



Los Guacharos National Park, Colombia.

## Living Amazon Initiative

# PROTECTED AREAS AND INDIGENOUS TERRITORIES

**Spaces for conserving biological and cultural diversity and for contributing to reduction of poverty and of social exclusion**

**C**overing an area of 6.7 million km<sup>2</sup> (larger than Europe), the Amazon Biome is both complex and fascinating. Not only is it the world's largest tropical forest, but it contains 10% of the planet's known biodiversity and its rivers discharge 15% of the world's freshwater into the Atlantic ocean.

The number of mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles that can be found in the biome is truly impressive, not counting the astonishing diversity of plants and invertebrates. But there is an impressive cultural diversity too. The Amazon is home to over 34.1 million people living in the eight countries that share the Amazon Biome: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela and one overseas territory (French Guiana). Of this total, almost 2.7 million are Amazonian indigenous people (9.2% of the Amazonian population) representing over 350 ethnic groups, 60 of which still live in voluntary isolation.<sup>1</sup>

Over three thousand indigenous territories have been identified within the Amazon Biome. These areas represent 35% of the Amazon region<sup>2</sup>. When protected areas are added to this percentage, 49.4% of the biome is under some type of management and protection.

<sup>1</sup> International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs, IWGIA, and the Institute for the Promotion of Social Studies, IPES – 2012. *Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact*.

<sup>2</sup> Riveros, J.C. et al. *Protected Areas and Indigenous Territories of the Amazon – Five Decades of Change (1960 -2012)*. A WWF Living Amazon Initiative Report related to *The State of the Amazon*. In prep.



## Protected areas and indigenous territories

Protected areas are spaces in which biological diversity, natural resources and often also cultural heritage are conserved.

Today, the term “protected area” covers a number of different categories that range from strict protection to those that allow the sustainable use of resources.

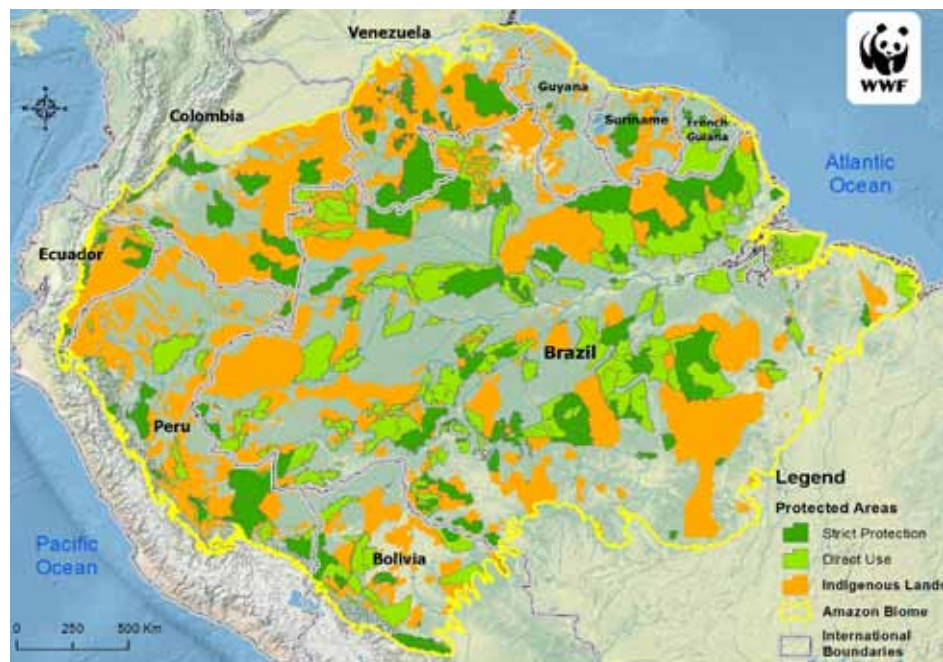
Protected areas maintain representative samples of habitats and ecosystems, preserve the natural and cultural heritage in a dynamic and evolutionary state, and offer opportunities for research, environmental education, recreation and tourism. In addition, they improve the ability of natural ecosystems to adapt to extreme climate phenomena and ensure the provision of fundamental goods and services in the context of climate change. From a socio-economic perspective, protected areas offer work opportunities and means of subsistence to the people who live in and around them, contributing to the alleviation of poverty and to the promotion of fair and equitable participation in the benefits of conservation. They are also spaces in which diverse forms of governance and management are developed.

