is the umbrella name for the diverse range of conservation initiatives directed by Kristine and Douglas Tompkins. These efforts to create parklands, conserve biodiversity, restore degraded lands, reintroduce missing species, encourage environmental activism, and promote ecological agriculture are accomplished through a group of charitable organizations founded by Kris and Doug Tompkins and through agricultural businesses owned by them personally. While privately funded, these family farms also focus on protecting wildlife habitat, conserving soil, and other components of the foundations’ goals. For more information visit tompkinsconservation.org.
In a rhythm of reciprocity, beauty enhances life and life reaches toward beauty.

—Sandra Lubarsky
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Preparing a retrospective on a quarter century of conservation work must necessarily be selective, covering projects, programs, and results that reflect an overall vision. The initiatives that my husband, Douglas Tompkins, and I have undertaken over the years are simple in their objective—to protect wild nature from a relentless array of threats—yet ambitious in their scale. We’ve helped to secure millions of acres in new national parks and other protected areas, to return missing creatures to their former habitats, to restore degraded farmlands, and to support activist campaigns on two continents. It has been comprehensive work, with many deeply satisfying milestones.

Doug’s untimely death on December 8, 2015, from complications following a kayaking accident in Chilean Patagonia, prompted an extraordinary outpouring of support and expressions of admiration from around the world. In the days prior to what would be his last trip with lifelong friends, Doug had been selecting photos and commenting on the text for this publication, which had been in preparation for months and was far along. As tempting as it was to start over and recast this volume to be an overt tribute to Doug, I decided to stay on the editorial path he’d chosen, covering the collective accomplishments of the Tompkins Conservation team over the past twenty-five years.

With Doug’s death, I see even more clearly that his exceptional ability to think on a grand scale, combined with a strategic mind for realizing his visions, and his extraordinary energy and capacity to motivate others laid the foundation for our accomplishments. And these were indeed collective efforts. The successes we have had are the result of teamwork that goes far beyond what is often seen as simply “Doug and Kris”—through our personal partnership and joint leadership of the projects, through the team of colleagues we have assembled over the years, and through collaboration with fellow philanthropists, governments, and other conservation groups. Large-scale conservation initiatives that will remain durable over time ultimately must be collaborative, engaging communities and shaping cultural values.

For me personally, the sadness of unexpectedly losing Doug is beyond words to describe. Our marriage and professional partnership was the source of our life’s greatest joy. While the future before me now is not one that I wanted or anticipated, our joint conservation work will go on as we both always envisioned. I am personally committed to seeing our projects advance and even accelerate in the coming years, building on our quarter century of hands-on, on-the-ground experience and success.

Even now the Tompkins Conservation team is working hard to create at least six more national parks and expand several others in Chile and Argentina. I’ve had very productive recent meetings with Argentine President Macri and Chilean President Bachelet to discuss donating more than 1.3 million acres of our privately assembled conservation lands to the national park systems of the two countries.

These projects to create new national parks, complemented by our ongoing rewilding program, will insure the recovery of endangered species and reintroduce extirpated species to some of our flagship protected areas. Our team has become a leader in this kind of hands-on rewilding work, with giant anteaters, pampas deer, jaguars, huemul deer, peccaries, maned wolves, and Darwin’s rheas among the beneficiaries of our efforts.

All of us who love the Earth can see how the threats to wild places and creatures are growing. Even so, conservationists have incredible opportunities to expand national park systems, to work with local communities linking ecotourism-related economic development and nature protection, and to help build a culture of conservation throughout society. This is crucial work—it’s the work we’ve been doing for decades now and will be doing with all of our energy and resources long into the future.

We invite you to learn more about it through this publication, by visiting tompkinsconservation.org, and through a visit to the great Iberá marshlands region of Argentina or to Pumalín Park or Patagonia Park in Chile. Seeing these spectacular landscapes in person is the very best way to understand the ecological and social benefits of large-scale conservation, and to know why the Tompkins Conservation team is so passionate about creating and expanding national parks.

—Kristine McDivitt Tompkins, 2016
Introduction

The greatest beauty is organic wholeness, the wholeness of life and things, the divine beauty of the universe.

—Robinson Jeffers

In the decades since we left the corporate world to devote our full energies to conservation, we have been hard at work on a host of projects oriented toward sustaining beauty and “organic wholeness,” to borrow a phrase from Robinson Jeffers, and resisting the accelerating forces of the global eco-social crisis. We were so busy that we hardly noticed the years flying by. Now, at the quarter-century mark of this work, it seems an appropriate time to present a general review of what our foundations have been doing through the years to help pay our rent for living on Earth. This report, like the online material at tompkinsconservation.org, is organized into four main categories—Creating Parklands, Restoration and Rewilding, Ecological Agriculture, and Activism—which cover our major areas of work. Of course a retrospective of this type can never be comprehensive, but it should give readers a good sense of our conservation program and the values behind it.

After launching the Foundation for Deep Ecology (FDE) in 1990, we subsequently founded the Conservation Land Trust, Conservacion Patagonica, Fundación Pumalín, and Fundación Yendegaia. The last four are dedicated to direct land and wildlife conservation. FDE continues to support activism, and operates an in-house publishing program that has produced a series of landmark environmental books. Besides developing and funding conservation initiatives through these nonprofit organizations, we have also used personal resources to acquire and restore several family farms, as we hope to positively influence ecological agriculture and to contribute to and the eco-local/organic movement.

