

Weaving Life: Toward an Ecological Culture

Annual Report 2024

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Naturaleza

Weaving Life: Toward an Ecological Culture



Fernando Lloveras
San Miguel, Esq.
President
Para la Naturaleza

On our path toward an ecological culture—where nature and humanity coexist with respect and reciprocity—we understand that conservation is not a solitary pursuit but a collective responsibility. *Weaving life* is not just a metaphor; it is a guiding principle in our work. Every conservation action, every restored ecosystem, and every partnership we build contributes to the well-being of all forms of life.

Nature conservation demands that we engage complexity. It is essential to the survival of life on Earth, especially in our Caribbean islands where human-driven habitat degradation poses escalating threats. Climate change, deforestation, and pollution are already leaving irreversible marks—impacting not only ecosystems but the communities that live within and alongside them.

For 55 years, Para la Naturaleza has embraced its role with care and responsibility, stewarding biodiversity across the archipelago. We are deeply convinced that education is a key strategy for transforming our relationship with nature. From the youngest to the eldest, all generations must recognize their roles in fostering care for the living world. Through education, we can nurture an ecological culture grounded in shared accountability.

In 2024, Para la Naturaleza entered a phase of deep internal reflection. We took time to examine, with honesty and care, what we have nurtured alongside communities and allies. From that process emerged our new Strategic Plan 2025–2030, which expands our mission, vision, and operational commitments toward more relational, inclusive, and systemic approaches. This plan is anchored in five guiding pillars:

Climate Resilience: We affirm that the impact of climatic adversities is a shared crisis, and our role is to strengthen ecosystems so they can adapt and persist—protecting both biodiversity and the human communities intertwined with it.

Inherent Rights of Nature: We reject the view of nature as solely an economic resource. We advocate for recognizing that ecosystems have value in and of themselves, and that forests, rivers, mountains, and all living beings deserve the same respect as any human right.

Inclusive Historical Narratives and Restorative Justice: To repair relationships with land and life, we must share the voices and knowledge of all our communities, including women, queer people, Afrodescendant and Indigenous communities, and people with diverse abilities.

Regenerative Economies: We support community-rooted economic models that generate

ecological regeneration and distribute benefits equitably.


Interdisciplinary Alliances and Solidarity-Based Networks: Conservation requires webs of mutual support—locally and globally. We believe in building coalitions across sectors, disciplines, and lived experiences.

This strategic framework reaffirms our commitment to conservation through just and relational means. That begins with care for our internal team, whose well-being sustains the strength and integrity of our work.

In 2024, even as we realigned our direction our work continued in full force: we deepened regional and international partnerships through engagements with IUCN; strengthened community conservation through reforestation and educational actions like *La Siembra*; launched innovations such as the *Ciudadano Protector* app and the aquatic-plant nursery in Cabezas de San Juan; and celebrated cultural milestones through *Cocinas Para la Naturaleza* and the publication of *Flora borinqueniana*.

Our mission has never been more urgent. As we reflect on the year behind us and step into what lies ahead, we recognize that the strength of our work lies in the living network we weave—connection by connection, act by act, with and for the land, waters, and beings of this archipelago.

Fungus species, photo taken at
Marín Alto Natural Protected Area, Patillas



Monte Las Pargas
Guánica, Puerto Rico

Land Conservation

Para la Naturaleza remains deeply committed to strengthening conservation practices in the ecological areas that sustain life across Puerto Rico. In 2024, amid financial constraints, we prioritized conservation easements and land donations as our primary tools for long-term protection. This strategic focus enables us to steward vital ecosystems while optimizing resource allocation for their care.

In May 2024, we secured an extension of our lease agreement with the Puerto Rico Land Administration for the management of Monte Las Pargas in Guánica—ensuring continuity in our conservation work while we seek funding to secure its long-term protection.

Additionally, we expanded the Río Maricao Nature Reserve by integrating a three-acre parcel generously donated by Jan Henle and his wife, longstanding allies of the Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico and Para la Naturaleza. This contribution strengthens the preservation of a

critical ecosystem, which now spans 436 acres.

In June, after years of negotiation, we formalized a 50-year lease agreement with the University of Puerto Rico for the Arturo Roque parcel. Stewardship of this land represents a vital step in our efforts to restore the Antiguo Acueducto del Río Piedras—an ecologically and historically significant site in the metropolitan area.

In October, a two-acre property in Barranquitas was incorporated into the Cañón San Cristóbal Nature Reserve. This expansion includes a multipurpose structure that will facilitate access for educational visits, immersive workshops, and conservation-focused agroecological projects in the region.

Each of these land protection efforts reflects our ongoing commitment to the archipelago's ecological health and the weaving of deeper, more reciprocal relationships between communities and their surrounding environments.

Ciudadano Protector: A Digital Conservation App



Ciudadano Protector App links society and science, strengthening education and conservation efforts.

Digital tools have become essential for environmental action and public participation in conservation. On April 30, 2024, Para la Naturaleza launched its new mobile application, **Ciudadano Protector**, developed with support from Filantropía Puerto Rico. The launch took place during *Puerto Rico Conserva: Digital Tools for Citizen Participation* at Casa Ramón Power y Giralt in Old San Juan and brought together allies across the environmental sector.

Ciudadano Protector is designed to empower citizens to monitor and report potential violations of land use and environmental laws. The app not only strengthens environmental oversight but also serves as an educational tool—raising public awareness around urban planning, environmental justice, and the ecological value of protected areas. Its development reflects our belief that technology can support informed, active stewardship of Puerto Rico's ecosystems.

At the launch event, Para la Naturaleza also introduced the tool alongside Mapa de Costas, a digital platform by Vanessa Uriarte of Amigxs del M.A.R., highlighting the collective momentum for open-access conservation tools.

A panel discussion followed, featuring leaders from Casa Pueblo, Ciudadanos del Karso, and the ENLACE Project of Caño Martín Peña, alongside experts Luis García Pelatti and Neida Pumarejo, our Director of Land Conservation. Panelists shared firsthand experiences of community-led conservation and emphasized the importance of civic action in protecting ecologically and culturally significant territories.

Together, these initiatives illustrate a growing movement to democratize conservation through accessible, community-driven technologies—reaffirming that the defense of nature must be a shared responsibility.

Conservation and Biodiversity

Fungus
Tricholomopsis fungusaurea

In 2024, Para la Naturaleza advanced several key initiatives focused on the conservation, restoration, and monitoring of Puerto Rico's natural ecosystems. Our work spanned species inventories, biodiversity research, and strategic conservation practices across multiple protected areas.



Biodiversity Inventories and Monitoring

Understanding and protecting the richness of Puerto Rico's biodiversity remains a core pillar of our conservation work. Systematic inventories conducted in **15** natural protected areas led to the identification of **4,580** species, including:

3,790 plant species

204 fungi

131 bryophytes

318 lichens

137 invertebrates

(collected by both internal teams and consultants)

These findings offer critical data for ecological management and affirm the importance of continued stewardship of our protected lands.

Key Observations in Protected Areas

At **Ojo de Agua**, our teams documented two rare endemic trees: *Ausubo* (*Manilkara pleeana*) and *Pouteria dictyoneura* subsp. *fuertesii*, the latter previously only found in Hispaniola.

Mycologist Kurt Miller identified **48 fungi species** in Ojo de Agua and **15 species** in **Punta Cabullones**.

In **Punta Cabullones**, two individuals of the **Ponce anole lizard** (*Anolis poncensis*)—a vulnerable species—and a first record of the **Puerto Rican sandy geckolet** (*Sphaerodactylus townsendi*) were observed.

Rapid assessments at **Ojo de Agua** led to a significant increase in knowledge: **+18%** in **bird species**, **+38%** in **flora**, and **+35%** in **invertebrates**.

These efforts underscore the critical importance of continuous biodiversity monitoring for adaptive conservation.

Puerto Rican Crested Toad Monitoring

In partnership with the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we launched a long-term monitoring project (2024–2026) to assess the status of the **Puerto Rican Crested Toad** (*Peltophryne lemur*) in the Northern Region. In 2024 alone, three tadpole release events were carried out, releasing **14,506** individuals. The project will include four additional releases in 2025–2026, aiming to establish a self-sustaining wild population.

Endangered Tree Discovery: Palo de Ramón

In Vega Baja, we documented several individuals of the endangered endemic tree *Banara vanderbiltii* (Palo de Ramón), marking only the second known wild population within our protected areas—following its earlier identification at the Tres Vidas Conservation Easement.

