

Mediterranews®

TERRA PENINSULAR'S TRIANNUAL MAGAZINE

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ARTICLE | CONSERVATION

• Projects

• Our Inspiration: Conservation Strategy

ARTICLE | NATURAL
PROTECTED AREAS

• Nature reserves in
Baja California

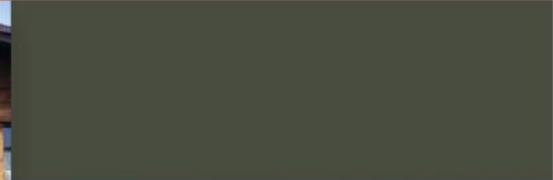
LEARN ABOUT TERRA

• About us
• Our Timeline

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of the magazine here



20
Terra
Peninsular
ANIVERSARIO



Thank you to all our interns and volunteers

who have helped us throughout the years. The impact we have made wouldn't be possible without you.

“ Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart ”

– Elizabeth Andrew

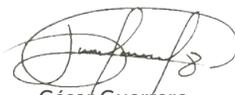
Editorial

The 20th anniversary represents the survival in time of an idea from a group of enthusiasts. Terra Peninsular started as an idea, there was a problem and there was a need; 20 years later, we continue achieving success and doing work that will remain here forever.

The organization is no longer a group of researchers with an enthusiastic idea of conserving and protecting unique natural areas. Now we are an organization made up of a lot of people who are working to orchestrate what is necessary to protect these natural areas.

I must say that it has not been easy, challenges and obstacles have appeared along the way. None of our great achievements would be possible if it weren't for the support of our donors, volunteers, foundations, organizations, authorities, communities, Board and staff members. My sincere thanks to all the people who have joined us on this adventure.

All the work of 20 years cannot be summarized in a single page, that is why we publish this special anniversary issue, we hope you enjoy this content and that you help us share the magazine with your friends, colleagues and family interested in knowing more about our beautiful Baja California.



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Mediterranews.

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ON THE COVER

Photo by Jonathan Villareal

Terra
Peninsular.

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▲ Agave shawii. Photo by Alan Harper.

Anniversary message

I can't believe that we have made it this far, and that we have been able to accomplish so much.

When we eight young and idealistic Mexicans and Americans started this nonprofit on Earth Day of 2001, we hoped that we might be able to protect some land for the future of Mexico. But the idea that we might actually have important reserves that protect endangered birds, plants and terrestrial animals, as well as promote the sustainable use by low-impact aquaculture and contribute to the economy of Baja California, was certainly well beyond our vision at the time. And then to have participated in the rediscovery of a kangaroo rat that was thought to be extinct, and find that our reserves are part of the critical habitat for its recovery would not have even been a dream at the time.



▲ Coyote. Photo by Terra Peninsular A.C.

What I love most is the community that we have helped form, and that we now are part of. We have collaborators and supporters from both sides of the border, and we are seeing our reserves being used for science and recreation as well as conservation. Books have been written about the plants and animals of our reserves, and we have watched new organizations spring up to help promote and secure the conservation of the native species of Baja California. Our staff has grown and become more professional, and finally we have (most of) the resources that we need to dedicate to our projects.

But what of the future? We are working with both individuals and park staff to improve the management of the Sierra San Pedro Martir. The Sierra is a place of solitude and recreation for the people of the peninsula, as well as home to many plants and animals that cannot be found elsewhere. To continue and strengthen the protection of this park is now part of our mission. But there are other habitats that we need to focus on as well. My own work has recently been focusing on the inland wetlands of the state, and we are realizing just how much has changed in these small but important habitats. I hope that Terra can find the resources to continue to expand its ambit in Baja California.

The global pandemic has dealt blows to all of us around the world, and yet, this has been one of our most productive years, in which, through extensive and open negotiation, we finally resolved some of the greatest threats to the management of our reserves. If our staff (and I want to thank them all) have been able to do this, in this year, I am sure that we will have even more successes to report at our next anniversary.

Alan Harper
Board member



About us

We are a nonprofit organization committed to the protection of ecosystems and wildlife in Baja California.

Our goal is to guarantee the long-term protection of natural areas. This is achieved through legal protection, adaptive habitat management and ongoing work with communities:

- **Identifying natural priority sites, and guaranteeing its long-term protection.**
- **Carrying out conservation actions in protected areas: biological monitoring, surveillance programs, attention to visitors, infrastructure maintenance and restoration.**
- **Promoting the active participation of society through community engagement, events, festivals, and environmental education.**

Thanks to consistent efforts over the past 20 years, we protect more than 30 000 acres of natural areas in Ensenada, Sierra San Pedro Martir, San Quintin and El Rosario.

One of our most important achievements is protecting nature reserves with a scheme that certifies private properties as protected areas with the federal government, and that guarantees its long-term protection.

In addition, we develop land projects in the Sierra San Pedro Martir, San Quintin and El Rosario, marine projects in San Quintin, beach clean ups, bird conservation projects in Ensenada, environmental ethics projects and educational projects, such as the Festival of the Birds.



▲ Valle Tranquilo. Photo by Jonathan Villarreal

We are an authorized grantee in Mexico and our conservation projects are carried out thanks to donations from individuals, companies and foundations around the world interested in protecting the natural heritage of the region. In addition, we launch fundraising campaigns and we have a strategy to generate resources that helps us achieve our mission.



▲ The landscape that we protect. Photo by Terra Peninsular.

Our Inspiration: Conservation Strategy

By Verónica Meza and Claudia Guzmán

Our team is very diverse, we are women and men from different career paths, diverse places of birth, different visions on life and even different tastes in music.

This diversity is what enriches our work and makes us value the points of agreement and coincidence; something that guides us is the commitment to our work and to fulfill the vision of the organization, not only because it's our way of living, but also because the passion and enthusiasm to preserve the natural beauty of Baja California is what inspire us.

We have a greater mission and a vision that we want to fulfill, and we work every day to achieve it. This diverse work group has developed a conservation strategy that unites us and contemplates the protection of habitats, their adaptive management and continuous work with communities; one does not exist without the other and they are in constant dynamism and construction.

*“Inspiration exists,
but it has to find you
working.”*

-Pablo Picasso



Land Protection

This strategy combines several actions to optimize the application of conservation efforts of a specific site. Broadly speaking, the protection and management of habitats is part of the territorial analysis of priority sites and the application of appropriate conservation instruments to achieve conservation and sustainability.

Through different instruments, the protection of natural spaces creates a legal basis for the adaptive management of the most important areas due to their biological value. Some of these instruments can be conservation agreements, land acquisition, federal coastal zone concessions for protection or collaboration through the creation of Ramsar sites, sites that are part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, Natural Protected Areas in different categories, Destination Agreements, among others.