Working with a relatively small but terrific team of colleagues in Chile, Argentina, and California, much interesting conservation work has been done and much is under way. We’re proud of this work—which is only a start—and are beginning to feel that our hope of leaving behind a lasting legacy of new parklands, restored landscapes, and “lighthouse” farms that can be beacons for others to build on our experience in organic agriculture may be realized.

It has also been a pleasure to support uncompromising activism, and be aligned with so many leaders in the conservation movement who are addressing the root causes of the global eco-social crisis. Living full-time in South America for some decades now, it has been gratifying for us to witness the growth of activism in Chile and Argentina, to see a flourishing movement of conservationists working to defend wild places and creatures from the forces of industrialization that would gladly pound the last nail in the coffin of nature.

The eco-social crisis, a growing storm cloud darkening the future for nature and people, is now fully acknowledged by thoughtful people around the globe. The debate today is about how to address it. Thus far, the response to its visible manifestations—anthropogenic climate change, economic turmoil, collapsing wildlife populations, and destruction of indigenous cultures, has been superficial and ineffective. Little public attention is paid to the worldwide extinction crisis—species loss and unraveling ecosystems due to habitat destruction, fragmentation, over-harvesting, and invasive species—a suite of threats even more immediately dangerous to the diversity of life than climate change.

We consider the extinction crisis the “mother of all crises,” which must be addressed with even more urgency than climate change, although both must be confronted. The entire ecosphere and its future depend on healthy, vibrant, and rich biodiversity. Consequently, all our efforts are oriented toward stopping the extinction crisis.

In simple terms, we believe that to address the root causes of the problem, all of humanity’s cultural, social, economic, and political decision making must shift, and begin to value and accommodate wildness. Toward this end, we have put considerable resources into eco-education and outreach initiatives focused on children, political leaders, and local citizens in the communities where our conservation projects are located. Helping build a widely embraced culture of conservation is crucial because there is no way that human beings will be able to manage the planet; it is arrogant and foolish to even think so.

Wild processes operating across vast expanses of “self-willed” land (wilderness) have a successful, multibillion-year track record of “managing” biodiversity, that is, allowing evolution to unfold on its own terms. Conversely, we humans are doing just the opposite by over-domesticating and over-humanizing the vast majority of the planet’s landscapes, over-extracting resources and overshooting the ecosphere’s carrying capacity. (Including the atmosphere’s ability to absorb carbon dioxide and other human emissions.) In short, humanity is in OVERSHOOT—something never having occurred in all of geological time and driven purely by human overpopulation, overconsumption, and the use of dangerous megatechnologies. Our foundations and all those who work with us are striving to reverse these trends and conditions.

Our top priority has been to preserve and restore wild habitat by creating new protected areas, especially...
national parks. Through our foundations and in collaboration with various partners we’ve permanently conserved more than 2 million acres so far, helping to create or expand five national parks and establish the world’s largest privately protected nature reserve (which also will ultimately be donated to Chile’s national park system), and we’re working to establish additional parklands in Chile and Argentina.

Restoration—of landscapes, natural processes, and populations of native species—goes hand in glove with making parklands and has been a central focus of our conservation program. From grasslands recovery at Patagonia National Park to jaguar reintroduction in Argentina’s Iberá marshlands, our teams are successfully implementing rewinding projects that aim to restore ecosystem health. Over the past quarter century we have become highly experienced in restoring natural grasslands, forests, and agricultural land. Apart from its absolute necessity in an increasingly damaged world, restoration is about as satisfying an activity as we can think of. If ever there was a growth industry it is ecological restoration—everywhere one turns a person can see opportunities to help abused landscapes recover their beauty, integrity, and diversity. There are centuries of such work to be done, and that kind of growth we can get excited about.

Agriculture affects more of the land than any other human activity and for this reason it is our largest program area after biodiversity-oriented conservation. Oddly enough, there are very few foundations with both wilderness/biodiversity and agriculture programs. It is our contention that focusing both on wilderness preservation and on developing agricultural systems where conservation is a consequence of production are complementary. As our colleague Wes Jackson of The Land Institute in Kansas says, “If we cannot turn around agriculture then there is no hope.

The fourth pillar of Tompkins Conservation is activism, aimed at both defending the natural world and critiquing the economic models, assumptions, and worldview that undergird the current system, what Ed Abbey correctly described as an “expand-or-expire agro-industrial complex—a crackpot machine—that the specialists cannot comprehend and the managers cannot manage.” The Foundation for Deep Ecology (FDE) has supported leading thinkers and activists who are resisting this crackpot machine, particularly economic globalization with its trade pacts and undemocratic structures. FDE has been a pioneer in this area of grantmaking, helping form the International Forum on Globalization, helping fund numerous think tanks and institutes working on these issues, as well as convening various symposia and conferences of our own design. We maintain that the current economic system of techno-industrial growth based on corporate capitalism is deficient and is driving the eco-social crisis and must be systemically critiqued to understand its inherent pathologies before either structural change or meaningful reforms may take place.

