

# WHAT'S NEW?

## THE US FOREST SERVICE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

January 2012

### HIGHLIGHTS

- **New Agreement for Tropical Forests Enters Into Force**
- **Improving Stopovers Along the Great Rift Valley Flyway**
- **A Comprehensive Approach to Growing Forests in Lebanon**
- **Study Tour to Enhance Protection of the Peruvian Amazon**
- **Project Predator: Reducing Illegal Tiger Trade in 13 Countries**

For more information on any of these program areas, please visit [www.fs.fed.us/global/](http://www.fs.fed.us/global/)

For more information:  
1-202-273-4695



---

The Office of International Programs is currently working to improve forest management, to conserve biodiversity and to foster the trade of sustainably harvested forest products around the world.

---

### NEW AGREEMENT FOR TROPICAL FORESTS ENTERS INTO FORCE

Early December heralded a new era for the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO). Created in 1983, at the agreement of consumer and producer countries, the ITTO promotes the conservation and sustainable management, use and trade of tropical forest resources. Its members represent about 80% of the world's tropical forests and 90% of the global tropical timber trade. One of the main roles of ITTO is to facilitate transparency on markets among trading partners and to promote sustainably managed and legally harvested trade in wood products. The International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA), which establishes the organization, is renegotiated periodically to reflect changes in global forest policies and the world timber trade. The recent ratification of the 2006 ITTA by the Government of Benin--a new member to ITTO-- triggered the required number of member votes for the new agreement to enter into force for the next ten years.

The newly-ratified ITTA takes into consideration the increasing complexity of trade and the need for more stable financing. In addition, it emphasizes strategic investments as well as more innovative, diversified funding. The

new agreement also acknowledges the necessity of dealing with topics such as illegal logging and emphasizes the important role environmental services and sustainable forest management play in the sustainable development of many countries.

The United States has been a long standing member of ITTO and a major importer of tropical plywood and secondary processed wood products. With domestic demand for green building products increasing quickly, US engagement with ITTO continues to be important.



### IMPROVING STOPOVERS ALONG THE GREAT RIFT VALLEY FLYWAY

Each year, over 500 million birds cross the Great Rift Valley Flyway as they migrate between their wintering grounds in Africa and their summer breeding areas in Europe and Asia. This journey is fraught with peril as birds must navigate open seas, arid areas with limited water and vegetation, and human threats such as hunting and pollution. The US Forest Service works with organizations along this globally important flyway to conserve critical habitat and train biologists to monitor birds and their migration.

Increasing stopover habitat at such bottlenecks, where birds can rest and

# WHAT'S NEW? | THE US FOREST SERVICE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

refuel, is an effective way to improve the success of birds making this difficult journey. Along this migratory route, a bottleneck occurs where the Red Sea meets the city of Aqaba, Jordan. The Aqaba Bird Observatory provides important stopover habitat to an abundance of bird species during migration, including water birds, waders, passerines, and raptors, provide a unique experience for birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts.

In December 2012, a Forest Service team traveled to Aqaba to work with the Jordan Society for Sustainable Development at the Aqaba Bird Observatory. The Jordan Society for Sustainable Development manages the Observatory with a mandate to provide bird habitat and promote bird-related ecotourism, education and research activities. The location of the Aqaba Bird Observatory at a wastewater treatment plant creates unique opportunities and challenges to the Jordan Society for Sustainable Development. While abundant water attracts migrating birds to the Aqaba Bird Observatory, developing vegetative habitat, facilities, and recreation activities at a water treatment plant requires careful planning. The US Forest Service team is working with the Jordan Society for Sustainable Development to increase forested and wetland habitat using native species that will also enhance water quality and provide an enjoyable experience for bird watchers and nature lovers.