Expanded Species Inventories

23 **Dragonflies and Damselflies**

species documented—nearly **46%** of Puerto Rico's known species

30 **Flora** species added to our records

+300 **Fungi** species by year's end

+100 **Bryophytes** species by year's end

These discoveries not only support scientific research but also guide our restoration priorities and reinforce our commitment to habitat protection.

Reforestation Efforts

The Reforestation Program at Para la Naturaleza, initiated in the late 1980s, continues to be a vital driver of ecological regeneration and community engagement across Puerto Rico. More than just tree planting, the program integrates restoration ecology, food security, and climate resilience while cultivating a culture of co-responsibility between people and place.

In 2024, our efforts prioritized the propagation and planting of native, endemic, and fruit-bearing species, emphasizing not only ecological function but also cultural relevance and nutritional value. These reforestation actions are aligned with our broader commitment to biodiversity conservation and regenerative land stewardship.

Ecosystem Restoration in Natural Protected Areas

Reforestation activities took place across multiple key conservation areas, including:

- **Cañón San Cristóbal**, strengthening steep-slope restoration and riparian buffers.
- **Río Encantado (Finca Escalera and Finca Florida)**, focusing on water retention and soil rehabilitation.
- **Medio Mundo y Dagua**, where coastal resilience efforts continue to advance.
- **La Pitahaya and La Parguera Nature Reserve (Finca La Julia)**, targeting dry forest recovery and landscape connectivity.

Each site is managed with place-specific protocols that reflect distinct ecological conditions and community relationships. In several cases, participatory mapping and knowledge exchange with local collaborators shaped planting strategies.

Networked Partnerships for Regenerative Impact

Our reforestation efforts are bolstered by long-standing and emerging partnerships that support planning, funding, technical expertise, and hands-on labor. Core collaborators in 2024 included:

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – providing technical assistance and funding for agroforestry and habitat restoration.

NCBA-CLUSA – supporting the propagation and distribution of over 135,000 shade and hardwood trees for local agricultural resilience.

Surfrider Foundation and Protectores de Cuencas – facilitating coastal and watershed reforestation.

University of Puerto Rico – engaging students and researchers in restoration science.

Instituto Nueva Escuela and various public schools – cultivating environmental stewardship in younger generations.

These partnerships reflect a shared commitment to ecological integrity and social equity, ensuring that reforestation serves both biodiversity and community resilience.

*La Siembra employee event
Cañón San Cristóbal, Barranquitas*

Arboretum Miguel A. “Papo” Vives Heiliger

A landmark achievement in 2024 was the official dedication of the arboretum at Hacienda La Esperanza to Miguel A. “Papo” Vives Heiliger, a visionary botanist and lifelong advocate for Puerto Rico’s native flora.

The arboretum now hosts:

- Over **25%** of **Puerto Rico’s endemic tree species**, many of them critically endangered.
- A curated collection of **Caribbean palm species**, with an emphasis on regional genetic diversity.
- Trees propagated from **seeds and propagules collected in the wild**, including from shrinking forest fragments.

This living collection supports research, restoration, and education, acting as both a refuge and a knowledge hub. In October 2024, it

achieved **ArbNet Level 2** accreditation, affirming its role as a center of excellence in conservation horticulture and community outreach.

With a focus on ex-situ conservation, the arboretum contributes to:

- **Seed propagation research**
- **Plant-animal interaction studies**
- **Phenological monitoring**
- **Public programming and interpretive walks**
- **Species-specific restoration protocols**

It is a place where biodiversity is not only preserved but performed as pedagogy, inviting all visitors to imagine themselves as participants in the regeneration of living systems.



Bromelia nativa
Wittmackia antillana



Cocinas Para la Naturaleza is more than a culinary initiative—it is a cultural and ecological invitation to reconnect with the land through food. Launched on March 13, 2024, the program emerged from a deep concern about the extreme dependence on imported goods in Puerto Rico and the vulnerabilities this creates in the face of climate-related disruptions. It asks a vital question: What does it mean to nourish ourselves in a way that also nourishes the land?

Funded by the Peter Alfond Foundation, produced by Tatiana Hernández Cotto, creatively directed by Gabriel Suau, and filmed at Las Lunas Natural Protected Area in Caguas by La Mafía Puerto Rico and Suau Productions, the first season featured a ten-episode video series blending culinary arts, agroecology, and ecological storytelling.

Each episode highlights accessible recipes prepared by renowned and emerging chefs using locally grown, agroecological ingredients. These video recipes are complemented by educational content that uplifts food sovereignty, environmental

sustainability, and public health. By promoting dishes rooted in Puerto Rican culinary traditions, the program foregrounds food as a relational and regenerative practice—where taste, land, memory, and justice converge.

The Agroecology Program of Para la Naturaleza played a key role in curating the agricultural narratives behind the dishes, ensuring a close connection between what is harvested and what is planted. This approach fosters awareness of sustainable agriculture while supporting local farmers and producers.

Airing on WIPR under the title Nueva Cocina Puertorriqueña, the program reached broader audiences and brought messages of ecological responsibility into the public domain.

Looking ahead, Season 2 will deepen this approach, featuring not only chefs but also farmers and fishers whose practices embody ecological reciprocity and community resilience. This next chapter promises to strengthen the relational web between sustainable cuisine, biodiversity, and cultural heritage across Puerto Rico.

La Siembra: Trees that Amaze, Roots that Unite

On September 7, 2024, Para la Naturaleza held its annual flagship event, La Siembra, under the theme “**Árboles que asombran / Trees that Amaze.**” More than just a large-scale tree distribution, La Siembra is a public celebration of intergenerational ecological learning, participatory reforestation, and cultural reconnection.

Held at Luis Muñoz Marín Park in San Juan, the event engaged over a thousand participants—families, community leaders, students, and volunteers—in a collective effort to promote climate action and biodiversity restoration across Puerto Rico. In total, over **4,000** native, endemic, and fruit-bearing trees were distributed, expanding the presence of resilient plant species across both urban and rural territories.

Ecological Learning in Action

What distinguishes La Siembra is its commitment to public education. The event featured interactive learning modules led by Para la Naturaleza’s Reforestation Unit, offering participants guidance on:

- **Species selection based on local conditions**
- **Best practices for planting and maintenance**
- **Tree benefits for climate mitigation and ecological health**

A temperature comparison station vividly illustrated the cooling effects of tree cover, helping participants viscerally grasp how reforestation can combat urban heat islands and reduce energy use.

Children’s Programming and Storytelling

To deepen environmental literacy at an early age, the event also featured a children’s activity zone, led by Lee Connigo and writer Pamy Rojas, where stories about trees, nature, and care for the land sparked imagination and joy. This space encouraged young participants to see themselves as stewards of life, planting not only trees but relational commitments to the Earth.

A Model for Participatory Conservation

La Siembra is part of a broader strategy to make reforestation accessible, community-driven, and culturally rooted. By pairing ecological restoration with meaningful public engagement, the event fosters a sense of collective ownership over conservation outcomes. It stands as a living example of how climate resilience can grow from the ground up, through the hands, hopes, and hearts of those who care for the land.

La Siembra 2024
Luis Muñoz Marín Park



A New Aquatic-plant Nursery in Cabezas de San Juan Nature Reserve

Red mangrove seedlings
Rhizophora mangle

What began as an informal experiment—plastic crates, a ruler, and two buckets of water—evolved into one of Para la Naturaleza’s most innovative ecological infrastructure projects of 2024. At the heart of this transformation was a team from the Reforestation Unit: Erik Ruiz, William “Willie” Burgos, and Ahmed Pérez, whose curiosity about red mangrove propagation set in motion a process of embodied inquiry and applied restoration science.

Their findings revealed that red mangrove seedlings (*Rhizophora mangle*) initially thrive in freshwater but require brackish or saline conditions for continued development. This observation, simple yet profound, laid the groundwork for a state-of-the-art aquatic plant nursery tailored for mangrove propagation—an effort essential to coastal resilience,

biodiversity preservation, and climate adaptation.

Nursery Design and Functionality

- Located within the Cabezas de San Juan Nature Reserve in Fajardo, the nursery is designed to be self-sustaining, scalable, and climate-smart. It includes:
- Six interconnected aquatic tanks with flexible, modular operation.
- A solar-powered system for water circulation and oxygenation.
- A polycarbonate roof that protects against rainfall while maximizing sunlight.
- Removable saran netting for light filtration.

- Rainwater harvesting infrastructure to ensure long-term water management.

This hybrid system of ecological design and renewable technology supports optimal growing conditions for:

- Red mangrove (*Rhizophora mangle*)
- Black mangrove (*Avicennia germinans*)
- White mangrove (*Laguncularia racemosa*)

With the capacity to cultivate 4,320 mangrove saplings annually, the nursery dramatically increases Para la Naturaleza’s ability to meet the demands of coastal reforestation—particularly in priority areas like Medio Mundo y Dagua Natural Protected Area

(Ceiba) and future expansion zones across the archipelago.