Technology criticism is a key area of “intellectual activism” that interests us. In our view, the weakest area in today’s progressive social movements is the ability to foresee the negative side effects of megatechnologies. This has produced confusion as to what kind of strategies should be employed in many areas, especially the response to global climate change and other related crises. Resting upon a largely unnoticed but pernicious mechanistic worldview articulated by European thinkers of the so-called Enlightenment era, modern society is enamored with technology and accepts new technologies uncritically. In time it becomes apparent that it would have been wiser to avoid developing or spreading that technology. It is now easy to imagine how the world might have been better off without nuclear technology, industrial agriculture’s Green Revolution, gunpowder, television, internal combustion engines, and so on. Through the years our foundations have supported writers, thinkers, and activists involved in constructive, academically rigorous, systemic technology analysis. We hope this work leads to a better understanding of the intrinsic logic of these megatechnologies and their “autonomous” nature, which compels society to act and behave under their logic rather than what is healthy for the ecosphere, and thus in turn for humanity.

As one can see, these program areas are unusually varied, but we believe that on-the-ground initiatives to protect parklands, restore damaged landscapes, reintroduce missing species, establish organic farms, and create durable local economies complements technology criticism. As Tompkins says, “idea work,” less tangible but vitally important efforts to build the intellectual infrastructure of social change movements. Ideas matter—and ultimately there can be no hope of ending the eco-social crisis until people abandon the arrogance of humanism and adopt an ecocentric worldview, embracing nature as our measure and model for economic activity.

Our thinking on this question has been deeply influenced by our long friendship with and admiration for the late Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess. Naess believed, as we do, that “the front is long”—that all these necessary changes to move human society toward harmony with the rest of life would take decades and centuries. And so the conservation activities described here are a work in progress. With all of these efforts, we hope to do our part to help society make that shift toward learning how to share the planet with other creatures.

Doug and Kris Tompkins
A tradition of philanthropy is well established in some cultures and not in others—but the idea of affluent people committing to give the majority of their wealth to charitable purposes is gaining traction around the globe. Kristine and Douglas Tompkins have publicly acknowledged and privately arranged to disperse essentially all of their personal wealth to advance conservation. As of 2015, their giving to and through the nonprofit organizations they have established amounts to $345 million. The Tompkins’ intention is that this philanthropic legacy will expand significantly during and just after their lifetimes, and be remembered not in dollars donated but in wild places preserved, wild creatures saved, and wild beauty sustained.

Tompkins Conservation by the Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acres purchased for permanent conservation</td>
<td>2.1 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres donated to create and expand national parks</td>
<td>521,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional national park acres leveraged from Tompkins Conservation donations</td>
<td>1,190,959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New national parks designated: existing national parks expanded</td>
<td>5/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New provincial parks established</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1 Global rank of Pumalín Park, in size, for privately owned nature sanctuaries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional national parks: Tompkins Conservation hopes to create with future land donations</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public campgrounds constructed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campgrounds destroyed by volcanic eruptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep removed from Estancia Valle Chacabuco to start Patagonia National Park project</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miles of ranch fencing removed by Patagonia Park volunteers</td>
<td>400+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cows removed from private conservation lands at Iberá Natural Reserve</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties improved for residents of El Amarrillo, gateway to Pumalín Park</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Species recovery efforts in parklands established by Tompkins Conservation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giant anteater cubs born in the wild following the species’ successful reintroduction</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual percentage growth in the imperiled pampas deer population at Iberá</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children participating in 2015 Patagonia Park outdoor education program</td>
<td>713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of volcanic eruptions to major wildfires at Tompkins Conservation park projects</td>
<td>1:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iberá gateway communities assisted for ecotourism economic development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural properties purchased and restored by Doug and Kris Tompkins</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural jobs created from farm/ranchland operations</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acreage devoted to agro-ecological projects (organic farms, ranches, habitat)</td>
<td>315,499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilograms of honey produced, Pumalín Park neighbor farms, 2002–2015</td>
<td>312,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants made to nonprofit organizations working to protect the Earth</td>
<td>2,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years spent fighting to stop proposed Patagonia dams</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs engaged in “Patagonia Sin Represas” anti-dam campaign</td>
<td>80+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds directed to book publishing and associated activist campaigns</td>
<td>$13.5 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book titles published</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Books granted to activists, NGOs, and distributed commercially</td>
<td>135,751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishing awards</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Giving Back to Nature

A Commitment to Wildlands Philanthropy

A tradition of philanthropy is well established in some cultures and not in others—but the idea of affluent people committing to give the majority of their wealth to charitable purposes is gaining traction around the globe. Kristine and Douglas Tompkins have publicly acknowledged and privately arranged to disperse essentially all of their personal wealth to advance conservation. As of 2015, their giving to and through the nonprofit organizations they have established amounts to $345 million. The Tompkins’ intention is that this philanthropic legacy will expand significantly during and just after their lifetimes, and be remembered not in dollars donated but in wild places preserved, wild creatures saved, and wild beauty sustained.
Doug Tompkins purchases a run-down coastal farm on the Reñihué Fjord in southern Chile and begins buying nearby land to form Pumalín Park, a public-access national park along the southern Chilean coast near the Corcovado Volcano.

The Foundation for Deep Ecology (FDE), a private charitable foundation incorporated in California, is endowed by Doug Tompkins.

FDE convenes the first of two gatherings of leading thinkers about the perils of megatechnology.

Doug Tompkins marries Kristine McDivitt, longtime CEO of Patagonia, Inc., and they begin their joint conservation work.

The Conservation Land Trust, in partnership with American philanthropist Peter Buckley, acquires roughly 208,000 acres along the southern Chilean coast near the Corcovado Volcano.

