estimations based on average numbers per hectare

Trees planted to date (2024)

Total

Actual counted number of planted seedlings and saplings of woody (tree and shrub) species in the project to date.

Trees planted for forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviors

Only woody species directly planted for livelihood improvement. This also includes woody fruit, fodder & timber trees, and woody cash crops, exclusively planted on community or farm land.

Trees planted for forest conservation and restoration

Only woody species that were directly planted for ecological reasons, aiding restoration of the natural forest ecosystem.

Woody species in project to date (2024)

Total

Actual observed number of woody (tree and shrub) species:

- Regenerating in the conservation/restoration zones (i.e. in the Permanent Monitoring Plots) and
- Planted, either for restoration or livelihood improvement
- Growing as mature trees in the conservation/restoration zones (i.e. in the permanent monitoring plots).
- Please note, these numbers are not exhaustive and the true species richness is likely to be higher.

Tree species for forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviors

Only woody species directly planted for livelihood improvement. This also includes woody fruit, fodder and timber trees, and woody cash crops, exclusively planted on community or farm land.

Tree species for forest conservation and restoration

The woody species observed in the project area that are not used for livelihood improvement purposes. Where species are used for both livelihood improvement and restoration (which is sometimes the case, as we use native species as much as possible), they have been counted under ‘forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviors’.

Terminology

Conservation

Where native forest canopy cover is still intact, we focus on protecting the forest from any threats and disturbances, such as overgrazing, unsustainable wood extraction and fire.

Restoration

Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR): Where there is reduced forest cover but high potential for natural regeneration, we aim to accelerate natural recovery, typically through preventing soil degradation, reducing competition with weeds, and protecting young trees.

Tree planting

Where there is reduced forest cover and little regeneration potential, we actively plant native trees at a density that corresponds with the regeneration potential.

Agroforestry and tree crops

Where agricultural landscapes exist, WeForest promotes the planting of trees for livelihood improvement. These trees can be used either for direct consumption or sale (fruits, timber, fuelwood) or to support other crops or livestock (agroforestry). Native tree species are prioritized but, where necessary, non-native species may be used.

Mammal and bird species sighted to date

Numbers are included where we have a good level of biological monitoring, for example using camera traps or audio devices - please note that numbers are unlikely to capture the full species richness of the project area and that the absence of reporting does not imply the absence of species.

Other notes

WeForest works in close cooperation with local partner organisations, institutions, community-based organizations and local people. Therefore, our impact can never be fully separated from the work of our partners. WeForest acknowledges that the presented impact numbers cannot be solely attributed to our work, but is also supported through the hard work contributed by all our local partners.