From Restoration Tool to Living Classroom

Beyond its technical achievements, the nursery is a space of community learning and applied ecological storytelling. Its establishment reflects the power of low-tech ingenuity, interdisciplinary collaboration, and place-based experimentation to generate scalable solutions to planetary crises.

In the coming years, this model will be replicated in other Para la Naturaleza nurseries, expanding the organization’s capacity to respond to both ecological degradation and climate vulnerability in Puerto Rico’s most sensitive coastal ecosystems.

Communities

Volunteer Recognition Event
Río Encantado, Ciales

At Para la Naturaleza, volunteers are not an extension of our work—they are central to it. Their commitment, curiosity, and generosity animate every corner of our conservation mission, weaving people into the very ecosystems we strive to protect.

In 2024, the Volunteer Program flourished through hands-on activities in reforestation, citizen science, environmental education, and ecological monitoring. These actions cultivated not only environmental outcomes but also deepened the social fabric of ecological stewardship across Puerto Rico.

Citizen Botanist Program

Now in its fourth cycle, this flagship initiative invites volunteers to care for native plant nurseries and reforested areas. In 2023–2024, 36 Citizen Botanists completed a robust training series—combining synchronous, asynchronous, and in-person sessions—and received certification for their contributions. Their work bridges scientific knowledge and community-led restoration, strengthening ecosystems while nourishing botanical literacy.

Nighttime Brightness Monitoring

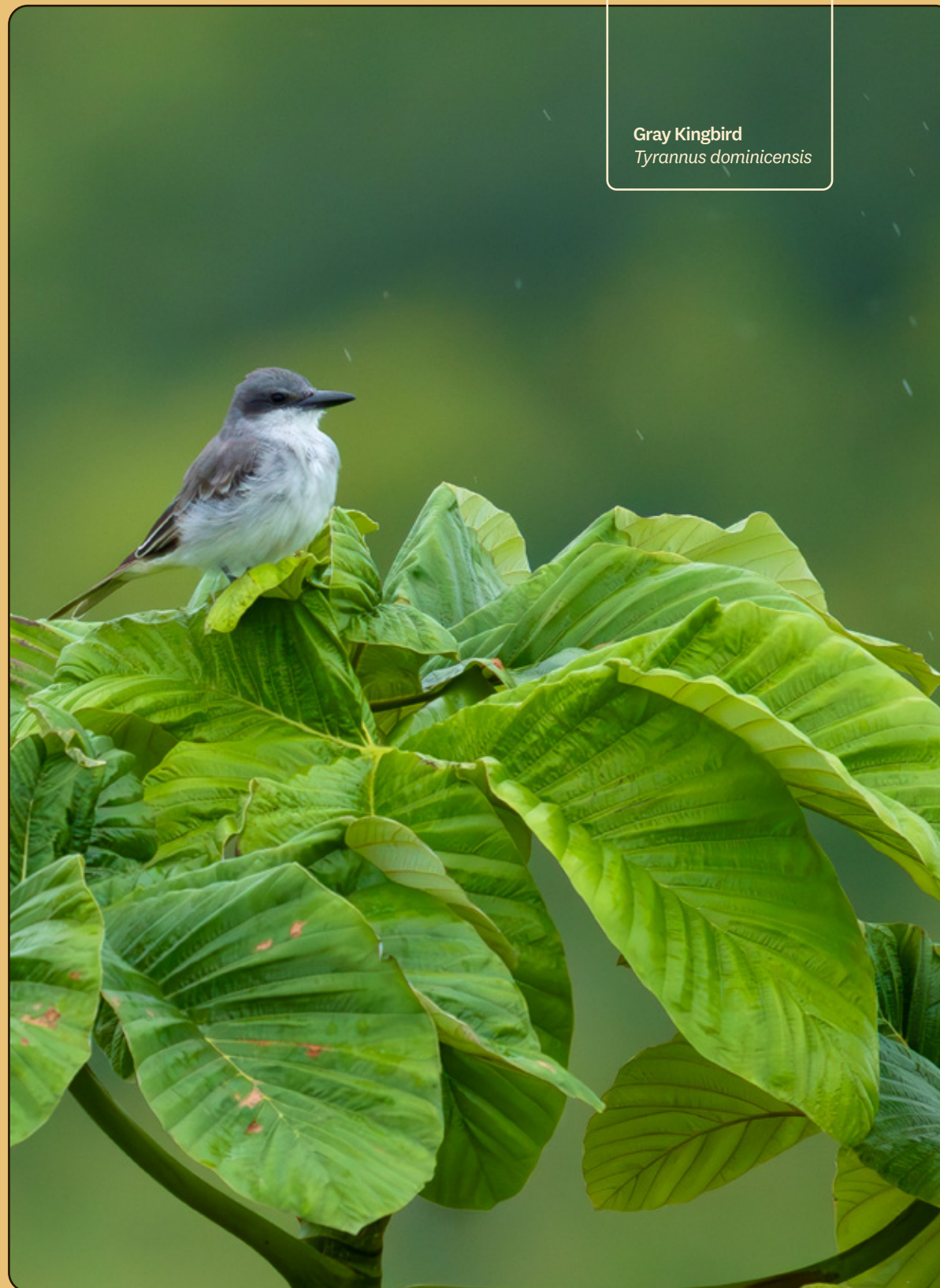
In La Parguera, Lajas, five dedicated volunteers have taken on the challenge of monthly bioluminescence and brightness monitoring—at night, by boat. Their perseverance is now generating critical historical data to support the conservation of the bioluminescent bay and deepen our understanding of light pollution's impact on sensitive ecosystems.

Bird Census with ProAlas

In the Western Region, volunteers participated in bi-monthly bird monitoring through the Coastal and Migratory Bird Projects. Their contributions enhance long-term data collection and highlight the power of citizen science in protecting avian biodiversity.

BioBlitz / Mapa de Vida

This strategy, now in its second phase, supports baseline biodiversity assessments across ten agroecological farms in eastern Puerto Rico. In partnership with the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership and the Southwest Soil and Water Conservation District, Para la Naturaleza has coordinated 10 BioBlitz events, engaging local communities and gathering data that will inform future land stewardship.



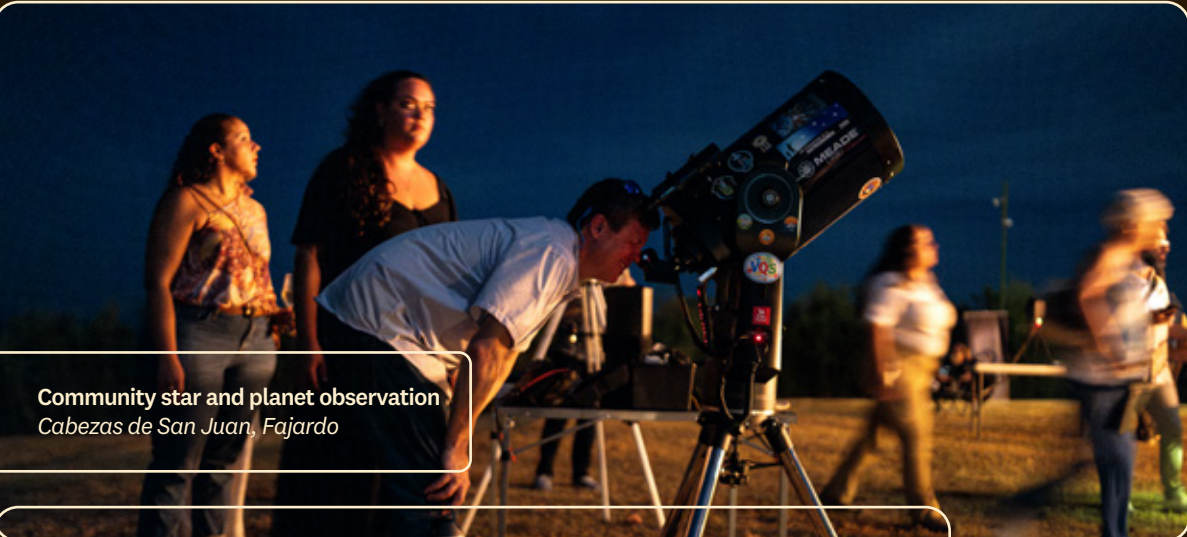
Gray Kingbird
Tyrannus dominicensis

Communities: Living Networks of Ecological Care

Working in conservation means engaging with the communities who live in, around, and care for the lands we steward. In 2024, our AComPAÑA Program (Apoyo a Comunidades para la Acción y la Naturaleza) deepened engagement with 33 community centers at varying stages of development.