FDE publishes Clearcut: The Tragedy of Industrial Forestry, the first in an ongoing series of photo-format books designed to stimulate activism on ecological issues.

FDE brings key activists from around the world together to develop a common framework of resistance to economic globalization. This conversation launches the International Forum on Globalization (IFG).

FDE is spun off from a foundation project to become an independent nonprofit, and organizes a massive, multi-day teach-in on globalization in New York City with FDE support. Similar teach-ins would be held around the globe in subsequent years, helping grow the anti-globalization movement.

Doug Tompkins moves full-time to Reñihué and begins restoring the farm, intending to see if careful, organic production could be compatible with conservation in that part of Chile.

The Conservation Land Trust (CLT), a private operating foundation incorporated in California and endowed by Doug Tompkins, is created to acquire land for Pumalín Park and support other land conservation projects in Chile and Argentina.

CLT continues land purchases for Pumalín Park, a process that lasts for years and results in a protected area of 731,632 acres, more than 99 percent of the acreage is purchased from absentee landowners.

CLT begins a major conservation project in northeastern Argentina’s Corrientes Province by purchasing Estancia San Alonso, a cattle ranch in the middle of the Iberá wetlands. In the subsequent decade, CLT purchases almost 350,000 acres in the area.

CLT and partners provide funding to buy the Estancia Yendegaia on Tierra del Fuego in Chile’s VIII region; the conservation area is later transferred to the Yendegaia Foundation for administration and stewardship.

CLT-Argentina, a subsidiary of the Conservation Land Trust, is founded to administer land and wildlife recovery projects in the Iberá region of Corrientes Province.

FDE sponsors the radio production “Deep Ecology for the Twenty-first Century,” a thirteen-part series broadcast nationwide to introduce the public to the principles of deep ecology.

FDE conceives and is a primary funder of the Turning Point Project, an independent organization that runs an unprecedented advocacy advertising campaign, publishing full-page ads in The New York Times over a six-month period. Topics include the extinction crisis, industrial agriculture, economic globalization, and biotechnology.

Kris Tompkins founds the Patagonia Land Trust, a public charity incorporated in California, dedicated to preserving biodiversity and creating parklands in southern Chile and Argentina. The organization’s name is later changed to Conservation Patagonica (CP).

CP funds the purchase of 165,000 acres of land in southern Argentina that is then donated to the Argentine National Parks Administration to create Monte León National Park, the country’s first coastal national park.

CP makes more than 100 grants, totaling $2 million, to NGOs working to protect biodiversity, promote ecological agriculture, and oppose megatechnology and globalization.

FDE publishes the photo-format activist book Wildfires: A Century of Failed Forest Policy, which promotes wildfire as a vital ecological agent in healthy ecosystems.

CP purchases Estancia Valle Chacabuco, a 175,000-acre sheep ranch in Chile’s Aysén Province, and launches the Patagonia National Park project, intending to create and donate a new national park to the Chilean park system.

FDE donates roughly 727,000 acres of land comprising Pumalín Park to the Chile-based Patagonia Foundation. In a pioneering effort, biologists with CLT—Argentina translocate giant anteaters to the Iberá marshlands, where they had been extirpated for decades.

FDE publishes the photo-format activist book Thrillcraft: The Environmental Consequences of Motorized Recreation, documenting the growing motorized assault on public lands around the United States.

CP begins construction of The Lodge at Valley Chacabuco, the first public-access infrastructure for the future Patagonia National Park.
2007 (cont.)
Kris and Doug Tompkins purchase Laguna Blanca, a 7,429-acre farm in Ente Río Province, Argentina, and the nearby Alto Feliciano farm, converting the properties from conventional to organic production. Partnering with a coalition of NGOs assembled to fight proposed dams in Patagonia, the Tompkins Conservation team produces a photo-format book—Patagonia. Chile, Sin Represas! (Chile, Without Dams!) to launch the opponents’ communication campaign.

2009
Kris and Doug Tompkins purchase a third farm, Malambo, in Entre Río Province, Argentina, to form a set of highly diverse, high production organic farms in this area. FDE publishes the photo-format activist book Plerundering Appalachia: The Tragedy of Mountaintop-Removal Coal Mining, which documents the coal industry’s assault on the land and people of Appalachia.

2010
FDE publishes CAFO: The Tragedy of Industrial Animal Factories, a large-format book that shines a spotlight on concentrated animal feeding operations—CAFOs—the inhumane factory farms where increasing amounts of the world’s meat, milk, eggs, and fish are produced. CP breaks ground on the new trail system and first major campground for the future Patagonia National Park.

2011
At the future Patagonia National Park, CP completes construction of the Lagunas Altas and La Vega trails and the Westwinds Campground, offering campers stunning views of snowcapped peaks.

FDE’s publishing program produces Work in Progress, a book-length retrospective on the first twenty years of work accomplished by Tompkins Conservation.

2012
The Tompkins Conservation team publishes The Corredera Austral: South America’s Most Spectacular Road as part of a campaign to have Chile’s southern highway formally designated as a scenic road. Promoting the road as the gateway to Patagonia’s “Route of Parks” soon gains momentum among government officials and local businesspeople.