Collaboration is a guiding principle for this strategy, which is why there is a very close link with the authorities of the state of Baja California, with the municipal and local authorities in the ejidos and communities; there is also a strong collaboration effort with the environmental sector at all levels.

The result of these collaborations have been thousands of protected hectares of land in Baja California, mainly in areas as important as San Quintin, Sierra de San Pedro Martir and Ensenada.

▼ Land protection actions. Photo by Terra Peninsular.





▲ Kangaroo rat monitoring. Photo by Jonathan Villarreal.



▲ Habitat restoration. Photo by Terra Peninsular.

Adaptive Management

This strategy emphasizes the importance of the human dimension in achieving long-term nature conservation success. Its objective is achieved through community engagement, knowledge sharing, community participation and self-management. In the same way, it works as a bridge to reach agreements between the conservation vision and the social vision, with the task of showing that both are compatible.

A fundamental part of the implementation of the strategy is education, the creation of relevant and valuable content and information related to the conservation of the environment, as well as the application of methodological tools that allow us to better understand the opinions and perception of the communities that interact with the natural spaces.

It is also essential to implement creative tools that allow us to innovate in the message and translate the field work and legal terms into symbols, identity, and promote the community adoption of this message.



Community Engagement

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▼ Art, conservation and community.
Photo by Terra Peninsular.



▲ Announcement of the campaign *La playa es de todos*.
Photo by Terra Peninsular.



▲ Capacity building with key stakeholders. Photo by Mirna Borrego.

It is also essential to implement creative tools that allow us to innovate in the message and translate the field work and legal terms into symbols, identity, and promote the community adoption of this message.



Successful Case Applying the Three Strategies

An example of how the three actions have been carried out successfully is *La playa es de todos* campaign (the beach belongs to everyone), which began in 2018 to protect the snowy plover in Bahía de Todos Santos. To date, four breeding seasons of the snowy plover have been protected in the beach area in front of Pacifica at Ensenada Bay.

To achieve this, key allies were invited, including Pacifica as a representative of the real estate industry. As part of the campaign we hosted environmental education

events, beach cleanups and the creation of outreach material, with the help and participation of volunteers and students.

So far, we have made a recount of the achievements implementing management and awareness actions, which drives us to the next level of considering to apply for a legal protection action in order to ensure the conservation of the snowy plover in this area. This model is an example of how the real estate industry can be a key part of conservation efforts.

▼ Education and community. Photo by Terra Peninsular.



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♦ **Verónica Meza** is the Land Protection Coordinator and **Claudia Guzmán** the Community Engagement Coordinator.



Our Timeline

In collaboration with research centers and civil society organizations, it was possible to cancel the Cabo San Quintin tourism megaproject, which put the bay's natural system at risk.

2002



Terra Peninsular was founded on April 20, 2001 in Ensenada, Baja California. 01

2001



2009

The federal government granted 5 concession rights to protect federal zone properties in San Quintin, this represents 32 hectares (79 acres) of wetlands and coastal areas.

2010

Six species of native plants of Baja California were included in the list of threatened or endangered species of the Official Mexican Standard 059.

The Valle Tranquilo Nature Reserve is formed through the acquisition of 2,710 hectares (6,696 acres) to preserve coastal sage scrub. 03

2011

The first ten California condors were reintroduced through a collaboration with CICESE, the National Institute of Ecology, and San Diego Zoo. 04

2012

Creation of the Punta Mazo Nature Reserve in San Quintin, through the acquisition of 832 hectares (2,055 acres) to preserve coastal sage scrub and coastal dunes. 05

The Valle Tranquilo Nature Reserve is expanded through the acquisition of 980 hectares (2,421 acres).

The first Destination Agreement in San Quintin Bay, called the Sudoeste Wetland, is obtained by the federal government.

Timeline

The Coalition for the Protection of Bahía San Quintín was formed, made up of Pronatura Noroeste, The Nature Conservancy, Pro Esteros and Terra Peninsular.

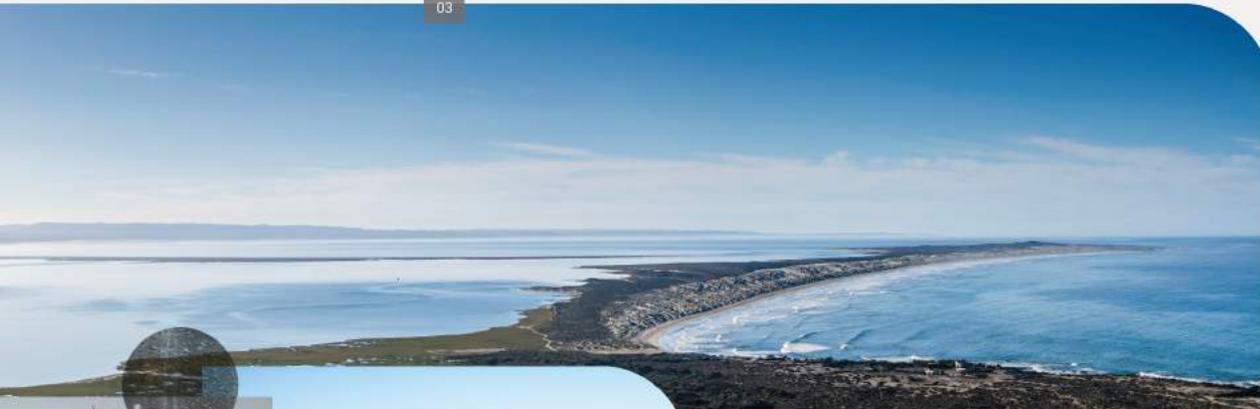
2006

2008

San Quintin Bay is part of the List of Wetlands of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention.

2008

The bay is designated as a site of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.



2013

We are an authorized grantee in Mexico.

The Valle Tranquilo Nature Reserve was certified as an area destined for conservation.

2014

The Punta Mazo Nature Reserve was certified as an area destined for conservation.

We signed a collaboration agreement with the federal government to assist in the protection and management of the Ramsar site in San Quintin Bay, and the areas destined for conservation.

2015

Creation of the Monte Ceniza Nature Reserve in San Quintín, through the acquisition of 803 hectares (1,984 acres) to preserve coastal sage scrub. 06

The first San Quintin Bird Festival was held with the purpose of raising awareness about the importance of birds and their habitats. 07

2016



We have been members of the Waterkeeper Alliance since 2016 to protect the quality of San Quintin Bay's water.



2017

The Monte Ceniza Nature Reserve was certified as an area destined for conservation. 08

Bahia de Todos Santos is part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.

