Fund offers renewed hope for habitats

Arcadia donates US$5 million to Fauna & Flora International’s Halcyon Land & Sea fund

Fauna & Flora International has received a US$5 million grant from Arcadia to support its Halcyon Land & Sea fund, which is dedicated to protecting critical areas of natural habitat.

Habitat loss is widely cited as one of the most significant threats to the world’s biodiversity, and is the primary factor driving population declines in 86% of all threatened birds, 86% of the threatened mammals assessed, and 88% of threatened amphibians according to IUCN¹.

The scale of habitat loss, both in the terrestrial and the marine realm, is disturbing. 70% of coral reefs are threatened or destroyed, says IUCN, and 6 million hectares of primary forest have been lost since 2000 alone¹.

Established in 1998 by Dr Lisbet Rausing, and managed by Fauna & Flora International, Halcyon Land & Sea (formerly The Arcadia Land Trust) is a fund dedicated to securing vital areas of natural habitat.

Intervention ranges from site management support to outright land purchase, but in every case these projects aim to put the management or ownership of the site back into local hands.

To date, Halcyon Land & Sea has secured almost 6.5 million hectares of critical habitat and has directly contributed to the conservation of over 46.5 million hectares – an area larger than Sweden.

“The beauty of Halcyon Land & Sea is that it allows us to intervene quickly in emergencies, when critical areas are threatened with destruction,” said Dr Abigail Entwistle, Director of Science at Fauna & Flora International.

“Great examples include securing vital swathes of distinctive species-rich fynbos habitat around Flower Valley in South Africa, establishing the Golden Stream Corridor Preserve in Belize, and protecting important areas of Mediterranean habitat – cork oak forest and native shrub/grassland – for the Iberian lynx in Portugal.

“Funds from Halcyon Land & Sea are also used to support more strategic initiatives and provide small grants to areas where traditional funding is unavailable,” she added.
Conserving a hotspot for plant diversity in South Africa

The Cape Floristic Region in South Africa is one of the most botanically rich regions on Earth, home to over 8,000 plant species (around 70% of which are endemic) and a range of vegetation systems including the stunning fynbos wild flower heathland habitat.

In 1999, Fauna & Flora International responded to news that a key area of fynbos was under threat from conversion to vineyards and, through Halcyon Land & Sea, purchased 550 hectares of near pristine fynbos on the Agulhas Plain.

Today, the area is managed by the Flower Valley Conservation Trust (FVCT), which works to ensure that the endangered fynbos is harvested sustainably and to secure a year-round, high-value bouquet market using ethically picked fynbos. Such enterprise development, augmented by low-impact local tourist trails and accommodation within the surrounding Conservancy, supports the conservation management of this critically threatened habitat. At the same time, the Flower Valley Early Learning Centre has been set up to provide education for children and training for teachers, as well as support and mentorship to the wider community.

Protecting a critical wildlife corridor in Belize

The Golden Stream Corridor Preserve (GSCP) in Belize is a lowland tropical broadleaf forest that forms a key part of a biological corridor stretching from the Maya Mountains to the coastal mangrove forests of Belize’s southern coast. It is home to a rich variety of plants and animals, including Central America’s five wild cats (the jaguar, jaguarundi, puma, ocelot and margay).

The formation of the preserve began in 1998 when Halcyon Land & Sea secured an area of 3,866 hectares at Golden Stream to protect it from logging and agricultural encroachment, with subsequent purchases increasing this to 6,057 hectares. This intervention has effectively protected the Golden Stream watershed, reducing the negative impacts of land-use change on the Port Honduras Marine Reserve – part of the Belize Barrier Reef, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Today, it is owned and managed by Fauna & Flora International’s partner, Ya’axché Conservation Trust, whose rangers patrol the forest and monitor biodiversity and water quality. Ya’axché also works with communities to build their capacity for the wise use of land and natural resources. This includes raising awareness of protected area law and supporting sustainable livelihoods.

Linking land for the world’s rarest cat species

Only around 300 Iberian lynx remain in the wild, making it the world’s rarest cat species. Its decline is largely down to the loss of key habitat and the massive decline in rabbits (its main prey) due to disease, although deaths from hunting, accidental trapping and road collisions have also contributed to falling numbers.

In 2003, Fauna & Flora International and Portuguese partner Liga Para a Protecção Da Natureza (LPN) began the process of securing a landscape corridor for the Iberian lynx, with help from Halcyon Land & Sea. This project has now successfully negotiated land management agreements for over 18,500 hectares, which are being managed for the recovery of lynx and their prey.
In 2010, the first sighting of a lynx in Portugal for nearly a decade was verified in the region in which the project works – an encouraging sign that initiatives such as this can contribute to the recovery of highly threatened species.

- ENDS -

For further information or high resolution photographs, please contact:
Sarah Rakowski (Communications Officer, FFI)
Tel: +44 (0) 1223 579 491
Email: sarah.rakowski@fauna-flora.org

Notes to editors:

1. IUCN, Why is biodiversity in crisis? <http://www.iucn.org/iyb/about/biodiversity_crisis/>

About Arcadia (http://www.arcadiafund.org.uk/)
Arcadia is the charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin. Since inception in 2001 Arcadia has awarded grants in excess of $237 million. Arcadia works to protect endangered culture and nature. For more information please see http://www.arcadiafund.org.uk/

About Fauna & Flora International (FFI) (www.fauna-flora.org)
FFI protects threatened species and ecosystems worldwide, choosing solutions that are sustainable, based on sound science and take account of human needs. Operating in more than 40 countries worldwide – mainly in the developing world – FFI saves species from extinction and habitats from destruction, while improving the livelihoods of local people. Founded in 1903, FFI is the world’s longest established international conservation body and a registered charity.