- **Seven centers** received direct structural support, including kitchen renovations, roof repairs, and resilient infrastructure improvements.
- In Cataño, the community project **Caras con Causa** received support for a rainwater harvesting system and kitchen rehabilitation—strengthening their intergenerational, socio-ecological work with children and elders.
- In Bayamón, **Casa Amor, Fe y Esperanza (CAFE)** completed renovations on student housing, creating safe, low-cost accommodation as part of their holistic community model.

Through this work, Para la Naturaleza isn't just protecting ecosystems—we're investing in networks of mutual care, ensuring that nature conservation also uplifts the well-being of human communities, now and into the future.



Community star and planet observation
Cabezas de San Juan, Fajardo

Protecting the Night to Preserve Life

For over a decade, Para la Naturaleza's **Puerto Rico Brilla Naturalmente** initiative has illuminated a crucial but often overlooked threat to biodiversity: light pollution. The artificial glow that spills across our skies can disorient nocturnal species, disrupt ecological rhythms, and dim the brilliance of places like the bioluminescent waters of Laguna Grande in Fajardo.

In 2024, we brought this mission closer to the people.

Together with Environmental Interpreter Leonor Alicea from the Cabezas de San Juan Nature Reserve and in collaboration with the Fajardo Recycling Center, we organized a community event that combined direct action with public education. Residents were invited to participate in a lightbulb exchange, trading in conventional household bulbs for energy-efficient alternatives that reduce skyglow and ecological disturbance.

But it wasn't just about swapping bulbs. It was about illuminating awareness.

Participants learned about the importance of dark skies for both wildlife and human health. They received guidance on choosing ecologically friendly lighting and tips on how to position outdoor lights to minimize disruption to natural habitats.

This initiative is a reminder: conservation isn't always about what we add—it's also about what we dim. By turning down the lights, we make room for stars to return, for turtles to nest, for fireflies to dance—and for nature's rhythms to unfold undisturbed.

As we continue this work, we envision a Puerto Rico where the night sky once again shines with its full brilliance, in harmony with the living systems beneath it.

Reading Nooks That Plant the Seeds of Wonder

In 2024, Para la Naturaleza launched a new initiative that blends literacy, ecological awareness, and joyful learning: the Biblio-Rincones Para la Naturaleza. These are not just reading corners—they are portals into the living world, designed for children and families to cultivate curiosity, creativity, and connection with Puerto Rico's natural heritage.

Developed in partnership with Fundación Flamboyán and Lee Connmigo Inc., each Biblio-Rincón is a thoughtfully designed mini-library located within our eight visitor centers across the archipelago. Stocked with more than 200 books—many of them by Puerto Rican authors—the collections explore themes of ecology, biodiversity, culture, and imagination, inviting readers to discover new ways of seeing and being in relationship with the land.

The first Biblio-Rincón was inaugurated in May 2024 at the Cabezas de San

Juan Nature Reserve in Fajardo, setting the tone for a broader educational journey. These cozy, inviting spaces are designed to spark early literacy, foster a love of reading, and deepen understanding of the natural world.

Beyond the bookshelves, these reading nooks are spaces of emotional and relational well-being. They offer a gentle pause from the speed of modern life—a place to sit, read, wonder, and feel the presence of the more-than-human world through story and symbol.

On every page turned, a question is planted. In every story shared, a relationship grows.

With Biblio-Rincones, we are nurturing a generation that learns not only to read books—but to read the land, the water, and the living stories that sustain us.



Family reading
Cabezas de San Juan, Fajardo

Three Decades Of Cultivating Ecological Consciousness

*TIN participants
Río Encantado, Ciales*

In the summer of 2024, Para la Naturaleza celebrated a major milestone: 30 years of **Nature Immersion Workshops**, a flagship educational initiative that has helped shape environmental leadership across Puerto Rico for three generations.

Held annually in natural protected areas across the archipelago, these workshops offer transformative, hands-on experiences for children and youth, combining scientific inquiry, storytelling, and direct encounters with the living world. Since their inception in 1994, the workshops have reached more than 3,226 participants, nurturing a deeper sense of connection to Puerto Rico's ecosystems and cultural landscapes.

To mark this 30-year legacy, a pilot leadership training program was introduced, granting returning workshop leaders greater autonomy and responsibilities. One of the most innovative additions was the creation of the “leader documenter” role—responsible for capturing photographs and videos that reflect the richness of the workshop experience. In recognition of their commitment, leaders also received stipends, acknowledging their time, presence, and care.

Throughout the summer, young participants engaged in immersive activities that deepened their understanding of biodiversity, conservation, and relational ways of living with nature. From guided hikes and water studies to collaborative games and storytelling circles, each moment was designed to ignite curiosity, cultivate confidence, and foster lifelong stewardship.

The Nature Immersion Workshops continue to evolve with the changing needs of the planet and its people, but their essence remains the same: to invite the youngest members of our communities to fall in love with nature—and take part in its care.

A Visual and Scientific Journey through Puerto Rico's Botanical Heritage

Building on the success of the 2023 traveling exhibition, *Flora borinqueniana: Three Centuries of Botanical Illustrations*, this landmark project has now taken root in book form. Authored by botanist Dr. Eugenio Santiago Valentín and made possible through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the publication offers an expansive view of Puerto Rico's botanical history—bridging art, science, and culture.

The book traces the evolution of botanical knowledge in Puerto Rico from the late 18th century to the early 20th century, presenting detailed illustrations and historical accounts that reveal the richness of the archipelago's plant life. It highlights not only the biodiversity of the region but also the scientific processes and cultural exchanges that have shaped how this flora has been documented, studied, and appreciated.

Designed by Vanessa Colón Rodríguez, Coordinator of Publications, Exhibits, and Products at Para la Naturaleza, the book maintains the visual impact and educational depth of the original exhibition. With a refined layout and thoughtful curation, it serves as both a scientific resource and a beautiful object of learning and wonder. In October 2024, a condensed



Flora borinqueniana publication

version of the exhibition was presented at the Museum of Natural History in Aguadilla, extending its reach to new audiences in western Puerto Rico and expanding the conversation about conservation, art, and history.

The digital edition of *Flora borinqueniana: Three Centuries of Botanical Illustrations* is freely available at paralanaturaleza.org/floraborinqueniana

With this publication, Para la Naturaleza reaffirms its commitment to accessible knowledge, cultural preservation, and the enduring importance of botanical literacy in ecological education.

Bridging Science, Creativity, and Ecological Imagination

Yagrumo leaf in traced drawing by Mónica Rodríguez

Art Residency

Through a five-year, grant-supported pilot initiative, Para la Naturaleza's Art Residency Program has nurtured a dynamic space where artists and scientists explore bold, interdisciplinary approaches to conservation. Each year, one artist is invited to develop a site-responsive project at the Las Lunas Natural Protected Area in Caguas, Puerto Rico. These residencies emphasize artistic experimentation, collaboration, and a deepened engagement with ecological realities.

In 2024, two Puerto Rican artists were in residence:

- **Mónica Rodríguez**, whose long-term research project Herbaria explored the historical presence and invisible labor of women in natural protected areas. Her work, spanning several years and multiple sites—including Las Lunas (Caguas), Casa Corretjer (Ciales), and Hacienda Margarita (Lares)—culminated in experimental workshops and drawings that trace the entanglements of flora, memory, and feminist eco-histories.
- **Llaima Suwani Sanfiorenzo**, filmmaker and interdisciplinary

artist, developed *Todavía la semilla* (Still the Seed), a short documentary that explores reforestation and environmental memory in Puerto Rico. The film, produced by Para la Naturaleza and partially supported by the Environmental Defense Fund, traveled through local and international film festivals, garnering multiple awards. Llaima also presented a talk titled *Cinema as a Conservation Tool* at Casa Ramón Power y Giralt, and her work was featured in a video-art loop installed at the same site.

The residency program fosters not only the creation of individual works but also ongoing dialogue across disciplines and geographies. It offers artists the opportunity to explore new methods of environmental storytelling, while inviting the public to see nature—and conservation—through alternative, often poetic, lenses.

By supporting artistic research and creative ecologies, Arte Para la Naturaleza contributes to a wider cultural shift toward ecological awareness, embodied learning, and relational forms of knowledge production.

Mónica Rodríguez: *Herbaria*

Artist Mónica Rodríguez developed *Herbaria* through several years of creative research and fieldwork in natural protected areas stewarded by Para la Naturaleza. Her project examines the often-overlooked relationships between women and the territories they inhabit—both human and botanical. Through site visits, drawing, documentation, and experimental workshops, Rodríguez invites us to imagine *Herbaria* as a feminist ecological practice.

