# Spizaetus

Neotropical Raptor Network Newsletter

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*Harpia harpyja* in Panama

*Spizaetus isidori* in Colombia

*Ictinia plumbea* in Venezuela

IV Neotropical Raptor Conference

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***Cover Photo***
A pair of Harpy Eagles *Harpia harpyja* in the Reserva Biologica Limoncocha, Ecuador © Jorge Vera

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*The NRN is a membership-based organization. Its goal is to aid the research and conservation of Neotropical raptors by promoting communication and collaboration among biologists, raptor enthusiasts, and other conservationists working in the Neotropics. To join please e-mail the NRN coordinator, Marta Curti, at mcurti@peregrinefund.org, stating your interest in Neotropical raptor research and conservation.*

# From the perspective of gender: conservation of forests inhabited by Harpy Eagles in Darien, Panama

By: **Yinela Salazar**[1,2], **Osiris Rodríguez**[1,2] and **José de Jesús Vargas González**[1,2]
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Within the framework of the conservation of an emblematic species like the Harpy Eagle (*Harpia harpyja*), The Peregrine Fund developed a project, with the support of the United States Forest Service (USFS), which aims to restore and protect the forests of Darien, Panama. This region containts essential habitat for this eagle.

This initiative adopts a comprehensive approach that links ecosystem conservation with gender equality, aligning with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5 and 13, focused on gender equality and climate action, respectively.

Through the implementation of community forest nurseries, this project seeks to strengthen the role of indigenous women from three communities, promoting their participation in the management and restoration of the natural environment. These women will be trained in reforestation techniques and native plant production, which will not only contribute to the recovery of the Harpy Eagle's habitat, but also to the improvement of forest cover, which in turn supports the mitigation of the effects of climate change.This gender approach to conservation recognizes the crucial role of women in the sustainable management of natural resources and their potential as agents of change in their communities. By integrating women into this process, the project not only contributes to the preservation of the forest that sustains biodiversity, including the Harpy Eagle, but also promotes the economic and social autonomy of these communities, promoting more inclusive and equitable development.

**General Objective**

Strengthen the sustainable management of natural resources in Harpy Eagle habitats by empowering indigenous women through the creation and administration of community forest nurseries.

**Specific Objectives**

1. Train twelve women from three indigenous communities to run nurseries, and to create a seed

bank of threatened native species and fruit trees significant for the Embera and Wounaan diets.

2. Implement a nursery management system that uses advanced tools, such as geographic information systems (GIS) and mobile applications, for phenological monitoring of seed trees and monitoring of reforested areas.

**Methodology**

This project follows a participatory approach that combines traditional practices and modern techniques with technological tools to strengthen community forest management. The key stages are:

*Training.* Twelve Emberá and Wounaan women will be trained in techniques to identify, collect, and care for seeds of native and fruit species that are key to their diet and ecosystem. Additionally, they will learn germination, irrigation and pest control practices, adapted to the local environment to ensure plant survival. The training will include sustainable management of the nursery, promoting efficient use of resources and seed registration for continued reforestation. This will promote the restoration of Harpy Eagle habitat and community self-sufficiency.

*Nurseries.* The collected seeds will be grown in three nurseries and then used to reforest degraded areas, promoting the recovery of Harpy Eagle habitat and local biodiversity and improving communal production farms. This process will include awareness campaigns aimed at the community to promote the value of reforestation, in addition to involving residents in the mainte-

***Figure 1.*Mrs. Berta Minguizoma, agroforestry and conservation mentor, part of the Gender Equity Planting Program, reforesting a farm in La Marea. Photo © Edixon Grajales**

nance and continuous monitoring of reforested areas.

*Technology Integration.* GIS and mobile applications will be used to map and monitor seed trees, collecting key phenological data such as flowering, fruiting, and species health. This information will optimize nursery management, and enable informed decisions. The technology will also facilitate efficient and real-time supervision, strengthening the sustainability of the restoration.