37 sites of archaeological value were identified in the nature reserves of Punta Mazo, Monte Ceniza and Valle Tranquilo through a collaboration with the National Institute of History and Anthropology. 09



08

2017

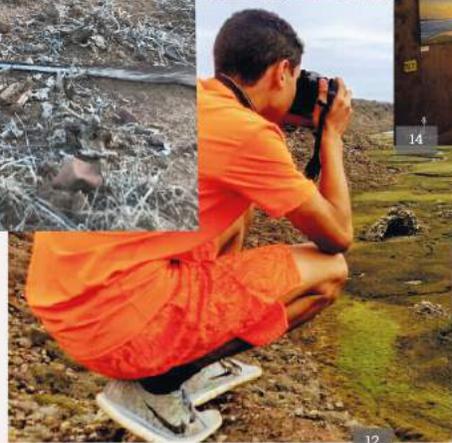
For 2017, a total of 14 Destination Agreements were granted to the federal government to protect and conserve more than 1500 hectares (3,706 acres) of wetlands and coastal areas.



10



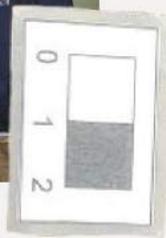
13



12



14



09



2019

In the area of influence of the Valle Tranquilo Nature Reserve, 16 sites were registered with graphic-rock manifestations of more than 1500 years old, through a collaboration with the National Institute of History and Anthropology. 13

Opening of the collective art exhibition "Travesia", which is made up of more than 60 pieces created by artists from San Quintin. 14

Thanks to the monitoring of mammals in the Valle Tranquilo Nature Reserve, we have verified the presence of badgers, coyotes, pumas, bobcats, deers, foxes, among others. 15

Collaboration to certify Los Montes de San Pedro, an area destined for conservation in the Sierra San Pedro Martir.

Between 2019 and 2020

157 snowy plover chickens were born in Ensenada thanks to the efforts of the "The beach belongs to everyone" campaign. 16

The Resilience Project was carried out to mitigate the effects of climate change and collaborated and update of the Management Program of the Sierra San Pedro Martir National Park. 17

2018

Members of the International Coastal Cleanup, an alliance of more than 30 organizations, companies, authorities, and academic institutions committed to collect the greatest amount of waste from the beaches.

Together with Pacifica at Ensenada Bay, we launched the campaign *La playa es de todos* to protect the snow plover nesting season in Ensenada.

We began a collaboration with the Youth Club of Nature Photographers Huellas Volcanicas, a group with the mission of using photography as a tool to promote the natural and cultural heritage of San Quintin. 12



2020

We received the Partners in Flight Award for the community design of the Bird Festival and the bird conservation projects. 18

Certified by the Mexican Center for Philanthropy in Institutional and Transparency Accreditation, and granted the Equivalency Determination determined by NGO Source. 19

Launch of a strategic plan for the protection, conservation, and sustainable management of the natural heritage of the Sierra San Pedro Martir National Park, and creation of the San Pedro Martir Fund to ensure that the activities of the plan are carried out. 20

2021

We collaborated with the State Government of Baja California to certify the San Quintin Nature Reserve. 21



Projects

Our time on this planet and what we leave on it represents an important part of what defines the generation to which we belong and with whom we interact.

Currently, the global context is defined by two fundamental elements that will decide the future, and that are our most valuable legacy: the care for nature and human health.

Each conservation action is designed with these two inseparable elements as a central axis; we pay attention to ecosystems and species, think about how to enrich the social value linked to the habitats that different communities share with wildlife, or propose conservation strategies that will pay off in the future, a future that could be even beyond our time.

During the last 20 years, we have been formulating, adjusting and reinventing projects in Baja California and the northwest part of Mexico. We would like to share with you some achievements that we have experienced during the implementation of our projects.

▼ Resilience Project in Sierra de San Pedro Martir.
Photo by Terra Peninsular.



Land Conservation

Sierra San Pedro Martir

During 2018 and 2020, we implemented actions to strengthen management effectiveness and resilience of natural protected areas threatened by climate change.

In this project, better known as the Resilience Project, several strategies were implemented to improve and restore the habitat of the sierra through an approach based on the adaptability of the ecosystem to climate change.

We helped to update the Management Program of the Sierra de San Pedro Martir National Park, and to certify three areas destined for conservation in the park's area of influence (Los Montes de San Pedro I, II, and III).

Together with community members and the national park, we also carried out actions to conserve forest soil, manage fire in order to reduce the occurrence of forest wildfires, and to capture carbon dioxide in biomass and forest soil.



▲ San Quintin kangaroo rat in Valle Tranquilo. Photo by Terra Peninsular.

Valle Tranquilo

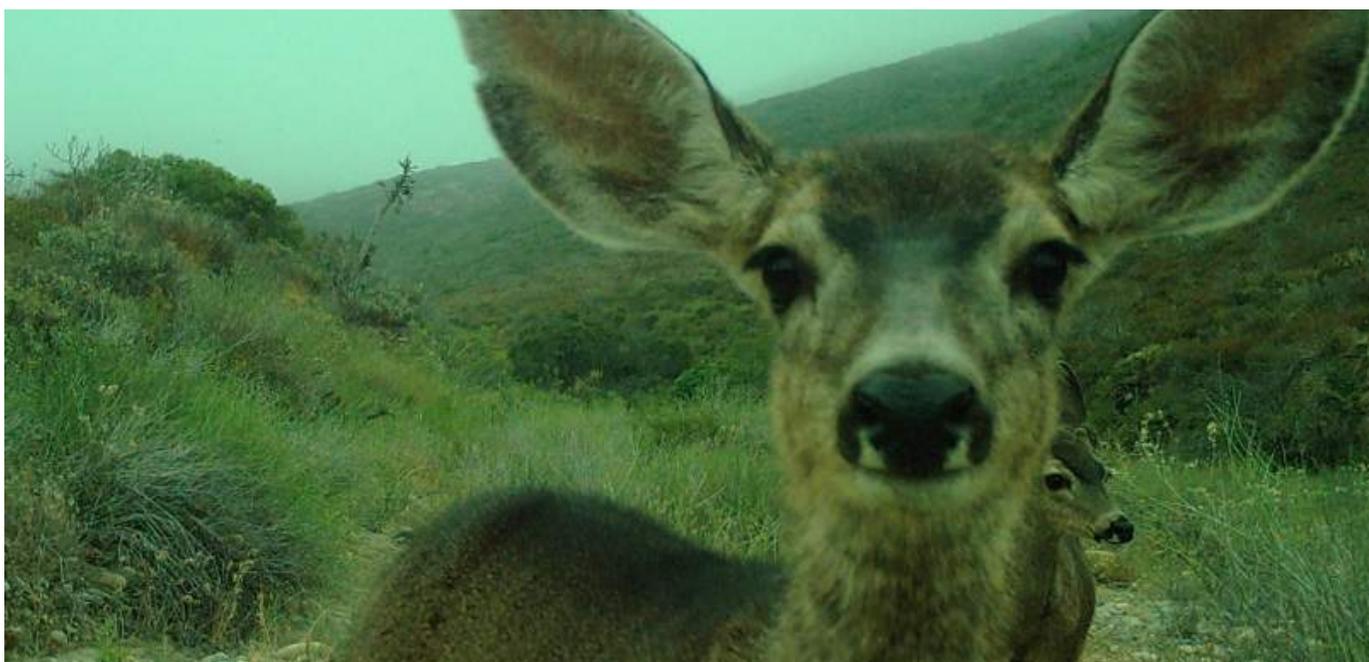
In order to know more about the species that live in the nature reserves, we began to monitor mammals in Punta Mazo, Monte Ceniza and Valle Tranquilo since 2018. This has allowed us to create the necessary tools that will guarantee their permanence in their habitat and to identify biological corridors and trails of great importance for these species.