At the same time, there is increasing evidence of the important role that indigenous territories play in the conservation of biodiversity and protection of critical spaces for the maintenance of ecological processes and provision of ecosystem services. Although the main purpose of these territories is to secure the tenure of the ancestral lands of indigenous peoples and safeguard their cultures, the conservation of the biodiversity in their territories is fundamental for their survival and is strongly tied to their livelihoods and to ensuring their access to the natural resources they depend on.

**INDIGENOUS TERRITORIES ARE THEREFORE IMPORTANT CONSERVATION SPACES FOR BIOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY.**



PROTECTED AREAS  
OFFER WORK  
OPPORTUNITIES  
AND MEANS OF  
SUSTISTENCE  
TO THE PEOPLE  
WHO LIVE IN AND  
AROUND THEM



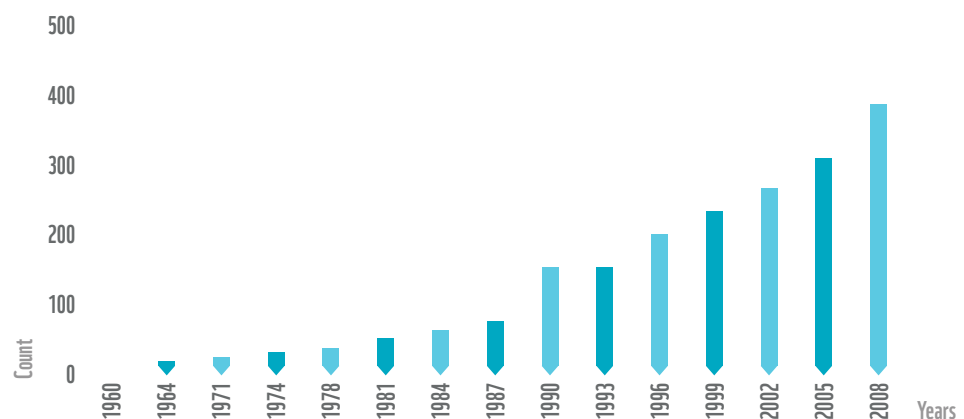
## Amazon Protected Areas: coverage and threats

The first protected area created in the Amazon region was Kaieteur national park established in 1929 in Guyana. Since then, around 400 protected areas have been designated in the region, the vast majority of which were established in the 80s.