The work was shaped by her time in Las Lunas (Caguas), Casa Corretjer (Ciales), and Hacienda Margarita (Lares). Across these sites, Rodríguez traced the imprint of women who lived, worked, or passed through these lands—asking how memory is held in plants, how care is inscribed in landscapes, and how knowledge is transmitted beyond official histories.

In collaboration with Beta-Local, Rodríguez led a series of experimental botanical illustration workshops that blurred the boundaries between art, science, and political ecology. Participants visited natural protected areas—including Cabezas de San Juan, Cañón San Cristóbal, and Finca La Escalera—and engaged in field-based observation, sketching, and conversation. They explored native and introduced species, their ecological roles, traditional uses, and the scientific languages that name and categorize them.

Back at Beta-Local in Santurce, these experiences were distilled into drawings, writings, and reflections. Rodríguez encouraged participants to unlearn rigid representational methods and instead follow curiosity, affect, and resonance—revealing *Herbaria* as a practice of seeing-with, rather than looking-at, the botanical world.

“I experimented with alternative forms of representing the history of feminism, environmentalism, and anti-colonialism in Puerto Rico through research, documentation, and identification of flora. Botanical illustration, for me, is a tool to trace these entanglements.”



Llaima Suwani Sanfiozenzo: *Todavía la semilla*

In 2024, filmmaker and interdisciplinary artist Llaima Suwani Sanfiozenzo joined Para la Naturaleza's residency program with a clear intention: to explore how cinema could act as a tool for ecological consciousness and cultural memory. The result was *Todavía la semilla* (Still the Seed), a poetic short documentary that centers on the vital role of reforestation in Puerto Rico's environmental and social recovery.

Raised in the Puerto Rican countryside and trained across Cuba, Germany, and Puerto Rico, Sanfiozenzo brings a global and grounded lens to her work. During her residency at Las Lunas, she collaborated closely with the Reforestation team, embedding herself in the rhythms of planting, tending, and remembering. Her filmmaking practice—rooted in participatory methods and slow observation—allowed her to listen deeply to the stories carried by trees, soils, and those who care for them.

On April 17, Sanfiozenzo presented her project in a public talk titled *Cinema as a Conservation Tool* at Casa Ramón Power y Giralt. She shared clips from *Todavía la semilla* and other works that blend environmental storytelling with embodied, place-based poetics. The event sparked rich dialogue about the potential of film not just to document, but to seed transformation.

Produced in part by Para la Naturaleza and supported by the Environmental Defense Fund, *Todavía la semilla* has already made an impact on the film circuit, receiving multiple recognitions:

- Best Local Documentary Short — Festival de Cine

y Derechos Humanos de Vieques, Puerto Rico

- Best National Documentary Short — Puerto Rico Film Festival
- Finalist — Natourale: Nature and Travel Festival, Germany

As part of her residency, Sanfiozenzo also curated a video-art loop installed at Casa Ramón Power y Giralt, featuring five short films that explored the convergence of conservation, memory, and creative translation. From a piano played by tree branches to the shimmer of a metallic flag responding to wind currents, the works invited audiences into a multisensory experience of interconnection.

Her year with Para la Naturaleza reaffirmed that storytelling—when rooted in land, community, and care—is a form of conservation.

Together, the residencies of Llaima Suwani Sanfiozenzo and Mónica Rodríguez reflect the generative potential of art as a relational and restorative force in conservation. Through image, sound, movement, and memory, these artists invite us to reimagine our entanglements with nature—not as distant observers, but as participants in its regeneration. Arte Para la Naturaleza is not merely a program; it is a practice of weaving ecological culture through creative resonance. As we move forward, we reaffirm our commitment to cultivating spaces where art can continue to seed care, provoke reflection, and help shape more just and biodiverse futures.



Sound Kite Ensemble: A Public Performance



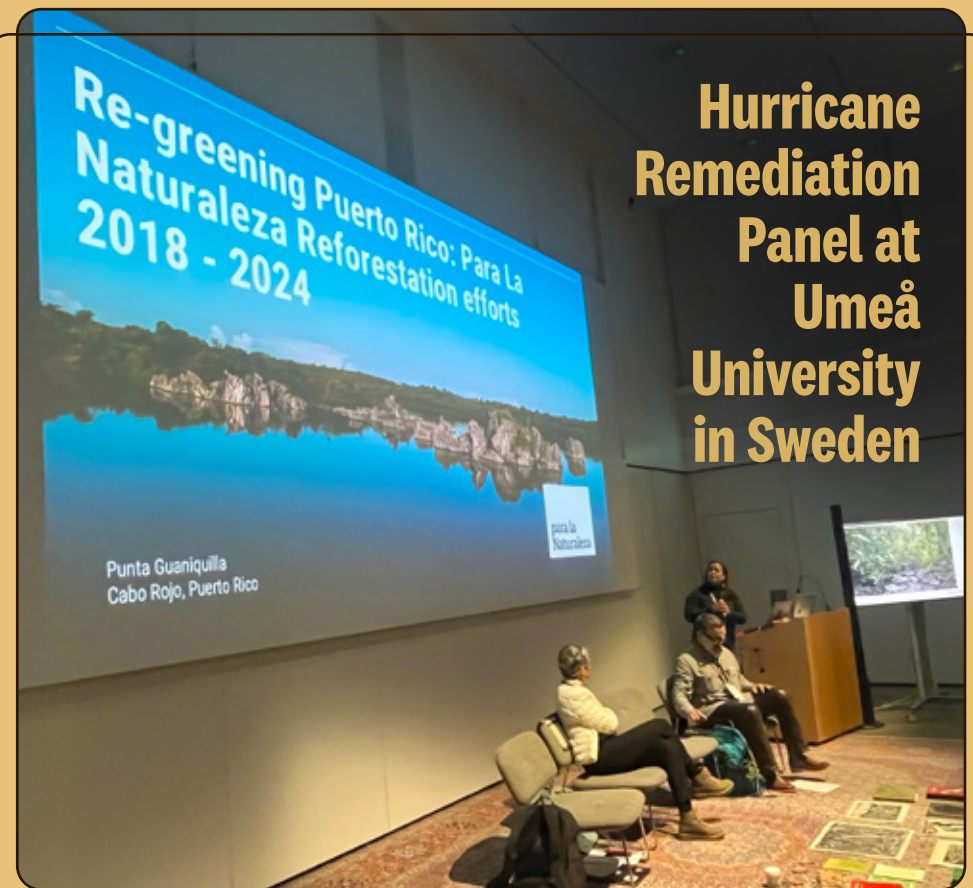
On October 20, 2024, the lighthouse at Cabezas de San Juan Nature Reserve became the stage for a multisensory public rehearsal of sound kites—aerial instruments that transform wind into sound. Led by German artist **Florian Dombois** and joined by thirteen Puerto Rican artists, this poetic experiment invited visitors into a unique auditory dialogue between humans, wind, and landscape. These “Triple Instruments”—a fusion of kite, string, and soundbox—captured the invisible movements of air and rendered them into vibrations, melodies, and tactile experience.

While the wind shaped music in Puerto Rico, a parallel performance unfolded in Sils Maria, Switzerland, where another group of artists launched kites in simultaneous exchange, creating a resonant connection across continents.

The ensemble expanded with inventive interventions: a metallic flag undulating at the lighthouse entrance gave form to the wind’s pulse, while an electric piano, activated by the swaying of tree branches, transformed a sea grape into a composer. Transparent threads tied to the branches carried their gestures to the piano keys, producing sound directly choreographed by nature.

More than 200 visitors experienced this ephemeral symphony—a call to listen differently, to attune to the non-human world, and to remember that we, too, are instruments within a living web. The event offered not only performance, but presence—a reminder that conservation can also be an act of wonder and reciprocity.

Hurricane Remediation Panel at Umeå University in Sweden



In December 2024, Para la Naturaleza’s Reforestation and Planting Plan Coordinator, **Juliann Rosado**, was invited to speak at the Hurricane Remediation panel hosted by Umeå University in Sweden. The event was convened by **Luis Berríos-Negrón**, a former Artist-in-Residence at Para la Naturaleza and now an UmArts Research Fellow in Art and Architecture. This panel was part of a larger collaboration with Umeå School of Architecture and Bildmuseet, rooted in urgent dialogue around climate justice and environmental recovery in the Caribbean.

Joining Juliann on the panel were Puerto Rican artists Karla Claudio Betancourt and Raquel Torres Arzola, whose creative practices—deeply tied to Caribbean ethnobotany, gender, and ecological storytelling—offered complementary perspectives on post-hurricane resilience.