*Community Involvement.* Regular meetings and workshops will be held with the community to strengthen collaboration and ensure that their traditional knowledge is integrated into all phases of the project. These activities will allow the sharing

***Figure 2 (left).*** **From left to right, Celmira Upigama, Nedis Mosquera, Gladilsa Dogirama, Marlen Grajales, and Yinela Salazar, young Emberá women who are part of the Gender Equity Planting Program for conservation. Photo © Fernando Quintana**

***Figure 3 (right).*** **Celmira Upigama, agroforestry mentor for the Gender Equity Planting Program, applying her knowledge in the forest nursery. Photo © Marlen Grajales**

***Figure 4 (below).*** **Emberá and Wounaan women from the villages of Playa Muerto, Cémaco, and La Marea who are part of the Gender Equity Planting Program for Conservation, after completing the forest nursery workshop. Photo © Osiris Rodriguez**

of ideas and approaches, ensuring that the cultural practices of the communities are respected and reflected in restoration actions. In addition, the participation of community members will be encouraged, promoting a sense of ownership and ensuring that the project is culturally relevant and sustainable in the long term.

**Preliminary Results and Discussion**

*Training and Empowerment.* The selection process was participatory and open, through digital and printed messages disseminated in the focal communities: La Marea, Cémaco, and Playa Muerto. This strategy allowed broad participation of interested women, ensuring the inclusion of those who wanted to be part of the project. The twelve selected participants have begun their training in nursery management, which has allowed them to become actively involved in local initiatives. With the support of local technicians, they have integrated into community forest nurseries, acquiring essential skills in seed collection and seedling care.

The first training took place in Costa Rica, thanks to the support of the USFS, and hosted by CATIE (Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza). During this training, two members of the project, the liaison technician Osiris Rodríguez and local technician Yinela Salazar, together with the Project Coordinator, José de Jesús Vargas G., interacted with groups from different locations in Central America that carry out similar activities. This workshop turned out to be a valuable opportunity to establish connections and learn from experts about forest nurseries, seed banks, and how to integrate gender equity into these processes.

The second workshop was held in Metetí, Darién, Panama, where thirteen Emberá and Wounaan women enrolled in the project participated in intensive training on forest nurseries, led by Osiris Rodríguez and Yinela Salazar. During this workshop, the participants not only gained theoretical knowledge, but also took a learning tour of a local nursery, which allowed them to observe the management and operation process of community nurseries. It was evident how the women became empowered with the knowledge acquired, and many enthusiastically expressed their plans to apply what they learned both in their town's community nursery and in their homes.

*Nurseries.* Based on the knowledge acquired during the workshop at CATIE, work is being done to improve three community nurseries, with a focus on the efficient use of water resources and improving the quality of the seedlings produced. The participating women are playing an active role in this management, applying what they have learned to optimize processes and ensure more sustainable and effective production of seedlings. Their involvement is key to implementing innovative practices and improving the results of the nurseries.

While wee are in the first months of implementation, we expect great results including the following:

1. Creation of a seed bank of native and fruit species of community interest, which will strengthen the capacity of communities to conserve and restore their natural environment.

2. Conduct training on the management and handling of seed banks, in order to transfer key knowledge for the sustainable development of nurseries and the conservation of species.

3. Establishment of associations with networks of forest nurseries and seed banks, promoting the exchange of knowledge and experiences to improve ecological restoration practices in the region.

4. Dissemination of knowledge with community members as a strategy for raising awareness about the importance of habitat conservation and resource management, on which both indigenous communities and local biodiversity depend.

5. Implementation of technology to map and monitor seed trees, collecting key data on flowering, fruiting, and tree health. This tool will optimize the management of the nurseries and the monitoring of the plantations.

**Conclusion**

The training and empowerment of local women in the management of forest nurseries contributes to the conservation of Harpy Eagle ecosystems and offers communities a sustainable economic option. By participating in habitat restoration through the production of native species, communities reduce the impact of deforestation and improve their economic well-being through responsible management of natural resources.

**Acknowledgments**

A special recognition to the Emberá and Wounaan women from Cémaco, Playa Muerto, and La Marea who are the fundamental pillars of this project. We also thank the United States Forest Service for financial support, The Peregrine Fund for its logistical and financial support, and Fundación Rapaces y Bosques de Panama for its continuous monitoring and for facilitating processes.