CURRENTLY,  
**80**  
MILLION HECTARES  
ARE IN PROTECTED  
AREAS



### Protected areas total number





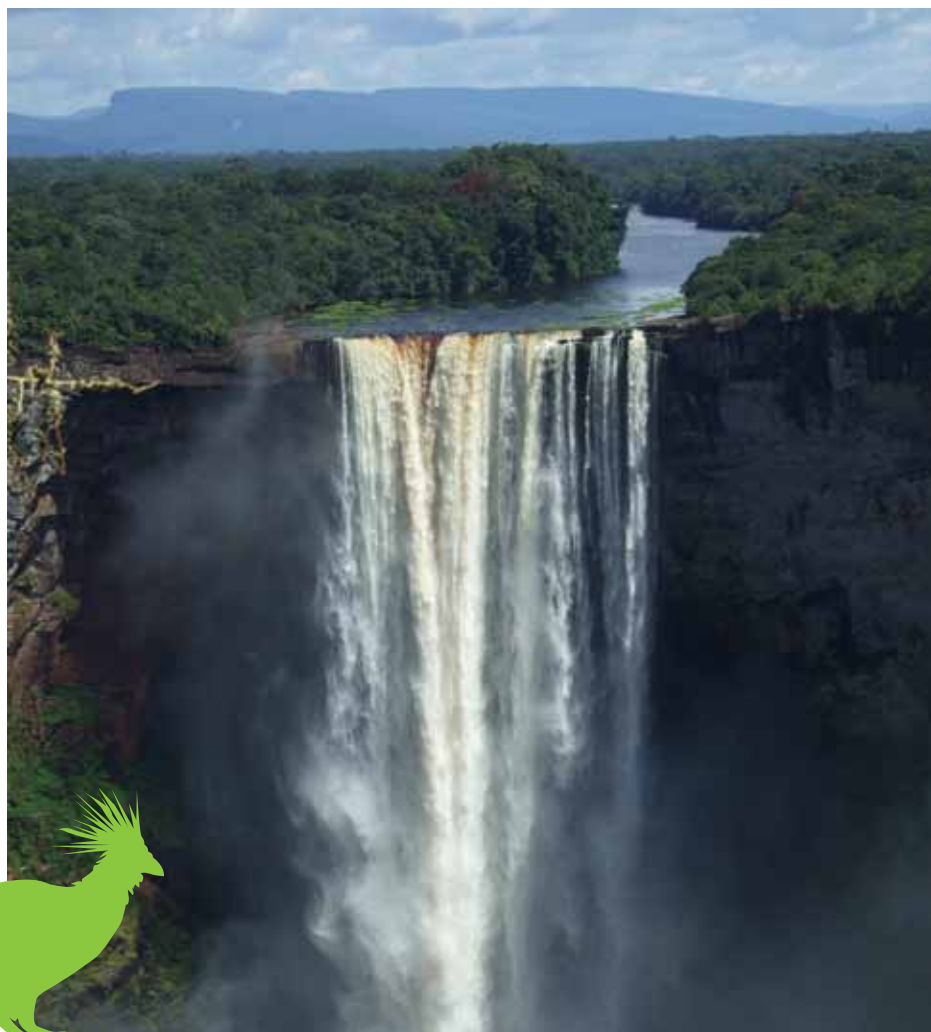


Protected areas do, however, suffer from various threats related to the development of non-sustainable human activities in the region.

The advance of the agricultural frontier by colonizers and, increasingly by large commodity producing agro-businesses has resulted in a significant loss of surface area in the Amazon region. In addition, the expansion of mining and oil activity as well as the construction of large hydropower projects and transport-related infrastructure is endangering not only protected areas but also indigenous territories, especially those rich in minerals and hydrocarbon deposits.

**At the same time, protected areas have sometimes been created without the knowledge or prior consent of the inhabitants of the area, and as a result they have been a source of land conflict, and in some have led to the expulsion and impoverishment of local populations.**

WWF Guianas



Kaieteur Falls, Kaieteur National Park, Guyana

THE AMAZON:

2.7

MILLION  
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

350

ETHNIC GROUPS

60

IN VOLUNTARY  
ISOLATION



©Valeria Sorgato

Quichua Unionmuyuna community, Napo Province, Ecuador

## A new approach to conservation work in the Amazon

Today, more than ever, a new approach to conservation is needed in the Amazon. Social and economic conditions in South America and particularly in the Amazon region are very different to those of ten or twenty years ago, when most protected areas and indigenous territories were first designated and/or recognized.

At the same time, we need to ensure that ecological representation and connectivity are safeguarded across the biome as a whole (not just according to national criteria), which will only be possible if we take a biome-wide approach to conservation in the region.

# 34

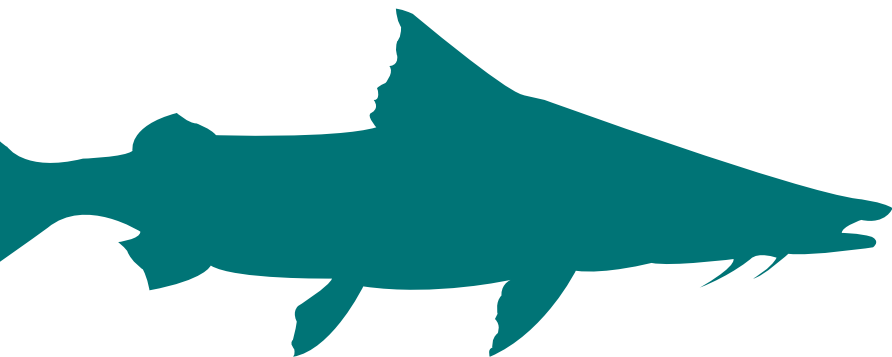
million  
people living  
in the eight  
countries  
and one  
overseas  
territory  
that share  
the Amazon  
Biome

Protected areas and indigenous territories in the Amazon now have a broader biome-wide ecological function to fulfill, as well as a new social and economic role that must be fully understood by other sectors of society, including multilateral organizations, international development agencies, regional finance institutions and cooperation agencies.