▲ Monitoring with camera traps in Valle Tranquilo. Photo by Terra Peninsular.

With the help of camera traps, we have been able to photograph pumas, mule deer bucks with large antlers, healthy females and juveniles, gray foxes, wild cats and black-tailed hares. Moreover, recently we found an active badger burrow.

Since the rediscovery of the San Quintin kangaroo rat, continuous monitoring has been carried out in order to know its population status and its distribution range within the nature reserves. During these monitoring activities, mule deer juveniles, lactating females and more than 20 new sites have been found. The necessary actions for their conservation are already being implemented.



▲ Incredible fauna in Valle Tranquilo. Photo by Terra Peninsular.

San Quintin

From the beginning of 2021, we began to work on the San Quintin Bay Public Use Program. The development of this program seeks to identify the opportunities and concerns of every stakeholder in the bay through participatory workshops and research on all the scientific works carried out in the area.

This will allow us to establish the range of opportunities or experiences in order to regulate the activities that are carried out in the area, both by external visitors and by local users. The final objective of this project is to find a configuration of zones and management strategies that maximize the diverse use and conservation interests; thus, mitigating human impact and climate change and improving its resilience.

We are fond of alliances and collaborations. As such, during the last years, we have been working with the State Government to expand the conservation areas in San Quintin and create a natural protected area. This is a milestone in the application of this conservation instrument on state-owned land.

In addition, since 2018, we have been working on the restoration of the dunes of Punta Mazo Nature Reserve. The restoration actions have been a success: the vegetation has claimed its territory, and today, these roads are almost entirely covered with native plants.

◀ Dune restoration area in Punta Mazo.
Photo by Terra Peninsular.





▲ San Quintin Bay Public Use Program. Photo by Terra Peninsular.

▲ Bird protection campaign *La playa es de todos*. Photo by Terra Peninsular.

Marine Projects

San Quintin

In 2017, we created this conservation program aimed at implementing long-term biological monitoring in San Quintin Lagoon Complex rocky intertidal zones and wetlands. Both ecosystems are vulnerable to the impacts caused by human activity, so it is of utmost importance to generate tools that support its conservation.

The rocky intertidal zone is an environment governed by the tides, inhabited by species with certain characteristics that allow them to live in this unique ecosystem. These species are of both ecological and economic importance as they are easy to reach due to their proximity to human settlements.

Wetlands are another ecosystem present in the region that are considered highly productive. They are home to a great diversity of species and serve as resting and feeding areas for migratory birds.

Beach Cleanups

We have been members of the Waterkeeper Alliance since 2016 and through the San Quintin Bay Waterkeeper Program we seek to protect the water quality in the bay. We also participate in the International Coastal Cleanup. Every year in September, we commit to cleaning beaches in collaboration with civil society organizations, companies, government agencies, educational centers and the community in general.

Bird Projects

Bahia de Todos Santos

La playa es de todos campaign (the beach belongs to everyone) seeks to protect the snowy plover between April and August by reducing the disturbance of off-leash pets and feral dogs since 2018 in collaboration with Pacifica at Ensenada Bay.

Between 2019 and 2021, we have implemented a program to protect the snowy plover, thanks to the support of the Coastal Solutions Fellows Program, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and Manomet.

Environmental Ethics

Since 2018, we have been members of the non-profit association Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics that protects outdoor spaces by inspiring people to enjoy them responsibly, and by teaching them the seven principles of Leave No Trace. In two years, we took part in the graduation of two Leave No Trace Trainers generations at the Punta Mazo Nature Reserve in collaboration with NOLS Mexico (National Outdoor Leadership School). We are committed to continue promoting Leave No Trace's skills and ethics to support water quality, healthy natural areas, thriving wildlife and sustainable trails in the protected areas.



▲ Leave No Trace trainer course. Photo by Terra Peninsular.

Outreach

San Quintin Bay Bird Festival

As part of our Community Engagement projects, a bird festival is celebrated every year in San Quintin Bay, a unique site where wetlands, sandy beaches, marshes and extinct volcanoes have the necessary traits to provide shelter and food to thousands of birds.

The festival is an opportunity to connect communities with their natural environment, to bring them closer to the conservation work being done in the bay, and it is also a space to promote bird watching as a low environmental impact activity. This arouses curiosity and contributes to the knowledge of the communities.

The first festival was held in 2015, and today, it is designed following the Leave No Trace philosophy and includes artistic, educational and recreational activities.



▲ Bird Festival. Photo by Terra Peninsular.



Interpretive Tours and Academic Visits

Nature reserves are the ideal classroom for students and academics. Our Adaptive Management and Community Engagement strategies work hand in hand to provide educational and outreach experiences. Walks and tours throughout the nature reserves are very efficient tools for sharing the environmental value and biodiversity of the site and the conservation actions implemented through the different projects of the organization.



▲ Educational experiences. Photo by Terra Peninsular.

Photography Club

The Youth Club of Nature Photographers Huelas Volcanicas was founded in 2018 with the mission of creating educational messages through photography, as a tool to promote the natural and cultural heritage of San Quintin.

The club started with five students between twelve and sixteen years old, and is led by José Lamberto Hernández, who was a teacher at Te-lesecundaria #59 in La Chorera.

Until today, twelve students from San Quintin have joined the club and are committed to the conservation of their surroundings. Every year, we carry out training activities to promote the continued formation and growth of the club.