Together, the panel explored Antillean imaginaries, ethnobotanical traditions, and the often invisible labor behind reforestation efforts. Anchored in lived experience, the conversation wove through the legacies of colonial disruption and the creative, grounded strategies of environmental repair emerging from Borikén and beyond.

Juliann presented “*Re-greening Puerto Rico: Para la Naturaleza’s Reforestation Efforts 2018–2024*,” a comprehensive overview of the organization’s restoration strategies following Hurricanes Irma and María. Her presentation highlighted the collaborative nature of recovery—centering community involvement, especially through the Citizen Botanist Program and its network of Volunteer Leaders. Her reflections were met with deep resonance, affirming Para la Naturaleza’s role as a model of holistic, community-rooted climate resilience.

Weaving the Way Forward: New Strategic Plan 2025 - 2030

Throughout 2024, Para la Naturaleza embarked on an in-depth process of reflection and renewal to shape a bold, forward-looking Strategic Plan 2025–2030. This plan charts a course for the next six years—one grounded in collaborative stewardship, ecological resilience, and shared responsibility. Developed through surveys, regional gatherings, and interviews with staff and board members, the plan centers the lived experience of our team and communities, while meeting international benchmarks for strategic rigor and impact.

The plan's five key pillars reflect our commitment to systemic transformation:

- **Climate Resilience**
Prioritizing nature-based solutions that mitigate climate change impacts and strengthen the adaptive capacity of ecosystems and communities.
- **Inherent Rights of Nature**
Affirming nature's intrinsic value and advocating for legal, ethical, and cultural frameworks that recognize ecosystems as living beings with rights.
- **Inclusive Historical Narratives & Restorative Justice**
Centering historically excluded voices—particularly women, queer folks, Indigenous, Afrodescendant, and differently abled communities—in conservation and land care.
- **Regenerative Economies**
Fostering local, cooperative models that redistribute resources, regenerate ecosystems, and reduce dependency on extractive systems.
- **Interdisciplinary & Solidarity-Based Alliances**
Weaving strong networks that

bridge science, education, culture, and community—locally and globally—to amplify conservation impact.

Three external consultants supported the plan's development:

- **Causa Strategies**, for facilitating inclusive, Spanish-led planning processes.
- **Dr. Bárbara Saavedra, Director of WCS-Chile**, who offered strategic insight from Latin American conservation contexts.
- **Biomimicry 3.8**, who brought nature-inspired systems thinking to reassess our internal structure.

The process was led by **Camila Marambio**, Co-Director of Ecological Culture, and **María Cristina Aponte**, Financial Management Accountant and Controller. Key milestones included a staff-wide survey, regional mini-encounters, a two-part leadership retreat, and participatory workshops that shaped the final strategy.

The result is a modular framework—flexible and action-oriented—through which cross-functional teams will develop detailed sub-plans in 2025. The Project Management Office (PMO) will play a key role in implementation, ensuring coordination and adaptability as the plan comes to life.

This plan is more than a document—it is a living invitation to align our work with the rhythms of regeneration, equity, and co-existence. It signals our readiness to move from protection to relationship, from urgency to caring, from conservation to ecological culture.

Land Trust Alliance

In March 2024, the Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico (CTPR) proudly received re-accreditation from the United States Land Trust Alliance (LTA), reaffirming its standing among the 450 land trusts nationwide that meet the highest standards of excellence in land conservation.

This recognition, renewed every five years, is more than a credential—it's a public affirmation of our commitment to permanent land protection, accountability, and transparent governance. Since its initial accreditation in 2012, the Conservation Trust has upheld these principles while expanding its impact across Puerto Rico.

Together, CTPR and Para la Naturaleza steward more than 40,000 acres of land, safeguarding ecologically significant ecosystems that form the living backbone of the archipelago. This work contributes to broader global goals, including the "30x30" conservation target—to protect 30% of Earth's land and waters by 2030.

As climate disruption intensifies, the role of accredited land trusts has never been more urgent. Our reaccreditation signals to communities, funders, and policymakers that we are a trusted and enduring force in the long-term defense of Puerto Rico's natural heritage.

Cascada El Ancón
Cañón San Cristóbal, Barranquitas

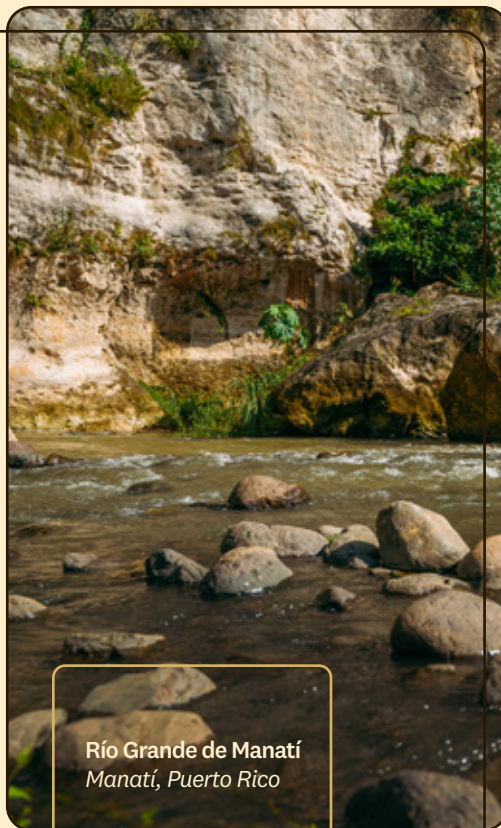
Territorios Vivos and the Inherent Rights of Nature

In the summer of 2024, Para la Naturaleza deepened its commitment to the global Rights of Nature movement by joining a certification seminar hosted by the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature Latin America (GARN). Representing the organization were President Fernando Lloveras San Miguel, Esq., Conservation Division Director Neida Pumarejo, Esq., and Co-Director of the Ecological Culture Unit and Curator of New Perspectives, Camila Marambio.

GARN is a diverse and global coalition of scientists, legal experts, Indigenous leaders, spiritual practitioners, and community activists who share a common purpose: transforming humanity's relationship with the planet by recognizing ecosystems as rights-bearing entities.

From this shared commitment emerged *Territorios Vivos*—a collaborative initiative born from Para la Naturaleza's Art Residency Program that evolved into a broad and participatory effort rooted in the Rights of Nature. This initiative catalyzed the formation of the *Coalición Boricua por los Derechos Inherentes de la Naturaleza*, a diverse alliance of individuals, collectives, and institutions working together to shift paradigms and restore relationality with the land.

One of the coalition's first major milestones was the co-creation of the *Declaración de Reconocimiento*



Río Grande de Manatí
Manatí, Puerto Rico

y *Defensa de los Derechos Inherentes de la Naturaleza*. This living document articulates ten guiding elements that frame the recognition, promotion, and protection of nature's rights across Puerto Rico. It is both a call to action and a shared ethical compass.

Among the first organizations to formally engage with the Declaration was El Caney, a Boricua Indigenous collective that is now collaborating with Para la Naturaleza to develop a series of internal workshops on ancestry. These sessions aim to strengthen the interpretive capacity of staff members by rooting their work in deeper understandings of Indigenous history and ecological kinship.

With *Territorios Vivos*, Para la Naturaleza is not only advocating for legal recognition of nature's rights—it is actively participating in a cultural shift that centers relational care, ecological reciprocity, and collective imagination.

International Union for Conservation of Nature

Para la Naturaleza continued to expand its leadership role within the international conservation movement in 2024 through its active engagement with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Representing Puerto Rico and the Caribbean region, the organization participated in three major IUCN events, reinforcing its commitment to collective, translocal action on behalf of biodiversity and climate resilience.

A key highlight was Para la Naturaleza's participation in the IUCN Leaders Forum, a high-level gathering

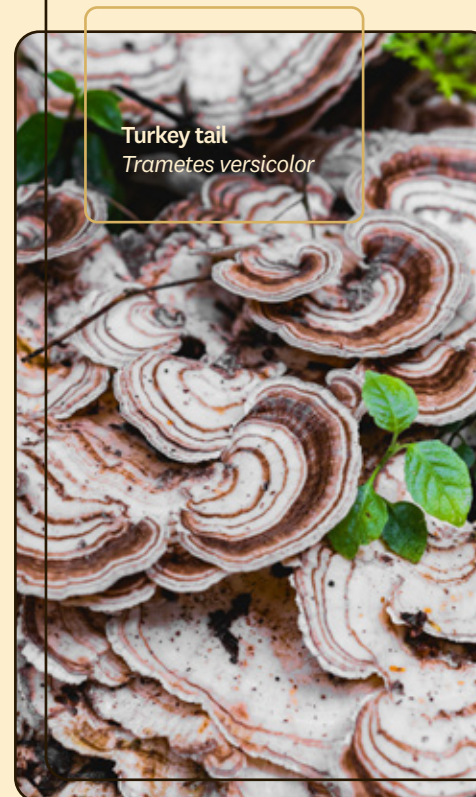
that fostered meaningful dialogue and collaboration across global conservation actors. The organization also took part in the National Council meeting in the Dominican Republic and the Regional Meeting for Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean, where its representatives presented ongoing work and deepened strategic relationships across the region.