FDE publishes the photo-format book ENERGY: Overdevelopment and the Delusion of Endless Growth and an accompanying edition (The ENERGY Reader) to launch the Post Carbon Institute’s Energy Reality Campaign. After years of work, Pumalín Park staff complete repairs to damaged park infrastructure resulting from the Chaitén Volcano eruption.

2013
Prompted by a promised donation of private conservation land from Fundación Yendegaia, Chilean President Sebastián Piñera creates Yendegaia National Park in Tierra del Fuego. Doug Tompkins and the Conservation Land Trust donate roughly 37,000 acres, the former Estancia El Rinconcito, for addition to Argentina’s Perito Moreno National Park.

Pumalín Park’s new park administrative office opens in El Amarillo, replacing the former visitor center and office that were closed when Chaitén was evacuated.

CLT-Argentina publishes Giant Anteater: A Homecoming to Corrientes, a photo-illustrated book recounting the successful reintroduction of giant anteaters to the Iberá marshlands region.

As a form of community outreach to neighbors of the future Patagonia National Park, CP launches a guardian dog program, supplying local ranchers with Great Pyrenees dogs to protect their livestock against predators.

2014
Fundación Yendegaia donates the former Estancia Yendegaia lands (94,000 acres) in Tierra del Fuego to be incorporated into the new Yendegaia National Park; the property leveraged a roughly 3:1 match of government lands, establishing a new protected area of roughly 370,000 acres.

CP’s release of rehabilitated Andean condors brings hundreds of visitors to the park to witness the young birds’ first flight into the wild skies over Patagonia Park.

Wildfires rip through 7,000 acres of Patagonia Park. CP staff and local officials collaborate to contain the blaze, which primarily affects grasslands on the western side of the park.

CLT publishes Perito Moreno National Park, a large, photo-format book exploring the exceptional beauty of that protected area, and celebrating its expansion via a land donation from CLT.

FDE publishes Keeping the Wild, a collection of essays responding to a faction within conservation that belittles wilderness conservation and emphasizes human management of the Earth.

CLT publishes Iberá: the Great Wetlands of Argentina, a large, photo-format book capturing the extraordinary beauty and biodiversity of the Iberá marshlands.

After several years of advocacy by conservationists, the National Congress of Argentina votes to create Patagonia National Park in Santa Cruz Province, which includes crucial habitat for the endangered hooded grebe.

Legislators in Corrientes, Argentina, declare the giant anteater a Provincial Natural Monument, granting maximum legal protection to this species, now returned to Corrientes after decades of absence.

Following years of concerted work by CLT and other Argentine conservationists, the National Congress votes unanimously to declare El Impenetrable National Park in Chaco Province.

PLanet and other NGOs, celebrates a long-fought victory against HidroAysén’s megadam project.

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National lands are a rare space of utter democracy: the poorest citizen gets resplendent views that even a billionaire is not allowed to buy.

—Nicholas Kristof
During the past few decades, as scientists around the globe cataloged the number of species that had disappeared or were on the precipice of extinction, a scientific consensus emerged among ecologists: the Earth has entered the sixth major extinction spasm in its history, this time not due to an asteroid strike or geological event, but due to human action—Homo sapiens’ explosive population growth and concomitant destruction of natural habitats. The collective weight of 7+ billion people going about their everyday activities—eating, manufacturing, warring, polluting, recreating, transporting themselves and their stuff, etc.—has appropriated so much of the planet’s productivity, and displaced so much of its biodiversity, that humans are causing a mass die-off of our fellow creatures. Global climate change is expected to accelerate this biological cataclysm, a contraction in life’s diversity unprecedented since the age of dinosaurs ended 65 million years ago.

The antidote to this ecological tragedy is challenging but straightforward: reduce human overexploitation of nature’s wealth. Central to this aim is protecting big wilderness areas surrounded by well-managed farms and timberlands, and connecting the conservation lands with habitat linkages that allow wild creatures freedom to roam. This core-buffer-corridor model of landscape-scale conservation is now embraced by governments around the world and endorsed by conservation biologists as the best approach to restore and maintain biodiversity. In most parts of the temperate world, existing natural areas are too small and isolated to sustain natural processes and wide-ranging species. Ecological restoration is vital. But some parts of the globe still offer opportunities to preserve big wild areas. Certain areas in the Southern Cone, such as the coastal fjords region of south Chile, Argentine and Chilean Patagonia, and the wetlands of northeastern Argentina, offer a chance for protecting such terrain. Creating parklands in these regions has numerous ecological and social benefits, including recreation and climate-stability.

In pushing other species to extinction, humanity is busy sawing off the limb on which it perches.

—Paul Ehrlich
Saving wilderness has been the fundamental goal of all of Doug and Kris Tompkins’s conservation work since they moved to South America in the early 1990s. All the many programs, projects, and organizations they have launched serve this end—but the effort to create new parklands has topped the agenda. The tradition of individuals and associations using private wealth to buy land for nature preserves is well established, but the scale of conservation land resulting from the Tompkinses’ philanthropy combined with donations from like-minded supporters, is unprecedented: roughly 2.1 million acres in multiple new or expanded national parks, provincial parks, and other reserves.