Art Exhibition

In 2019, we created the traveling art exhibition Travesia (which means journey). This exhibition is composed of different works carried out by members of the San Quintin community. Adults, children and elderly contributed to this annual show that gathers sensitive looks to the natural world in which they live. The photo exhibit was presented for the first time in the fifth edition of the San Quintin Bay Bird Festival, and it was later displayed in the exhibition rooms of the San Diego Museum of Natural History. The call for photographers is launched within the framework of each Bird Festival.

Internships

With the aim of promoting professionalism in the areas of conservation, research and community outreach, we have a collaboration agreement with academic institutions so that Biology, Oceanology, Environmental Sciences and Communication students, among others, can do their internships with us.

Credits

- ◆ Verónica Meza, Land Protection Coordinator.
- ◆ Claudia Guzmán, Community Engagement Coordinator.
- ◆ Vitza Cabrera, Tourism Projects Officer.
- ◆ Mirna Borrego, Education and Community Outreach Officer.
- ◆ Mariana Espinosa, Sierra de San Pedro Martir Project Officer.
- ◆ Héctor Sánchez, Valle Tranquilo and San Quintin Field and Operations Officer.
- ◆ Ricardo Domínguez, Marine Projects Officer.



▲ Three warrior women at the welcome sign to the reserve. Photo by Sofía Garduño.

Punta Mazo Nature Reserve

By Sofía Garduño

When I arrived in Ensenada 10 years ago, the inhabitants of the port talked about San Quintin as a desolate and sad town, something like Juan Rulfo's Comala, a place ruled by the wind and by ghosts. I had to go see it with my own eyes to discover that these images could not be further away from reality.

Once one ventures into the bay, everything changes. A few meters from the Transpeninsular highway and after crossing the fields of cucumber, raspberry, eggplant, strawberry and tomato, the landscape, the open skies, the 12 volcanic cones and the mist of the sea hugs you tightly and welcomes you to a wild and misunderstood paradise, because very few people take the time to get to know it thoroughly.



▲ Coastal dunes and volcanic cones at Punta Mazo's entrance. Photo by Sofía Garduño.

On several occasions, I visited different places in the bay and each time was a new discovery. I saw ospreys in search of their next prey, barn owls watching me curiously from a tree in broad daylight, kangaroo rats that used the night as a shelter to go unnoticed. But it was not until 2020, the year of the first global pandemic in history, that for the first time I had the opportunity to live for a week in the Punta Mazo Nature Reserve, and I was the happiest woman on Earth. Our mission was to work as park rangers and understand the problems facing San Quintin.

Natali, Mariana and I settled in El Refugio, located a few meters from the entrance to the reserve, and we immediately started seeing everything with new eyes. In the mornings, the same group of quails took exactly the same route around the house as a uniformed army squad of impeccable routine. At night, mice would make us startle and burst into laughter by running from side to side as we walked to the restrooms or made a surveillance round. Every sunrise and sunset were unique, the texture of the sky and its colors would never be the same again.



▲ A barn owl looking at me with curiosity in broad daylight. Photo by Sofía Garduño.



▲ A black-crowned night heron resting in a tree. Photo by Sofía Garduño.

As we walked through the sand bar and cleaned up the trash, we observed the perfect flight of the snowy plover and the least tern. We learned that the coastal scrub and dunes were not simple sand mounds or weed, but a complex and delicate home inhabited by plants that can only be found in this region, such as the Antony's liveforever with a poetic and vital name, the strawberry cactus and the Santa Barbara milkvetch, or my beloved sand verberna, a succulent with purple flowers that likes to live in the dunes, in extreme conditions of low humidity and high salinity, yet it flourishes as no other plant.

I also learned that there was a Baja California legless lizard that took the "Look ma, no hands!" to a whole other level, and that would surely leave Darwin astonished if he were still among us. I was in the home of the Baja California whiptail, a lizard with vibrant colors and a design on the same level or even above the *haute couture* of Paris. We had to walk carefully because the Baja California rattlesnake was also in its home, and as a great warrior it would defend its territory without hesitation. Sometimes, it warns you "Watch out, I have



▲ Sand verberna on the coastal dunes of Punta Mazo. Photo by Sofía Garduño.

fangs and I will not hesitate to use them", and other times one passes in such a hurry that it does not have time to tell you that it is beautiful but lethal. For this reason, I have always believed that it is important to enter nature slowly and with respect so that you give it time to guide you.

I remember that at night, we would listen to the coyotes, laughing quietly and I also laughed with them when remembering that before we left Ensenada,



▲ At El Refugio surveilling and making new friends. Photo by Sofía Garduño.



▲ An osprey resting on an abandoned boat. Photo by Sofía Garduño.

my colleagues warned me about a “wolf” that lived in the Southwest volcano and ate women that were my age. I thought: What a demanding wolf, I don't think there are many women my age around here, he will starve! The shelly deposits, as "windows to the past", remained in place as evidence of the passage of hunter-fisher-gatherers who lived in these lands hundreds of years ago and the ornamental objects that they made with abalone shells reminded us that we have always found beauty in our surroundings throughout human history.

The Punta Mazo Nature Reserve was certified in 2014 as an area destined for conservation, and it covers 830 hectares of pure magic. For this reason, my heart breaks when I think of all the garbage that we collected, and that reappeared the next day in the same place as if we had not cleaned anything; when I think that the extraction of cobble and volcanic stone is strongly affecting its coasts and the geomorphology of the territory and therefore, the species that live there; when I think about the coastal dunes being destroyed by motorized vehicles or

that many bird species are flying away due to the disturbance of their natural habitat. We just need to open our eyes to understand that the natural world is our home and our responsibility, and that we must cherish it and take care of it with gentleness, because procuring its balance is extremely delicate.

I felt very fortunate to be able to be immersed in nature during that week and more, being in the middle of a pandemic. We felt safe and free, and it was the perfect setting to witness the birth of a great friendship between three co-workers who did not know each other and who came out of there being stronger women with a clearer mind. Nature does that in people, it shows us the way and gives us all the answers. We just need to stop a bit to contemplate the miracle that this planet is.

Punta Mazo Nature Reserve



Location
San Quintin Bay,
Baja California



Area
830 hectares
(2050 acres)



Date of certification
October 24, 2014



Type of certificate
Area Voluntarily
Destined for Conservation

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> Stronger Than Ever

Areas Voluntarily Destined for Conservation

Text and photos by Verónica Rizzo / Land Protection Coordinator at TerraPeninsular

This article was translated by Anaïs del Arco and María Estrella Méndez

Mexico City, February 27 and 28, 2019. A meeting of experts, an ambitious work agenda and a celebration around the Areas Voluntarily Destined for Conservation (ADVCs for its initials in Spanish). Created 10 years ago as federal Natural Protected Areas, ADVCs have become one of the most promising and favorite tools of the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP in Spanish) for the protection of natural areas.