The WWF's Living Amazon Initiative (LAI) is engaging with key actors in the region to ensure that national systems of protected areas are fulfilling their biodiversity conservation roles through more effective management. At the same time promoting the integration of national protected area systems into regional development agendas and with each other (joining the dots between national protected area systems). Similarly, for indigenous territories, the LAI is promoting integrated indigenous territories that are able to help fill conservation gaps and safeguard Amazon cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and the rights of indigenous peoples to their land and resources.

On the protected areas front, the LAI and WWF Amazon offices, together with other partners<sup>3</sup> are working with the region's governments on the implementation of an Amazon Vision for protected area conservation where the eight Amazon countries share a vision for the future of conservation in the Amazon region, one that secures natural resources for the benefit of local populations and the regional economy.

This vision will be enriched by the results of a complementary project which will conduct a series of analyses to determine the resilience of protected areas to the effects of climate change and their role in adaptation to this change<sup>4</sup>



<sup>3</sup> This project is financed by the European Union and has the following partners: RedParques, the FAO, IUCN, UNEP and the national systems of protected areas of the eight countries.

<sup>4</sup> This project, financed by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMU), is being developed in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru and is delivered by the national protected area systems of the three countries.



OVER 3.000  
INDIGENOUS  
TERRITORIES  
HAVE BEEN  
IDENTIFIED  
WITHIN THE  
LIMITS OF THE  
AMAZON BIOME.

## Regional conservation strategy of indigenous territories

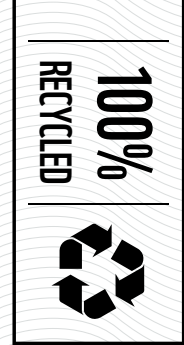


Adriano Gambarini

Juruena National Park, Brazil, 2007

On the indigenous territories front, and in order to safeguard the role of indigenous territories, WWF and COICA (Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin) are developing a Regional Strategy for the Holistic Management of Indigenous Territories that will define a framework for the implementation of long-term actions with key actors, mainly indigenous peoples.



**WWF AMAZON VISION**

An ecologically healthy Amazon Biome that maintains its environmental and cultural contributions to local peoples, the countries of the region and the world, within a framework of social equity, including economic development and global responsibility.

**FIND OUT MORE:**

E-mail: [livingamazon@wwf.org.br](mailto:livingamazon@wwf.org.br)  
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 Facebook: <http://goo.gl/r26Xgy>  
 Youtube: <http://bit.ly/1cFLsyf>

6.7

million km<sup>2</sup>10% of the  
planet's known  
biodiversityits rivers  
discharge 15%  
of the world's  
freshwater into  
the Atlantic  
ocean.

The LAI is also working with multilateral organizations and key social, economic, and productive sectors in the region to ensure that the role of protected areas and indigenous territories in the conservation of Amazon biological and cultural diversity is understood and mainstreamed into their planning processes and development agendas.

WWF holds the view that national systems of protected areas are a core element of a nation's public policy framework, and alongside other key public policies, such as education, health or food security, should receive the same attention and generate similar obligations. Protected area systems should be the foundational building blocks of responsible and sustainable development strategies that work with, rather than against nature.

At the same time indigenous peoples and their territories are inseparable. For indigenous peoples, their territories are the seeds that initiated the existence of their peoples and their distinct cultural identity. The relationship between indigenous peoples and their territories is vital, since it provides the food, shelter and space that allow the continuity of their culture. Without a territory, and without its contents and rich biodiversity, there is no life.

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 To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.  
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