This work continues, with ongoing efforts to establish the future Patagonia National Park in Chile’s Chacabuco Valley, acquire land for its sister park across the Argentinean border, and create a huge new national park in the great Iberá marshlands of northern Argentina. Other future land donations to the Chilean national parks system—at Melimoyu, Cabo León, and Pumalín Park—are all intended to build out a world-class system of parklands that will help sustain beauty and biodiversity, and counter the global extinction crisis.
National Parks

The Gold Standard of Conservation

The American writer Wallace Stegner famously described national parks as “the best idea” America ever had. That wonderful innovation—places that represent the diversity of a country’s natural heritage, that prevent exploitative development and allow natural processes to flow unimpeded, and that provide opportunities for families to enjoy the wonders of nature—is today a global phenomenon. From its birth at Yellowstone in 1872, the national park idea has spread around the Earth, with roughly 100 countries having protected areas of that designation, in total representing thousands of wild places bequeathed to the future.

Argentina and Chile both have a proud tradition of establishing national parks. Argentina’s first national park was created in 1903, Chile’s in 1926, and every full-term Chilean president since has expanded the park system. Images from those countries’ most beloved natural areas, Iguazú Falls in Argentina and Torres del Paine in Chile, are as recognizable to Argentines or Chileans as photos of the Tetons or Yellowstone are to Americans. These images of national parks become a shared cultural touchstone, part of the iconography that helps hold a society together.

As in the United States, government funding and support for parks creation, expansion, and stewardship in Chile and Argentina have been inconsistent, and private philanthropy offers an effective tool for parklands expansion. The Conservation Land Trust and Conservacion Patagonica have focused on creating national parks because of the values they provide—ecological, cultural, spiritual, recreational—and also because of their permanence. National parks are the best-known and most durable way to preserve public land, having a successful track record approaching 140 years. While not a perfect or universally applicable conservation strategy, national parks tend to be extremely popular and an effective way to link the landscape occupied by a society to the people’s sense of national identity and patriotism. History suggests that there is no better way of fostering a culture of conservation than providing opportunities for citizens to experience—and thereby grow to love—the wild world by visiting their national parks.
The Conservation Land Trust, Conservacion Patagonica, Pumalín Foundation, and Yendegaia Foundation have conserved habitat in a diversity of ecosystem types. From the subtropical wetlands and savanna of northern Argentina to the arid Patagonian steppe of southern Chile and Argentina, from the subantarctic forests of Tierra del Fuego to the Valdivian rainforest in coastal Chile, the various parklands conservation projects that these organizations have spearheaded over the past 25 years center on one principle: putting nature first. First restore and preserve healthy ecosystems that support the diversity of life, and then there is a chance to create truly sustainable human societies.

The areas where Tompkins Conservation has focused attention are some of the most beautiful and wild places left on the planet. The Iberá marshlands region of Corrientes Province, Argentina, is one of the Earth’s greatest freshwater wetlands. El Impenetrable National Park in Argentina’s Chaco region is exceptional wildlife habitat. Monte León National Park in Santa Cruz Province of Argentine Patagonia harbors vast colonies of sea birds and marine mammals along its protected coastline. Pumalín Park and Corcovado National Park in Chile’s Palena Province now secure the best-protected examples of Valdivian rainforest. The future Patagonia National Park in Chile’s Chacabuco Valley offers breathtaking scenery, retains its full complement of native species, and is a globally important example of grasslands restoration. Strategic land conservation in these various ecosystems, and complementary wildlife recovery projects, are helping sustain wildlife, natural processes, and landscape diversity.
Parks, reserves, nature sanctuaries . . . whatever formal designation they may have, “protected areas” have long been a foundation of conservation and remain a vital tool today. Since the first national park was established nearly 150 years ago, the idea that nations should set aside areas of exceptional scenic beauty and ecological value for citizens to enjoy has gained widespread support around the globe. Although parklands frequently interpret cultural as well as natural history and can be unparalleled for human recreation, conservationists typically place biodiversity conservation as the paramount value of protected areas.

Habitat protection is fundamental. This is the overarching idea behind all of the park creation efforts initiated by Kris and Doug Tompkins through the years. With adequate and healthy habitat, wildlife will flourish. Rare and charismatic species may get more attention from conservationists (and missing species may warrant heroic efforts to put them back into ecosystems from which they have been extirpated), but it is sometimes the case that extremely abundant creatures drive ecological function. The wildebeest migration of Africa’s Serengeti, the role that bison historically played on the Great Plains of North America, or the way that tens of millions of guanaco shaped life on the Patagonian steppe prior to European settlement are such examples. Common creatures matter, and when common creatures are not present in population numbers optimum for fulfilling their ecological roles, what biologists call “ecologically effective” population density and distribution, then conservation is not complete.

With the Chacabuco Valley grasslands again teeming with guanacos, the coastline of Pumalín Park alive with the sounds of shorebirds, the Iberá marshlands’ common and rare creatures free to follow their own ways in raising young and enjoying their home, wildlife is more abundant and secure due to Tompkins Conservation efforts over the past decades.
Building the infrastructure for a new national park must be done with great care. Campgrounds, visitor centers, road and trail networks, signage, and other facilities should be designed to minimize impacts on the landscape’s natural qualities, while offering a first-class visitor experience. Pumalín Park and the future Patagonia National Park are spectacular wilderness areas in the tradition of Yosemite and Torres del Paine national parks; they attract visitors from around the globe and are intended to be the premier showcases for Chile’s wild character in the decades and centuries to come.