Currently a strategy is under development to promote and strengthen the ADVCs as a legal tool, this is to achieve the conservation of priority areas and species throughout the Mexican territory. And, why not? If in this ecosystem, the conservation of private lands has been promoted against all odds for at least the last 10 years, adding almost half a million hectares and involving more than 84,000 people to the actions of conservation of valuable spaces of natural wealth.

The ADVCs have been consolidated as a safe path for the conservation of the most biodiverse and important areas, because they are created with conviction of the owners and managers of the land, demonstrating that governance is the base of radical changes in our country.

The ADVC strategy seems to be stronger and more serious than ever, and a commitment was made to protect 3 million hectares (2,971,053 acres) in the following years using this conservation tool.

Read the full article on our blog Terra Stories: <http://www.terrapeninsular.org/en/blog/>



Celebrating 10 years of the creation of ADVCs as Natural Protected Areas in Mexico.



Chair speakers are situated in a meeting at the Chamber of Representatives, showing the search and growth of the Natural Protected Areas.



At the Lobby of the Senate was presented a presentation on the search for ADVCs in Mexico.



From left to right: Oscar Salazar, Executive Director of Terra Peninsular; Beatriz Martínez-González, President of the Chamber of Representatives; Susana Rodríguez, Chamber Change and Victory Movement at the Chamber of Representatives; and Andrés Ramírez, National Commissioner of Natural Protected Areas.

TERRA NEWS

18 Years of Conservation for Baja California

Text by Bárbara Román / Development and Communication Leader at Terra Peninsular

The Baja California peninsula is an area of great ecological importance and a biodiversity hotspot that is rapidly disappearing due to the unconscious growth of cities. To counteract this loss of habitat, Terra Peninsular has focused on land protection in Baja California since 2001.



Photo: Mirra Borrero

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Monte Ceniza Nature Reserve

By Vitza Cabrera and Mirna Borrego

The Baja California peninsula is one of the largest in the world. It is a region that is home to a great diversity of flora and fauna and where the wonderful duality of sea and coastal scrubland intermingle to form surprising places. One of those places is San Quintin Bay and its volcanic valley.

Monte Ceniza Nature Reserve is found here. The volcano, which gives the reserve its name, was formed approximately 125,000 years ago, making it one of the oldest volcanoes in the valley.

Life here may seem scarce and desert-like, but if you take a close look, you will notice that there is a great diversity of species, colors and textures. In addition to this, the reserve is surrounded by the bay, a paradise that has the necessary traits that allow oyster farming; a delicacy of the ocean.

Its vegetation is very particular, and it may seem harsh as thorny bushes and rosette-shaped plants abound. Nevertheless, this vast land dominated by coastal scrub is bathed by the sea breeze, allowing a countless number of unique plants to take over the environment. This includes some plants that are not found anywhere else in the world.





▲ The San Quintin volcanic valley can be seen from Valle Tranquilo. Photo by Jonathan Villarreal.



▲ San Quintin kangaroo rat. Photo by Antonieta Valenzuela.



▲ Blue herons can be seen in the reserve. Photo by Antonieta Valenzuela.

Some of the succulents and cacti that will amaze you are Anthony's liveforever, knife-leaved liveforever, coast hedgehog and barrel cactus.

The reserve is home to a great diversity of mammals and reptiles, so you must be very respectful as you go. During the day, it is easy to find traces of the rattlesnake, a threatened species in Mexico. If you look closely, you will be able to find the Baja California whiptail hiding in the sand near the wetlands; and if you are lucky and wait for the sunset, you will surely be able to see a coyote passing by.

All species depend on the protection and conservation of this site, but a particularly fragile species is the San Quintin kangaroo rat, which was thought to be extinct up until 2017 due to the agricultural expansion and the consequent fragmentation and loss of its habitat. As San Quintin is an important agricultural center, this situation has spread throughout the region in recent decades.

For those who love birds, this site is ideal to enjoy bird watching, especially between autumn and winter. For example, you will be able to see the black brant flying, a goose that makes its journey from Alaska to Ensenada every year, or the curious brown pelican, and of course the amazing golden eagle.

Like many of the areas of the bay, Monte Ceniza Nature Reserve is steeped in history. Some 8,000 years ago, hunter-gatherer-fishers roamed these areas, delighting in their beauty and using each of their valuable resources.

At least nine archaeological sites have been identified, but it is possible that there are many more. Walk carefully as you could find shells or even fragments of points or materials that were used thousands of years ago. Remember not to take anything with you as these are highly valuable elements of our historical heritage, so let other people discover these fragments of the past.



If you want to take a memorable memory with you, we invite you to go up to the Monte Ceniza interpretive station, which was built with the support of the surrounding communities. The station is in the center of the reserve and almost at its highest part. A small trail will lead you to a bench where you will be able to see the entire bay. Be sure to take a break and enjoy the wonderful view.



▲ View from the Monte Ceniza station. Photo by Estefany Maya.

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♦ **Vitza Cabrera** and **Mirna Borrego** work as Tourism Projects Officer and Education and Community Outreach Officer, respectively.

Monte Ceniza Nature Reserve



Location
San Quintin Bay,
Baja California



Area
803 hectares
(1984 acres)



Date of certification
April 18, 2017



Type of certificate
Area Voluntarily Destined
for Conservation



▲ Photo by Laura Tamayo.





▼ Photo by Jonathan Villarreal.



Valle Tranquilo Nature Reserve

By Héctor Sánchez

The Valle Tranquilo Nature Reserve is a protected area located in ejido Reforma Agraria Integral in El Rosario, Baja California.

Before being a nature reserve, the area was a small ranch owned by a founding family from El Rosario, whose main activities focused on cattle ranching and agriculture with an approach that always sought respect for nature. Due to its geographical traits which include valleys and hillsides with grasslands, its conditions are ideal for cattle grazing.

Preserved in perfect condition, the site was acquired by Terra Peninsular and subsequently certified as an Area Voluntarily Destined for Conservation on October 24, 2013.

The reserve is located within the California Floristic Province, one of the 35 biodiversity hotspots in the world and the most floristically diverse area in temperate North America. It is also located in the transition zone between the limits of the Mediterranean region in northwestern Baja California and the central desert region of the peninsula. For this reason, the convergence of species from both ecosystems generate a unique biological richness.

As we enter the reserve, this transition zone is noticeable. In the northernmost part of the reserve there are large valleys and canyons covered with coastal scrub vegetation such as agaves, barrel cacti, live forever plants and sour pitaya.

