



CONSERVATION POLICY IN BRIEF

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Conservation Landscape Program

PEACE IS MUCH MORE THAN DOVES: ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF THE PEACE AGREEMENT IN COLOMBIA FROM BIRDING TOURISM

Colombia has the greatest bird diversity in the world. The country's approximately 1,900 registered species, equivalent to 20% of the global total, highlight a tremendous potential for birding tourism. Current efforts by the Colombian government to increase security and end decades of armed conflict, as well as to promote ecotourism, can help position the country as one of the most important destinations in the world for birding. This policy brief summarizes the principle findings of a study carried out by the University of the Andes, Conservation Strategy Fund, and the National Audubon Society, which aimed to analyze the economic potential of international birding tourism to Colombia, as part of the Conservation Landscape program.¹



Lazuline Sabrewing

Using a contingent valuation approach based on the construction of hypothetical markets, the study estimated that Audubon's members would be willing to pay on average \$US 310 per day per person to visit important birding areas in Colombia. That is \$US 60 more than the average price of a similar tour (in terms of duration and services) in Costa Rica, a country that is currently a major global destination for international birders. Higher willingness to pay in Colombia is associated with the possibility of better birding, the participation of local communities previously affected by armed conflict, and improved security during the trip.

Considering only Audubon's members as potential visitors, the projected total demand for birding in Colombia reaches more than 278,000 birders in total. Of this group, our analysis suggests that 170,000 would travel to Colombia if the cost per person per day was equivalent to the average current cost per person per day in Costa Rica (\$US 250). If the cost was equivalent to the average willingness to pay to visit Colombia (\$US 310), the estimated number of birders interested in visiting is nearly 150,000 in

¹Maldonado, J.H., Moreno-Sanchez, R., Espinoza, S., Bruner, A., Garzón, N., Myers, J., (2016). La paz es mucho más que palomas: beneficios económicos del acuerdo de paz en Colombia, a partir del turismo de observación de aves. Conservación Estratégica Serie Técnica No. 46. Agosto de 2016.

total. If each person in this group visited Colombia once in the next 10 years, bird tourism would generate \$US 9 million in profits per year and more than 7,500 new jobs. These results show that Colombia has the foundation for developing a birding tourism sector that is diverse and competitive in terms of quality and price.

Beyond these core findings, the study also generated information on the type of birders to whom promotional activities could potentially be targeted. In particular, it found greater willingness to pay more among birders who had higher incomes, were younger, had greater expertise in birding, had visited other countries, and had already been to Colombia or stated interest in visiting.

Capitalizing on the potential to develop Colombia's birding tourism industry, as a means to contribute to biodiversity conservation and local economic development, requires concentrated efforts in several areas during the post-conflict period. The study recommends a focus on the following objectives:

1) Make strategic investments aimed at establishing a national network of birding tourism circuits.

2) Build the capacity of current and future guides, community organizations, and local tour operators to offer high quality birding experiences.

3) Increase recognition of Colombia's spectacular biodiversity from the inside out, by promoting a cultural and scientific renaissance among Colombians related to the natural wealth of their country.

4) Seek to reach 2,000 registered bird species by promoting scientific study in areas formerly affected by armed conflict, notably Putumayo, the Darién, Serranía de San Lucas, Serranía de Chiribiquete, Serranía del Perijá and the Orinoquía, among others.

5) Increase recognition of the potential for birding tourism among national and international institutions, with the goal of implementing a sustainable development strategy that blocks the expansion of unsustainable mining, oil and gas, and agricultural activity.

There is strong demand among birders to visit Colombia. Focused actions, including those described above, have the potential to make Colombia's natural wealth in bird diversity into a source of truly sustainable development for



thousands of people formerly kept in poverty by armed conflict. This contribution to development, in turn, is just one of the many benefits that peace could bring to Colombia.

Notes:

- a. University of the Andes, Colombia
- b. Conservation Strategy Fund
- c. Audubon

For the full report, please visit:

<http://www.conservation-strategy.org/en/reports> (Spanish)

https://economia.uniandes.edu.co/component/booklibrary/478/all_categories?layout=showCategory&catid=46 (English)



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