While creating these new protected areas in southern Chile, tremendous effort has gone toward assuring the aesthetic quality of park infrastructure. Good architecture in a national park can elevate the visitor experience, communicate that a society values its natural heritage, and promote the idea that beauty in all its forms—natural and human-created—truly matters. Conversely, bad architecture degrades the visitor experience, and implicitly communicates that aesthetics are of little concern and parkland protection is unimportant. Creating park buildings that reflect the vernacular architecture of a region, use local materials, and display fine craftsmanship reinforces the sense of permanence conservationists place on national parks as sanctuaries of beauty and wildness. It is also a proven conservation strategy for gaining popular and governmental support. Making new parks attractive to visitors, especially young people, is one important way to build a culture of conservation throughout society.

All of the public-access infrastructure at Pumalín, the future Patagonia National Park, and other parkland projects in Chile and Argentina initiated by the Conservation Land Trust, Conservacion Patagonica, and the Pumalín Foundation reflect a commitment to durability, localism, and sustainability. Structures are designed to require minimal inputs of outside energy for maintenance, and often incorporate renewable energy production. Following these standards is expensive initially but an excellent investment over time. Just as today visitors may appreciate outstanding examples of historic architecture in Yosemite or Glacier national parks in America, a century hence visitors to Patagonia National Park, Pumalín Park, and, hopefully, a future Iberá National Park, will experience big, beautiful, wild landscapes where the built environment contributes to the health, appreciation, and conservation of the natural world.

Public-Access Infrastructure
Establishing protected areas, whether through governmental or citizen action, is just the first step toward perpetual conservation of a landscape. The problem of “paper parks,” designated protected areas without effective conservation protections in practice, is a problem in developing countries around the globe. And even in overdeveloped countries with well-established systems of public lands, including the United States, agencies often fail to protect conservation lands from motorized recreation and other abuses. Effective, durable structures for administration, maintenance, and stewardship must be developed for protected areas, and where public access is welcomed, a competent ranger corps is necessary to interpret the natural values of the place, serve visitors, and deter illegal uses.

At three Tompkins Conservation flagship projects—Pumalín Park, the future Patagonia National Park, and Íberá—considerable attention has gone into developing excellent administrative and ranger personnel. These teams of dedicated conservationists are in large part responsible for the success of the efforts. In the Pumalín area, strategically located farms around the park (formerly or currently owned by Kris and Doug Tompkins) act as a bulwark against timber theft and illegal settlement, and workers there can help monitor activities of the industrial salmon farms that are polluting nearby fjords.

In the Íberá marshlands of northern Argentina, the ranches that surround conservation areas form buffer zones, where workers help spot and report illegal activity in the wetlands. The ranger team works closely with provincial authorities, lends technical support to communities, and has built a new ranger station in the Íberá Natural Reserve. Because of the marshlands’ vastness, rangers there employ small planes to monitor illegal incursions, which include illegal water diversions for rice farming and illegal road construction through the wetlands.

In Chile’s Chacabuco Valley, when Conservacion Patagonica purchased a large private ranch to become the heart of the future Patagonia National Park, the gauchos who had tended the livestock were invited to stay on, transitioning to jobs in ecological restoration and park ranger work. Arcilio Sepúlveda, who formerly had been a shepherd and “leonero” for the ranchers in the valley—the person responsible for capturing and killing mountain lions—is today a park warden who oversees the puma tracking and conservation program. He is among many local residents learning new livelihoods related to the conservation future of the area.
When complete, the future Patagonia National Park in Chile’s Aysén Province will be a nearly 700,000-acre protected area with spectacular scenery, thriving wildlife populations, and outstanding public-access architecture. As of 2016, most of the park’s infrastructure—campgrounds, hiking trails, restaurant and lodge, etc.—is complete and open to the public. Innovative restoration and wildlife recovery efforts are ongoing, and the park is becoming a destination for travelers.

Under the leadership of Kris Tompkins and with the support of many donors, Conservacion Patagonica purchased a large private ranch, the 174,770-acre Estancia Valle Chacabuco, in 2004 to launch the park effort. Roughly 31,000 acres have since been acquired, with plans to increase the acreage as opportunities arise. Conservacion Patagonica, a public charity dedicated to expanding parklands in southern Chile and Argentina, will ultimately donate its land holdings, which would be combined with two adjacent national reserves, to create the new national park.

The Chacabuco Valley’s extraordinary beauty, biodiversity, and wildness have made it a top conservation priority of the Chilean national parks administration for decades. All of the region’s native species, from Andean condors to guanacos and pumas, are still present. The park dramatically expands the amount of permanently conserved habitat for the huemul deer, the iconic and endangered species that graces Chile’s national shield.

The birth of a grand new national park in Chilean Patagonia has captured the imagination of conservationists globally. With generous support from many institutional and individual donors, Conservacion Patagonica has implemented a suite of innovative restoration, science, and educational programs in the Chacabuco Valley. Construction of the park’s public facilities began in 2006. Despite the area’s remoteness (many building materials must be transported nearly a thousand miles), the park headquarters is nearly complete. The new structures are being crafted to be highly energy efficient, durable in the harsh Patagonia climate, and welcoming to visitors.

Using volunteers from around the world, the park project’s science team is undertaking the largest-ever grassland restoration initiative in Chile and one of the largest on Earth. Hundreds of miles of fencing and other ranch infrastructure have been dismantled. Restoration efforts including eradicating exotic species, controlling erosion, and restoring native plants have been highly successful. In the few years since livestock were eliminated from the landscape, the historically overgrazed grasslands are showing strong recovery and wildlife populations are rebounding. The future Patagonia National Park is a tangible, hopeful example of people working together to help heal a degraded landscape, encourage ecological processes, and provide a permanent sanctuary for wildlife to flourish.