We can also find a unique and impressive place called Mesa Shawii, named for the great amount of agaves found in the reserve. Some of them are more than three meters high.

426 plant species and subspecies have been identified, representing more than 75% of the total number of species in the region: 382 of them are native species, 57 are endemic, and 3 are listed in the official Mexican regulation NOM-059-SEMARNAT-2010.

Many plants are used by the local community of El Rosario as medicinal plants or as food. Bluedicks are one of the most interesting ones as they have been eaten by the native inhabitants for more than 1,500 years.

This vegetation and climate give shelter to a large number of mammals such as puma, mule deer, gray fox, badger, black-tailed hare, cottontail rabbit, as well as birds such as the red-tailed eagle and the California quail.



▲ Photo by Jonathan Villarreal.

Thanks to constant monitoring with camera traps, we have identified important corridors within the reserve and neighboring areas, and we have also been able to photograph the great richness and abundance of medium and large mammals and to obtain recent records of juvenile, pregnant female, and lactating mule deer.

In Valle Tranquilo Nature Reserve, the San Quintin kangaroo rat was rediscovered between January and February 2018. A group of researchers from the San Diego Natural History Museum along with some team members of Terra Peninsular rediscovered the San Quintin kangaroo rat. Today, we continue to monitor this species in order to know the status of its populations and distribution. Until now, we have found new sites and burrows with lactating females and juveniles.

Regarding its archaeological importance, in 2017 the National School of Anthropology and History and the National Institute of Anthropology and History visited the nature reserve in order to locate and record archaeological sites. A total of 9 shell middens and 5 sites where materials such as rock tools and obsidian (an uncommon material in the area) were recorded.



▲ Photo by Jonathan Villarreal.



▲ Photo by Jonathan Villarreal.



▲ Photo by Jonathan Villarreal.

One of the most important fossil sites in Mexico is also located in the southern part of the reserve. Near the area known as El Gallo, a large number of dinosaur, turtle, crocodile, lizard, mammal, and fish fossils have been discovered. It is a site famous for its more than 70 million years old large ammonites and bivalves.

Moreover, in 2019, 16 sites were found in that southern zone and adjacent to plots of land ow-

ned by inhabitants of El Rosario. These sites contained dozens of graphic-archaeological manifestations. Most of them were petroglyphs that were at least 1,500 years old. This project was conducted together with the National Institute of Anthropology and History.

All of the characteristics that are reflected in the Valle Tranquilo Nature Reserve show us its great ecological, archaeological and social value.

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♦ **Héctor Sánchez** works as the Valle Tranquilo and San Quintin Field and Operations Officer.

Valle Tranquilo Nature Reserve

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 **Location**
El Rosario,
Baja California

 **Area**
803 hectares
(1984 acres)

 **Date of certification**
October 24, 2013

 **Type of certificate**
Area Voluntarily Destined
for Conservation



▲ Photo by Alejandro Arias.



▲ Photo by Jonathan Villarreal.



Collaborations to Create Areas Destined for Conservation

By Verónica Meza

During the last 20 years of work to preserve the natural beauty of our state, many partners have been part of the projects to support the creation and maintenance of nature reserves certified as areas destined for conservation.

In addition to these nature reserves, there are other certified areas that have been managed in coordination with other collaborators. This has allowed us to expand the conservation areas of Sierra San Pedro Martir and San Quintin, a wetland of international importance.

These two experiences are an example of the importance of sharing an inclusive vision that seeks to ensure that conservation efforts are achieved through alliances and the sum of joint efforts.





▲ Photo by Mariana Espinosa.

Los Montes de San Pedro

In 2019, a family of landowners received 3 certificates from the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas to protect more than 4,500 hectares (11,000 acres) in the Sierra de San Pedro Martir National Park's area of influence.

We participated in this certification process by integrating the technical file and by providing managing support. This effort was part of the conservation actions of the Resilience Project of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) which sought to implement climate change adaptation measures.

Currently, these three areas are preserved thanks to the good management of their owners and the implementation of various ongoing projects in collaboration with the federal government.



▲ Photo by Verónica Meza.

San Quintin Nature Reserve

Recently, the first state natural protected area in Baja California was certified. The San Quintin Nature Reserve is a 201-hectare site (496 acres) that precedes a state system of protected natural areas that seeks to protect important ecosystems.

This new protected area joins the other two (Punta Mazo and Monte Ceniza) already protected in the bay, and that are part of the San Quintin lagoon complex and volcanic field.

This nature reserve is owned by the State Government and managed by the State Secretariat for Sustainable Economy and Tourism, with which we collaborate in developing coordinated actions that allow us to conserve priority sites both in San Quintin and San Pedro Martir.

Examples of synergy and collaboration between organized civil society, landowners, communities and the State Government such as this one lay the foundations so that different sectors work for the protection of important wildlife areas; undoubtedly, this effort represents a success for the conservation of nature in Mexico.



▲ Photo by Roberto Chino.



▲ Photo by Terra Peninsular.



▲ Photo by Roberto Chino.

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Verónica Meza is the Land Protection Coordinator.
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What Does the 20th Anniversary Mean to You?

By Charlotte Vizzuett and Roberto Chino

"For me, 20 years of Terra Peninsular is a reminder that this project is worthwhile, that this project is the result of a lot of good will, of people interested in doing things well and generating collective benefits. It fills me with pride to know that I'm part of a solid, honest, fitting project that is going forward and will be here forever, 20 years is just a little bit of what this project represents."

-César Guerrero

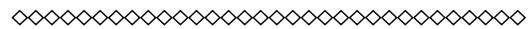


"For me the 20th anniversary speaks of a commitment from its people, its staff, the communities where we work, that what we are doing is on the right path; it would be impossible to think of someone doing the same thing wrong for twenty years, it is practically impossible to think. For me, 20 years of Terra are a reaffirmation that we are doing the right thing."

-Rosario Álvarez

"When you embark in a project like Terra, you don't know what direction it's going to take, where it's going to take you; when we started Terra, the idea was to work on the entire peninsula, that's why it's called Terra Peninsular, and we ended up working in San Quintin and a part in El Rosario in Valle Tranquilo, but San Quintin became our flagship. 20 years represents that large projects such as environmental protection in spaces like San Quintín are possible."

-Eduardo Palacios



"Something that makes me very proud is that the team leading the organization has been able to have so many achievements and we're still here. The fact that we are recognized nationally and internationally for our land conservation work; the work we do in Mexico can inspire Mexicans to conserve more, inspire people who are just learning about conservation and the value of nature, that they may develop a much stronger relationship with nature and that through that relationship they take measures to conserve land, either through donations, talking with their friends about this project or creating new conservation projects."