## Endangered Species Visitors to the Aqaba Bird Observatory

- Lesser White-fronted Goose
- Marbled Teal
- Ferruginous Duck
- Corncrake
- Sociable Lapwing
- Black-tailed Godwit
- White-eyed Gull



## A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO GROWING FORESTS IN LEBANON



The U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon, Maura Connelly, recently launched the Lebanon Reforestation Initiative (LRI) and the 2012 tree planting season at a ceremony in the village of Tannourine. The LRI is a four-year project

funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) as a part of the Mission's environmental program to engage local communities in preserving Lebanon's natural resources. The U.S. Forest Service Office of International Programs implements the project to enhance native tree nursery operations and improve reforestation practices throughout Lebanon, promoting rural development. Although Lebanon is one of the most forested countries in the Middle East region, recent trends indicate the rapid decline of its forests, from covering 30 percent of the country in 1980 to approximately 13 percent today. The LRI is one of the largest and most comprehensive efforts undertaken recently to combat deforestation in Lebanon. The initiative is assisting with the modernization of native tree seedling production and planting, reforesting large tracks of land in each of the country's diverse regions. Low rates of seedling survivability along with limited coordination among forestry stakeholders and the lack of an effective national strategy have been among the main reasons why past reforestation efforts have not been fully successful. The LRI is responding to those challenges by promoting a comprehensive, "bottom-up" approach to modernize forestry practices throughout the country's tree nurseries, ensuring longer-term care and monitoring of reforested sites, mapping priority areas for reforestation by others, and building linkages among the country's forestry practitioners. The project is building local community ownership of reforestation by hiring local laborers – especially women, when possible – to plant and care for the tree seedlings. LRI staff and affiliated groups are spearheading awareness-raising campaigns in each of the communities, introducing innovative programming at area schools and with local community groups to reinforce the importance

# WHAT'S NEW? | THE US FOREST SERVICE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS



of Lebanon's forests.

The country is committed to seeing at least 20 percent of Lebanon covered by forests by 2020. The LRI is an important part of that equation—building a foundation for a better environment,

and creating and sustaining jobs.

## STUDY TOUR TO ENHANCE PROTECTION OF THE PERUVIAN AMAZON

In December, the Forest Service International Programs hosted a delegation of 12 high-level members of the Peruvian Amazon Inter-Regional Council on a 10-day coast-to-coast study tour. The participants, including five regional presidents and their natural resource directors, met with US Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell as well as technical experts and managers across the agency to explore themes of coordination with states, private landowners, tribes, and communities for improved natural resource management. The forests of the Peruvian Amazon range in condition from highly deforested to nearly intact. Since 2009, the US Forest Service International Programs, through its Peru Forest Sector Initiative and with the support of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) has provided technical assistance for local and national efforts to promote better forest management and conservation of this globally important ecosystem.

Highlights of the December trip included discussions with Forest Inventory and Analysis experts from the Pacific Northwest Research Station and the Deschutes National Forest on topics ranging from models for collaborative forest management and information management tools. The group visited Grey Towers, the historic home of Gifford Pinchot, first Chief of the Forest Service, to learn about the legacy of this environmental leader. During a meeting with Pinchot's grandson, Gifford Pinchot III, the delegation made a commitment to cooperate on a broad range of environmental issues, including sustainable forest management, public participation and climate change. The goal is to sustainably manage the fourth largest tropical forest in

the world and protect the unique flora and fauna of Peru, one of the world's "megadiverse" countries. Through this study tour and ongoing exchanges with the agency, the regional presidents are able to learn from the historical and contemporary successes and challenges of forest management in the United States.

## PROJECT PREDATOR: REDUCING ILLEGAL TIGER TRADE IN 13 COUNTRIES



Project Predator unites police forces in 13 tiger range countries to combat illegal tiger trade. The new project, under the Global Tiger Initiative, brings together a wide range of partners. The US Forest Service International Programs receives funding from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to take part in the project. Together, partners build capacity for law enforcement agencies in using advanced investigation methodology. At the launch of the Global Tiger Initiative in 2010, USAID contributed funds to the Wildlife Conservation Society to enhance their Management Information System program in the Russian Far East. The system monitors anti-poaching activities and assesses their effectiveness. The program is now being expanded with additional funding from USAID.

The situation for tigers is urgent—poachers have decimated the world's population to feed a large, illicit and steadily growing market for the fur, bone and parts of the animal. Illegal trade and trafficking in tiger parts and products are rampant across international borders, making enforcement of laws against it a challenge. Presently, wildlife officials in most tiger range countries are poorly staffed and under equipped to fight wildlife crime on the ground. The US Forest Service International Programs will continue ongoing work with the Wildlife Conservation Society in the Russian Far East on protected area management, community engagement, and fire management for the preservation and restoration of key tiger habitat.