At the heart of these efforts was Fernando Lloveras San Miguel, President of Para la Naturaleza, who was nominated by Dr. Sixto Inchaústegui for the role of Regional Councilor for the Caribbean on the IUCN Council—the Union's principal governing body. If elected during the upcoming IUCN Congress in Abu Dhabi in 2025, Lloveras would bring crucial Caribbean leadership to the table, amplifying the voices of small island territories and their unique conservation challenges.

Throughout the year, Para la Naturaleza also contributed to the development of IUCN's 20-Year Strategic Vision, providing feedback rooted in the organization's local experience and regional priorities.

In October 2024, Para la Naturaleza was honored to attend the 8th IUCN Regional Conservation Forum in Arlington, Virginia, where pressing issues such as climate change adaptation, habitat connectivity, youth engagement, and the 30x30 biodiversity target were discussed. The #NatureForAll campaign, which calls for inclusive and participatory conservation efforts, resonated strongly with the organization's own relational approach to conservation.

As Vice President of the IUCN Caribbean Regional Committee, Para la Naturaleza is committed to advancing the Union's mission of safeguarding nature and ensuring its benefits are equitably shared. Through this work, the organization continues to weave bridges across geographies, strengthening collective capacity to respond to ecological urgencies in the Caribbean and beyond.



Turkey tail
Trametes versicolor

Shaping Policy with Ecological Care

In 2024, despite the slower pace typical of an election year, Para la Naturaleza remained an active force in shaping environmental policy in Puerto Rico. The organization maintained a steady presence in legislative spaces, defending vital ecological protections while laying the groundwork for a more comprehensive and integrated public policy agenda for 2025.



Black-necked Stilt
Himantopus mexicanus

Advancing New Legislation: Riparian Conservation Easement

Para la Naturaleza played a lead role in developing and advocating for Senate Bill 1439, which seeks to establish the Puerto Rico Rivers and Creeks Riparian Conservation Easement Act. This proposed legislation introduces a 40-meter buffer zone along riverbanks to safeguard freshwater ecosystems from encroachment and degradation. The bill addresses both local conservation needs and the global climate crisis by protecting riverine habitats and the communities that depend on them.

This proposal is among the most ambitious legislative efforts for river restoration and conservation in Puerto Rico. It has garnered broad support from environmental and community-based organizations and reflects Para la Naturaleza's ongoing commitment to place-based advocacy informed by ecological science.

Strengthening Climate Policy

Para la Naturaleza contributed a detailed and strategic review of Puerto Rico's draft Climate Change Plan (P-MARCC), offering concrete recommendations to enhance its structure and effectiveness. The organization emphasized conservation as a central pillar for climate mitigation and adaptation and advocated for clearer governance frameworks and accountability measures.

Additionally, at the request of architect Fernando Abruña, the team provided specific feedback on the infrastructure section of the plan, including its exploration of carbon credits as a tool to move Puerto Rican industries toward carbon neutrality. These recommendations were presented in a public hearing in November 2023 by Neida Pumarejo, Esq., Director of Land Conservation and Legal Counsel for Para la Naturaleza.

In total, over 240 staff hours were dedicated to this critical review process between 2023 and early 2024, underscoring the organization's investment in shaping just and effective climate policy.

Legislative Monitoring and Advocacy

In 2024, the policy team monitored 299 environmental bills introduced to the Puerto Rico Legislature. Para la Naturaleza submitted 9 formal letters of commentary and participated in 6 public hearings, contributing its expertise to a wide range of conservation-related topics. One of the key moments was an invitation by Senate leadership to present on coastal conservation policy, recognizing the organization's credibility in addressing the urgent challenges of shoreline protection.

Para la Naturaleza also dedicated over 41 hours to evaluating and commenting on land use plans in Yabucoa, Utuado, and Cabo Rojo. In the case of Yabucoa and Utuado, the organization identified instances where municipal plans exceeded their authority by attempting to override existing environmental legislation. Additionally, Para la Naturaleza collaborated with Estudios Técnicos in the development of the Cabo Rojo Coastal Resources Master Plan, helping to ensure robust protections for sensitive coastal areas.

Participating in Energy Planning

As a member of the PR Energy Recovery and Resiliency Advisory Group, Para la Naturaleza submitted analysis and commentary on the use of agricultural lands for solar development under the PR100 Energy Plan. The organization also contributed to the design of a proposed job description for the PR Clean Energy presidency, advocating for conservation-aligned leadership within the energy transition.

One More Day: Building Community, Leaving a Common Legacy

In celebration of Earth Day 2024, Para la Naturaleza launched its first-ever Giving Day under the theme **One More Day** or *Un día más*. Centered on values of care, continuity, and interconnection, the campaign asked a simple yet powerful question:

What would it mean to offer one more day to the Earth—not just in metaphor, but through real, committed action?

This grounding question sparked deep reflection and inspired collective action. More than just a call for donations, the campaign invited supporters to imagine what we could collectively achieve if we offered the planet one more day for conservation, and regeneration.

A key feature of this initiative was the integration of our new donation platform, Fundraise Up. This intuitive, donor-centered tool allowed individuals to easily contribute, create peer-to-peer (P2P) fundraising campaign, and mobilize their networks. It made the donation process more personal, empowering supporters to share stories and raise awareness about conservation across Puerto Rico.

The results were inspiring. We raised a total of \$124,500, surpassing our original goal of \$100,000—proof of what’s possible when community and purpose align.

To close the year, we launched **A Common Legacy** or *Un legado común*, a year-end campaign that invited reflection on the legacy we hope to leave behind—not just for our families, but for the forests, rivers, pollinators, and communities who also call this archipelago home.

As we move into 2025, we carry with us the energy and commitment that emerged from both campaigns—a strong reminder that the path to conservation is one we must walk together.

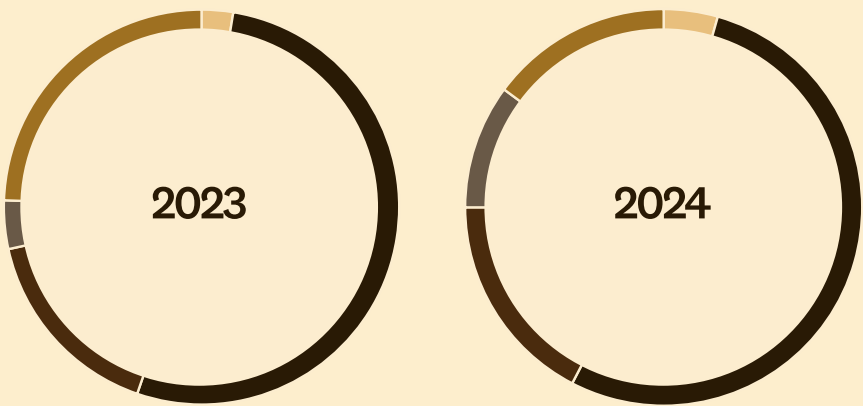
Coquí de la montaña
Eleutherodactylus portoricensis

photo:
Carlos Andrés
Rodríguez



Selected Financial Information

Sources of Funds



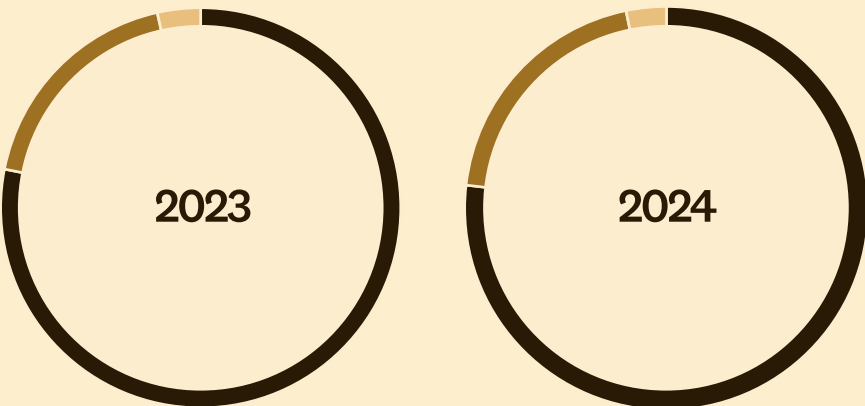
	2023	2024	%	
Income from Notes and Preferred Securities	\$ 871	\$ 1,262	45%	↑
Portfolio Income*	17,828	15,258	-14%	↓
Donations, grants and other gifts	5,515	4,983	-10%	↓
Other income	1,342	2,906	117%	↑
Land Donations and easements	8,271	4,261	-48%	↓
Total	\$ 33,827	\$ 28,670	-15%	↓

*unrestricted portfolio income
+ authorized endowment draw

During 2024, Para la Naturaleza’s funding sources decreased by 15% compared to the previous year, primarily due to its portfolio income and land donations and easements. This was offset by efficiencies and advancements in major projects, leading to reduced

fund usage. Below is a summary of selected financial information for Para la Naturaleza. Numbers for 2024 are unaudited. These figures do not represent the entirety of the financial statements. All amounts are presented in thousands (’000).