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# Note on the occurrence of a juvenile Black-and-chestnut Eagle (*Spizaetus isidori*) in the foothill lowlands of the northwest of the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, Colombia: implications for its local distribution

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The Black-and-chestnut Eagle (*Spizaetus isidori*) is one of the 139 threatened bird species in Colombia (Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development 2024). This species is categorized as Endangered (EN) both nationally (Renjifo et al. 2014) and internationally due to the marked decline in its population, which is estimated at approximately 1,400-4,200 individuals (BirdLife International 2024). It is suggested that the destruction of its habitat in montane forests and direct persecution by humans are the main causes of this decline (BirdLife International 2024).

The Black-and-chestnut Eagle lives mainly in montane forests between 1,500 and 3,500 meters above sea level (Ayerbe 2022). However, there are records that describe its altitudinal range from 150 to over 3,000 meters above sea level (Hilty and Brown 2001). The high sensitivity of this species to habitat fragmentation and destruction, together with its extensive territorial requirements (Thiollay 1991), has sparked growing conservation interest in several countries in the region, given the significant impact that these factors have on its survival.

The range of the Black-and-chestnut Eagle covers much of the Andes mountain range in South America, from Colombia and Venezuela to northern Argentina (Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001). In Colombia, the species is found in the three mountain ranges, with specific records in the departments of Antioquia, Boyacá, Caldas, Caquetá, Cauca, Nariño, Quindío, Risaralda, Santander, Tolima, and Valle del Cauca (Salaman et al. 1999, López-Lanús et al. 2000, Márquez y Renjifo 2002, Flórez et al. 2004, Cortés-Herrera et al. 2007, Córdoba-Córdoba et al. 2008). In the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, it has been recorded mainly in the San Lorenzo sector and in the San Salvador Valley, on the northern slope