-Rosi Bustamante

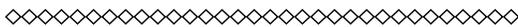




▲ Photo by Michael Ready.

"Let's say that Terra has been a difficult child to raise, I think the first 10 years were very very difficult, we were about to throw in the towel several times, when we reached the 15th anniversary we felt that we were finally presentable. Reaching this 20th anniversary already gives us the maturity of an association recognized at least nationally, so I believe those 20 years of work are accompanied by the proof that we are a hard-working, trustworthy, transparent organization."

-Horacio De la Cueva

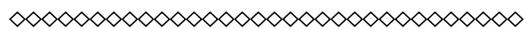


"For me it is really a pleasure to have reached the 20th anniversary and that I can be part of the organization that will continue growing, that its influence will grow more and that we can be more ambitious with our objectives and the scope of work we have as an organization for the benefit of the Baja California community."

-Sergio Hiraes

I once heard a talk by a world's famous conservation biologist and he said that if he got up in the morning and thought about the state of the world he'll never get out of bed because it's so depressing, but what keeps him going and gives him hope is that all over the world there are hundreds, thousands even hundreds of thousands of local groups who have picked a region, somewhere they love that's important to them and are working on it, because conservation ultimately has to do with local circumstances; and so Terra Peninsular represents that to me."

-Dan Silver



"The real challenge when you are doing land conservation, as we are, is you can't stop. With land conservation is a responsibility you retain forever and that is really the hardest for any organization like Terra that it's dedicated to something para siempre that needs to be continued. And 20 years is a really, really good start, but it's always a challenge and it's always a discussion we are having: how much do we want to do new things, how much do we keep doing what we are already doing. The reach of our 20th anniversary makes me feel really good, because it means we have actually figured some of that out, and with luck we are going to continue to protect the lands that we are working on."

-Alan Harper

Watch the full interviews on our YouTube channel www.youtube.com/TerraPeninsular



SENTINELS

OF BAJA CALIFORNIA

The magic of the peninsula lies in its extravagant nature, this space of contrasts between dunes and sea, desert and snowy forest.

The **Sentinels of Baja California** are all the people who love this peninsula and treasure the memory of the first sunset, the first view of the sea or the first walk through its ancestral paths. Through monthly contributions, they join this effort to protect the natural spaces that make this corner of the Earth unique.

We love Baja California as much as you do. Join us today and become a sentinel!

*"NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL GROUP
OF THOUGHTFUL,
COMMITTED CITIZENS CAN CHANGE
THE WORLD."*

-Margaret Mead

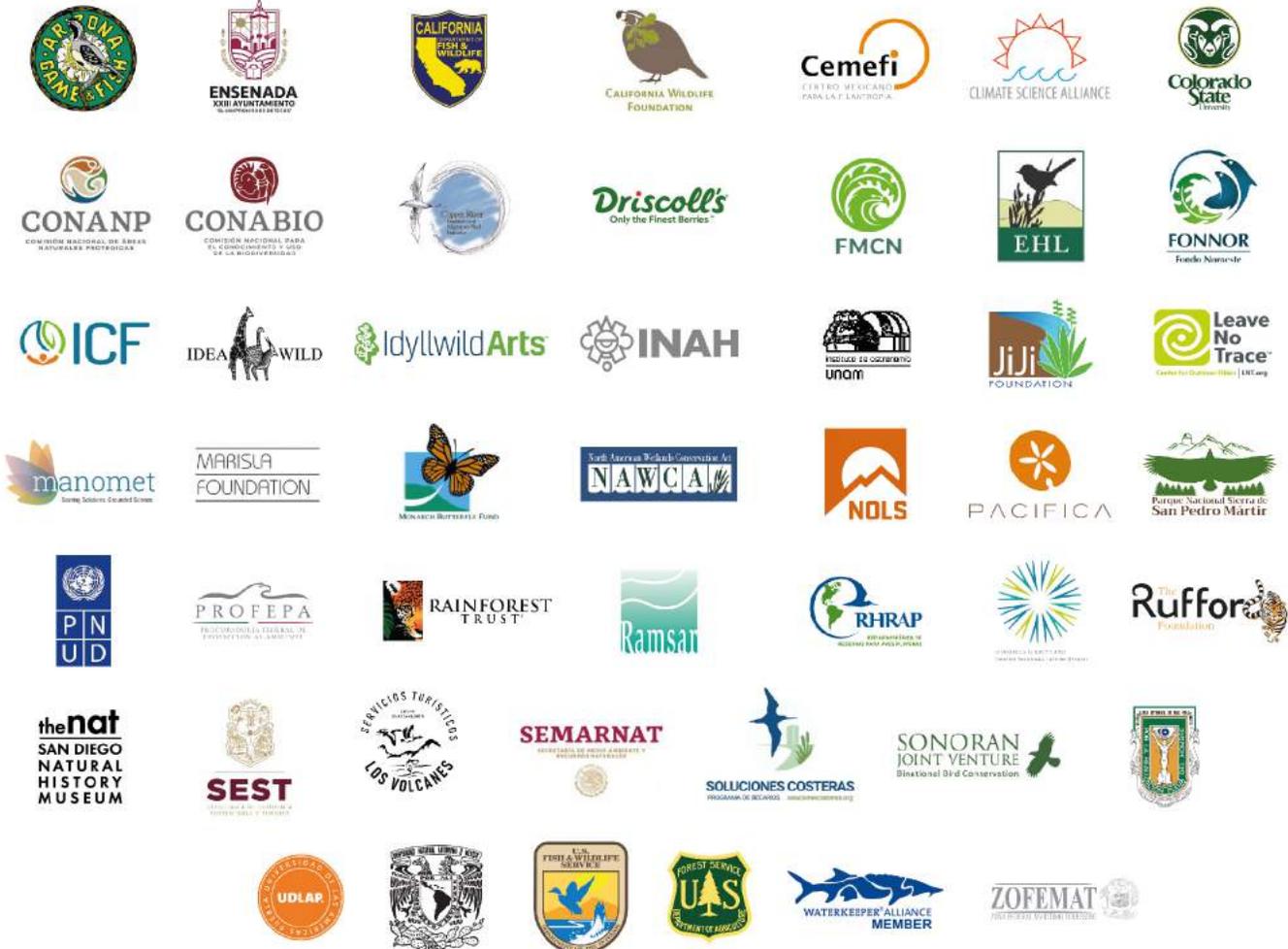


To learn how to be part of this movement, please contact Charlotte Vizzuett at charlotte@terrapeninsular.org



“ The nice thing about teamwork is that you always have others on your side ”

MARGARET CARTY



Publishing this magazine was possible thanks to the support of our donors and volunteers.