Operating Uses of Funds



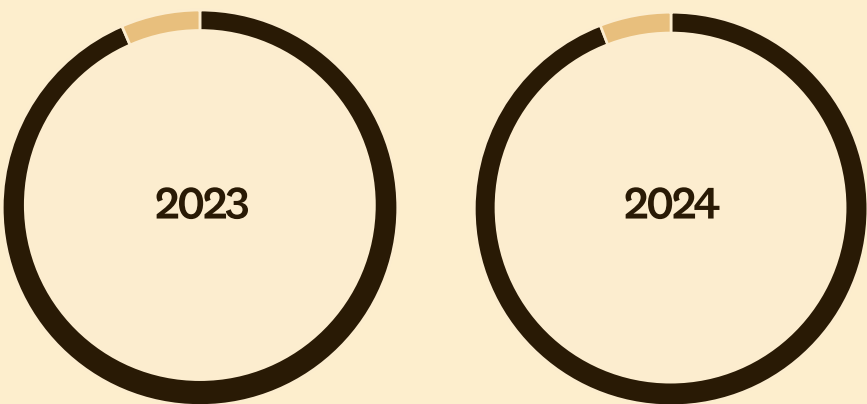
	2023	2024	%	
Program Services	\$ 23,421	\$ 20,639	-12%	↓
Management and Support	5,462	5,359	-2%	↓
Fundraising	980	865	-12%	↓
Total	\$ 29,863	\$ 26,863	-10%	↓

Capital Investments



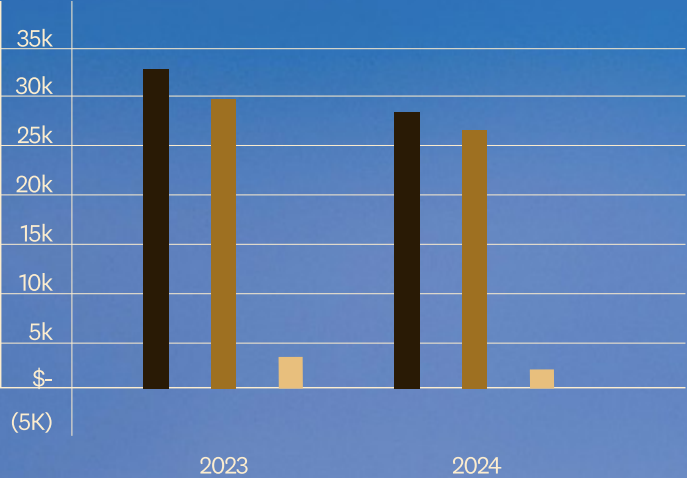
	2023	2024	%	
Land Acquisition	\$ 665	\$ 348	-48%	↓
Site Development and Improvements	1,112	715	-36%	↓
Furniture and Equipment	287	610	113%	↑
Total	\$ 2,064	\$ 1,673	-19%	↓

Total Uses of Funds



	2023	2024	%	
Operating	\$ 29,863	\$ 26,863	-10%	↓
Capital	2,064	1,673	-19%	↓
Total	\$ 31,927	\$ 28,536	-11%	↓

Revenue
Less
Operating
Expenses



	2023	2024	%	
Operating Revenues	\$ 33,827	\$ 28,670	-15%	↓
Operating Expenditures	29,863	26,863	-10%	↓
Excess Funds	3,964	1,807	-54%	↓



Gray King-bird
Tyrannus dominicensis

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\$1,000 – \$4,999

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TOTE
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\$100,000 +

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Natural Resources Conservation Service
Oriental
Popular
US Forest Service
US Fish and Wildlife Service



Short-horned grasshoppers
Tergoceracris luquillensis

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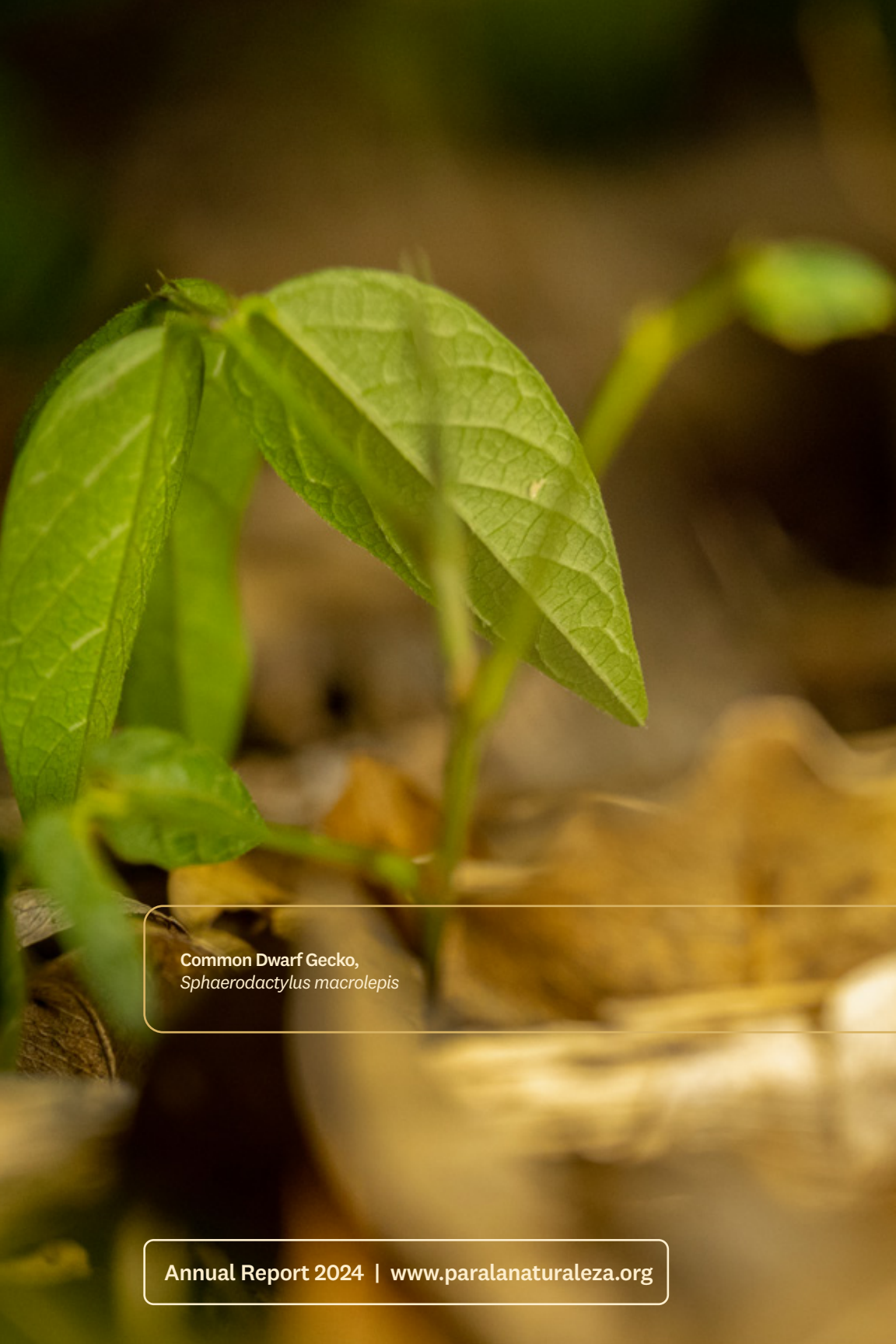
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* As of December 31, 2024



Common Dwarf Gecko,
Sphaerodactylus macrolepis