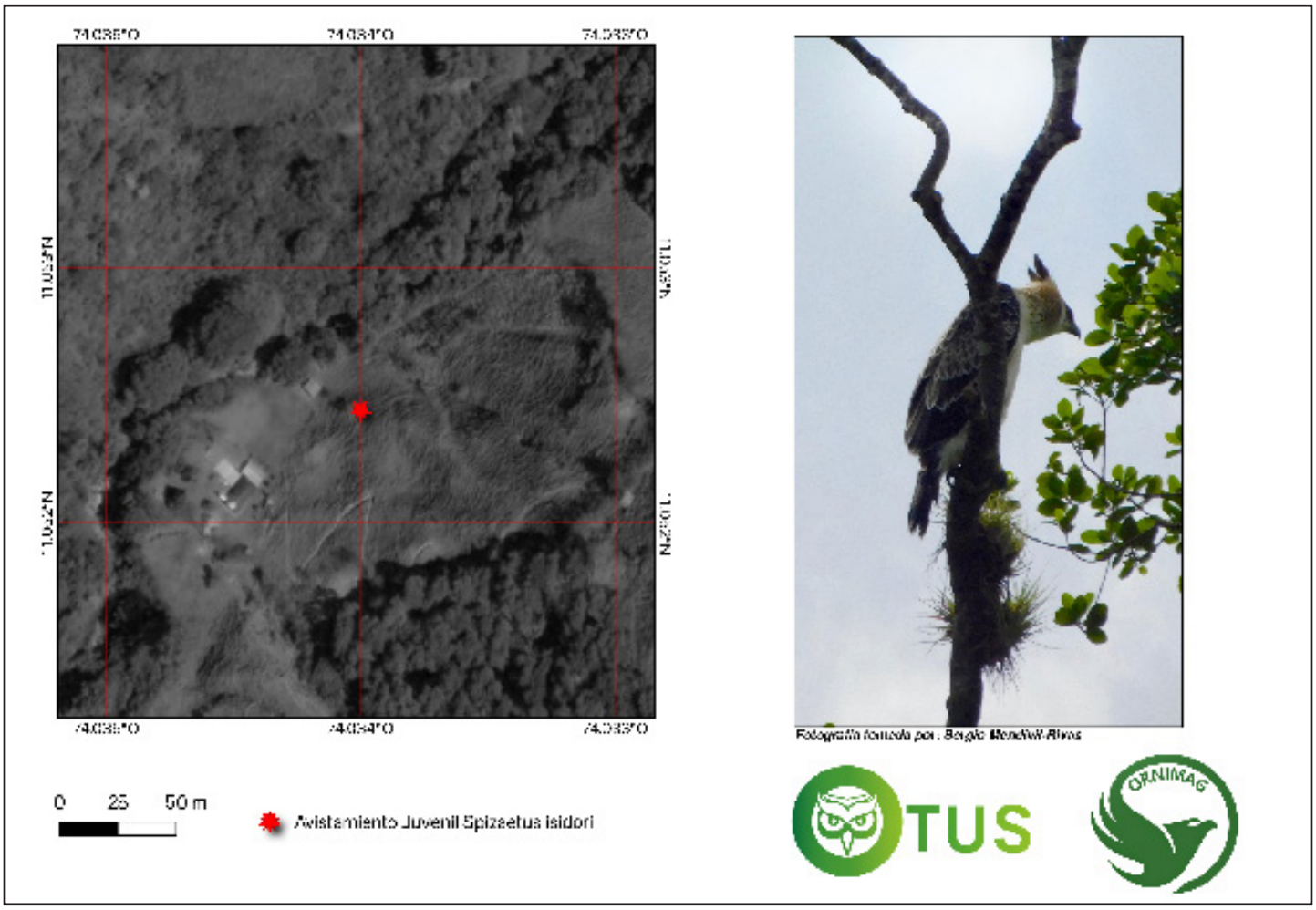


***Figure 1.*** **Location and photograph of sighting of a juvenile Black-and-chestnut Eagle (*Spizaetus isisdori*) in a premontane forest near the Cuchilla de San Lorenzo.**

of this mountain massif (Hilty and Brown 2001, Strewe and Navarro 2003). However, the species is likely to inhabit other mountainous areas of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, although the lack of observations limits a precise understanding of its distribution in this region.

In this note, we report the observation of a juvenile Black-and-chestnut Eagle in a premontane forest located northwest of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. This sighting expands our knowledge about the species' local distribution and highlights the need for more detailed investigations in little explored areas of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

In July 2024, we observed an individual perched on a tree approximately 30 meters high, located 50 meters from a stream. The observation was carried out at an approximate altitude of 900 meters above sea level (in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta near an agricultural system; Fig. 1). Based on plumage characteristics, the individual was a juvenile (Fig. 1). We watched

it for two minutes, as it was being attacked by two Tropical Kingbirds (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) which caused it to fly off and out of sight. The observation ocurred in an area with characteristics of premontane forest with the presence of fragmented and dense forests, where various local families carry out agricultural activities, such as managing banana, coffee, and fruit tree plantations.

Although the sighting ocurred near the San Lorenzo Cuchilla, where individuals of this species have already been recorded (Hilty and Brown 2001), this sighting provides valuable information about the presence of the Black-and-chestnut Eagle in an environment different from that which has usually been reported. Furthermore, this report of a juvenile coincides with another from the same time frame, between March and July, in the San Salvador River basin on the northern slope of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta massif, department of La Guajira (Strewe and Navarro 2003). In Colombia, Black-and-chestnut Eagle reprodution seems to be concentrated in the first half of the year, with reports of nests and juveniles in Huila (February and March), Quindío, Nariño (May), and Boyacá (January and April) (Zamudio et al. 2018 ).

Available records indicate that the Black-and-chestnut Eagle lives mainly in well-preserved subtropical forests; however, sightings have also been documented in coffee plantations and open areas (Echeverry-Galvis 2014). In this context, the sighting of this individual juvenile could be related to dispersal or exploration processes, since some nesting sites are located on the borders between native forests and agricultural frontiers (Zuluaga and Echeverry 2016).

Likewise, although the species can travel by taking advantage of thermal currents, biological corridors play a crucial role in the dispersion of juveniles. Forested areas within agricultural areas act as ecological connectors, providing habitat and trophic resources for their mobilization, in addition to reducing the risks of crossing open areas (De la Concha 2011). Therefore, the conservation of forested areas within agricultural systems is essential to maintain and promote the connectivity and dispersal processes of the Black-and-chestnut Eagle. Likewise, these areas play a key role in mitigating the impacts derived from landscape fragmentation, a particularly critical challenge in highly disturbed ecosystems such as the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (Rangel and Garzón, 1995).

Finally, we want to emphasize that the sighting of a juvenile Black-and-chestnut Eagle in the lower foothills of the northwest of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta represents a significant contribution to the knowledge of the local distribution of this endangered species. This record highlights the

need to continue exploring and monitoring areas adjacent to the species' known distribution to improve understanding of the ecology and dispersal patterns of this species in the region.

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* * *

# Observation of parental care of a fledgling Plumbeous Kite (*Ictinia plumbea*) in the Sierra de Aroa, Independencia, Yaracuy State, Venezuela

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The Plumbeous Kite (*Ictinea plumbea*) is distributed from eastern Mexico through Central America, to northern Argentina including Trinidad and Tobago (del Hoyo et al. 1994; BirdLife-Internacional 2020). According to Hilty (2003), the species is found in various regions of Venezuela, including the Llanos, the Orinoco Basin, and forested areas of the north of the country. It is considered common in the lowlands and open areas, including savannas, forest edges, and agricultural areas.

***Figure 1.*** **Fledgling Plumbeous Kite (*Ictinia plumbea*) perched on the branch of a Cecropia tree (*Cecropia peltata*). Photo © Anderson León Natera.**

According to Restall et al. (2006), it is particularly abundant in the Venezuelan Llanos, where it can be observed hunting insects and small vertebrates. Rodríguez and Rojas-Suárez (2008) mention that the distribution of the Plumbeous Kite in Venezuela includes protected areas such as the Henri Pittier National Park and the Canaima National Park, which suggests that the species benefits from the conservation of these natural habitats.

It is considered a gregarious species, which on some occasions, can be observed sharing space with other species such as the Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*), the Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*), and the Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*) (Márquez et al. 2005). There is little knowledge of the species' courtship practices between sexes, however, it is estimated that their reproduction occurs between the months of March and May (del Hoyo et al. 1994) based on field observations.

On 28 June 2023, we observed two adult Plumbeous Kites flying over the tree canopy, responding to the call of a fledgling perched on the branch of a Cecropia (*Cecropia peltata*), (Urticaceae family). The fledgling was about 20 meters above the tree canopy at the edge of the semi-deciduous forest in the La Montaña Sector, Independencia del Estado municipality Yaracuy (Figs 1 and 2). The observations described here were made between 13:00 and 16:20 hrs. during a period of 73 minutes. They were made from an observation point about 25 meters away using a Canon PowerShot SX50 camera HS with 50X Zoom and a Xiaomi Redmi 10C digital recorder.

After frequent calls of up to 20 seconds by the fledgling, we observed four feeding events wherein one adult at a time provided food with a feeding frequency of between 15 and 18 minutes. The parents arrived at the perch and proceeded to tear off small pieces and pass them to the fledgling's beak (Fig. 3).

***Figure 2.*** **Fledgling Plumbeous Kite (*Ictinia plumbea*) on a perch, attentively observing the movement of the adults. Photo © Anderson León Natera.**

Among the prey captured by both parents, two species of insects could be identified: Leaf-cutter ants (*Atta laevigata*) (Atta: Formicidae) and a cicada (*Pachypsaltria cinctomaculata*) (Pachypsaltria: Cicadidae). Adults were often observed flying nearby, which may coincide with what was described by Jacomassa (2011) and Loures-Ribeiro et al. (2023), who mention that the parents stay nearby, capturing prey with their talons during flight. After 73 minutes of observation, the fledgling left the branch, taking short flights between the trees, thus preventing further observations of parental behavior.

The behavior described above agrees with the feeding habits indicated for the species, whose diet is based mainly on insects that they capture in flight or on some occasions by snatching them with their talons directly from the foliage or branches (del Hoyo et al. 1994; Hilty 2003. During the observations, the sex of the adults could not be differentiated because the species does not present sexual dimorphism. These observations are a contribution to the knowledge about the parental care behavior of one of the little-studied tropical birds of prey, the Plumbeous Kite.

**Acknowledgments**

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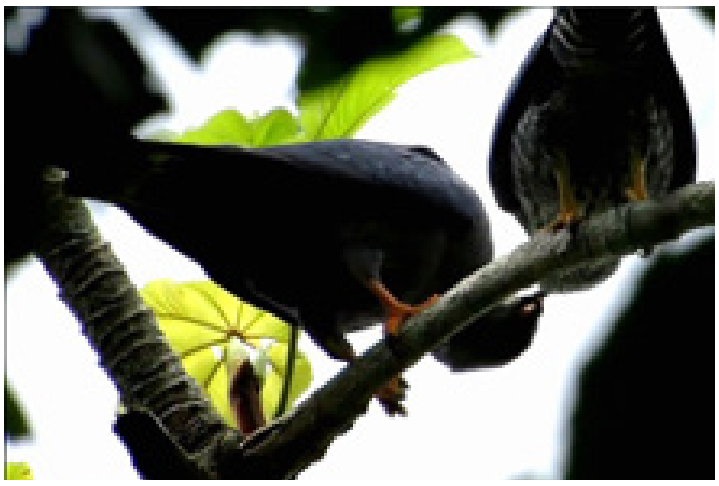
***Figure 3.*** **Adult Plumbeous Kite (*Ictinia plumbea*) tearing off pieces of prey and feeding the fledgling. Photo © Anderson León Natera.**



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# The Neotropical Raptor Network celebrates the VI Conference of Neotropical Raptors in Colombia

About every four years, the Neotropical Raptor Network (NRN), together with The Peregrine Fund, organizes a Neotropical Raptor conference, with the aim of bringing together students, falconers, biologists, educators and more people who are working in the field of raptor conservation in the neotropical region.

By creating a meeting point for raptor enthusiasts, we hope to facilitate communication and increase collaboration to help advance the conservation of Neotropical birds of prey. The first NRN conference was held in Panama City in 2002. Since then, we have had two conferences in Argentina, one in Costa Rica, and one virtual conference during the Covid-19 pandemic.

From 1 to 4 October 2024, we held the VI Neotropical Raptor Conference in Pereira, Colombia. As part of the conference, we also held the V Symposium on Neotropical Owls, the II International Symposium on the Conservation of the Black-and-chestnut Eagle (*Spizaetus isidori*), a symposium on Lessons Learned and Information Gaps for the Conservation of the Harpy Eagle, and the symposium Raptors: Threats and Solutions.

***Figure 1. Left.*** **Bird watching at the Botanical Garden in Pereira. Photo © Marta Curti**
***Figure 2. Right.*** **Participants in the tree climbing course. Photo © Ana Maria Morales**

The NRN and The Peregrine Fund collaborated with Águilas de los Andes Foundation to create a very memorable event. The conference began with a workshop on Basic Canopy Ascent for the study of Raptors in the Neotropics taught by Luis Felipe Barrera and Mateo Giraldo Amaya. The workshops continued on 1 October, wherein participants had the opportunity to gain valuable skills and first-hand experiences. Dr. Miguel Saggese taught a course "Management, Medicine, and Rehabilitation of Birds of Prey," Dr. Ulises Balza gave the course “Territoriality in raptors: an approach from point pattern analysis,” Carolina Granthon and Matt Boone taught Basic R to several participants, Mateo Giraldo Amaya and Helena Aguiar gave a course “How NOT to install nest cameras,” and David Ricardo Rodríguez, Alejandra Moreno Rojas, and Dra Paula L Enriquez gave the course “Searching, processing, and analyzing owl pellets.”

The scientific sessions formally began on 2 October with the presentation: “Neotropical owls: advances and perspectives” given by our keynote speaker Dr. Paula Enríquez. Dr. José Tomas Ibarra and Dr. Miguel Saggese also presented their keynote talks over the following 2 days on "Territories with memory: birds of prey as indicators of biocultural diversity in the landscapes of the southern Andes" and "Birds of prey: contributions to ecology, natural history, biomedicine and conservation," respectively. Over the next three days, 96 presentations were given during seven different sessions. During the conference, more than 20 participants also presented posters, addressing topics such as: *Philornis* infestation in raptors and environmental education to help conserve Harpy Eagles.

The Technological University of Pereira (UTP), held a children's story contest as part of the V Bird Festival held the weekend before the conference. As part of our alliance with them, they awarded the 3 winning writers during the conference. Stories were written about *Spizaetus isidori*, thus inspiring the next generation to love and care for birds of prey. The conference ended with a closing banquet at the Ukumari Biopark. Here, we presented awards for the best presentation and the best poster, with cash prizes.

We had wonderful vendors who participated in the conference including: Raptor Research Foundation, e-obs, Atratus, and the Ornithological Association of Colombia, among others. Participants also donated items for our silent auction. We raised more than $900 to support the conservation of birds of prey in the region.

Before, during, and after the conference, we also offered bird watching excursions in Pereira and surrounding areas. Many of the participants took advantage of these tours to observe some of the

amazing wildlife of Colombia. The tours were guided by Adventures Colombia, BioTours, and our allies at the Botanical Garden of the Technological University of Pereira.

Over 170 people from 19 different countries participated in this conference. Most came from North, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. However, we had participants from countries as far away as Germany, South Africa, and England. All in all, the conference was a huge success and we look forward to seeing old friends and making new ones at the next Neotropical Raptor Conference in four years or less!

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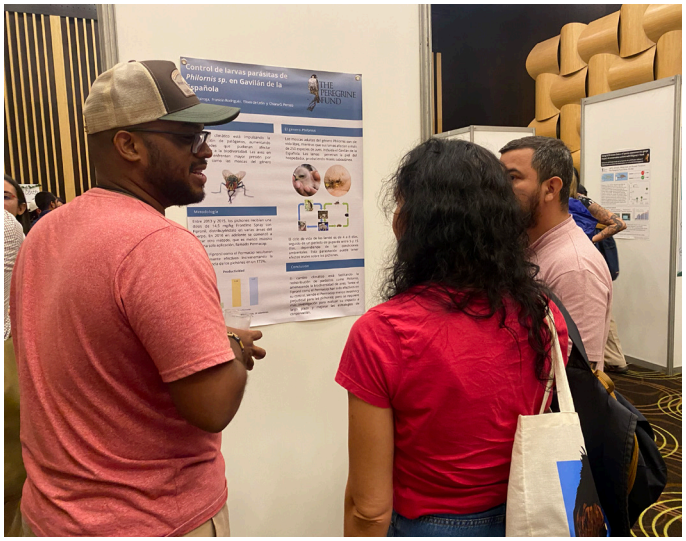
***Figure 1. left.*** **Logos of the conference sponsors.**
***Figure 2. Right above.*** **Participants during the poster session. Photo © Marta Curti**
***Figura 3. Right below.*** **Three winning children receiving their awards. Photo © Marta Curti**

# Of Interest...

## Grants

### IDEAWILD

https://ideawild.org/application/

IDEA WILD receives equipment requests daily, between 50 and 70 requests per month, and prioritizes them based on conservation impact, recipient needs, and project location. Additional consideration is given to projects in areas identified as biodiversity hotspots. Our grants serve areas where support is most needed and promote biological research, conservation education, community outreach, conservation management, field training, and professional development.

### HAWK WATCH FUND

https://www.hmana.org/hawk-watch-fund/

The purpose of this Fund is to provide grants to assist viewing sites seeking assistance, whether it be educational materials and displays, construction and maintenance of viewing platforms, hiring falcon watchers, or purchasing equipment. These grants will be awarded through a competitive application process and will be judged annually by a committee. Applications can be submitted between December 1, 2023 and March 1, 2024.

## Conferences

### Andean Condor International Congress

The 5th International Congress of the Andean Condor – 1st Vulture Symposium of the Americas, will take place from March 17 to 21, 2025 in Sucre, Bolivia. They hope that this event marks a before and after in the research, management and conservation of New World vultures, and having you and the valuable work you do will greatly facilitate the achievement of this goal.

You can pre-register and submit your work summary here:https://vcongresocondor.com/elementor-1705/