**Future Patagonia National Park/Chile**

206,266 acres/83,473 hectares; acquired 2004–2016

*Project of Conservacion Patagonica*

*Aysén Region, Chile*
Future Patagonia National Park/Chile
Future Patagonia National Park/Chile
In 1992, on a camping trip in Patagonia, Doug and Kris Tompkins first visited the Chacabuco Valley in Chile. Enchanted by the area, their interest in conserving the land later resulted in the purchase of the Estancia Valle Chacabuco and launch of the Patagonia National Park project. On that same trip, they spent time exploring the area just across the Argentine border and were stunned by its beauty. They remarked among themselves how the landscape was a natural jewel and perhaps someday should become part of Argentina’s national park system.

This idea was kindled in earnest in 2012 when three conservation groups, Flora and Fauna Argentina, Aves Argentina, and Ambiente Sur began a campaign to add this area to the national patrimony. Within this region the Buenos Aires Plateau emerged as a focus of special conservation concern. An almost uninhabited area of harsh climate and beauty, holding the only flatland glacier in South America, and being known as the mythical cradle/origin of the now-extinct Tehuelche people, the plateau contains numerous archaeological sites with prehistoric remains and art.

Working collaboratively with the National Parks Administration, provincial officials, and local residents, conservationists successfully urged creation of the new park. In December 2014, the Senate and Lower House unanimously passed the legislation authorizing Patagonia National Park. The enabling statute took effect in early 2015, but did not contain funds for acquiring private lands (which would come from willing sellers at market value) within the new park’s boundary. Thus private funds are being raised to buy properties as they become available. As of late 2015, 173,165 hectares had been purchased or were in process to be acquired for the new park due to the generosity of a private conservation funder. Tompkins Conservation provided vital support to the project by funding its expertise on land title research.

A critically endangered waterfowl found only in a small part of Patagonia, the hooded grebe is threatened by Kelp gulls, introduced American minks, and a species of nonnative trout that alters the aquatic ecosystem upon which the bird depends. Saving its core habitat in the new national park and implementing monitoring and recovery programs is likely to be the best hope for helping the hooded grebe population rebound.

Through these efforts, the Conservation Land Trust has lent technical, administrative, and some fundraising support to the groups leading the park campaign. Conservacion Patagonica holds the former Estancia Valle Chacabuco lands on the Chilean side of the border and cannot own contiguous properties in both countries. When CP’s landholdings are donated to the Chilean park system, the future Patagonia National Park is designated, and the national park administrations of Argentina and Chile agree to cooperative management, Patagonia Park will be established as a globally notable transboundary protected area.
Patagonia National Park is expected to develop into a major tourism destination and economic development tool for the communities of Los Antiguos, Perito Moreno, Lago Posadas, and Bajo Caracoles. Park attributes include its recreation potential (offering trekking opportunities in a wild landscape that looks like Tibet), and because of its outstanding prehistoric art and archaeological sites. In late 2015, a property acquired for addition to the park includes a World Heritage site, Cueva de las Manos (Cave of the Hands). Along the Pinturas River, where the hands cave is located, at least 70 archaeological sites are known, recording continuous human presence for more than 8,000 years (9,200 BP to 500 BP), a rarity in South America.
Sometimes called “the Argentine Pantanal,” Iberá is one of the planet’s great freshwater wetlands, covering more than 3.2 million acres (1.3 million hectares) of grasslands and marsh in Corrientes Province of northeastern Argentina. The landscape supports fabulous wildlife including more than 360 species of birds. Doug and Kris Tompkins were introduced to the area’s biodiversity and conservation potential in the late 1990s. Since then, the Conservation Land Trust–Argentina and the Tompkinses personally have acquired more than 400,000 acres for pure conservation (parklands) and ecological agriculture purposes in the Iberá watershed.

The primary goal of the Iberá project is to expand and upgrade conservation protections for land within the Iberá Natural Reserve, a protected area designated by the province in 1993. The reserve is comprised of roughly 40 percent public land, 60 percent private property controlled by some 1,800 landowners. Through habitat acquisition, restoration projects, public outreach, and legal activism, the CLT–Argentina team has worked for some 15 years to strengthen the public core of the reserve, increase local support for conservation, defend the region against ecological threats, and augment and/or restore wildlife populations, especially of endangered or extirpated species. CLT biologists have successfully reintroduced giant anteaters (a native species that had been absent from the Iberá area for decades), have helped to bolster the population of pampas deer, and are working to restore jaguars and other missing species to the Iberá.

One key element of the conservation program is to demonstrate biodiversity-friendly management techniques on agricultural properties within the Iberá watershed. Consistent with a core-buffer-corridor model of landscape conservation, the various ranches owned by CLT in the watershed help buffer the core areas from negative outside influences, while also modeling good stewardship to fellow landowners. The ongoing work to expand wildlands, create broad public support for conservation, and support a vibrant agrarian economy has achieved significant progress on the way toward creating a possible future Iberá National Park that would contain its original species, including thriving populations of large carnivores such as jaguars, maned wolves, and giant otters.
Future Iberá National Park
San Alonso

28,130 acres/11,384 hectares

Landscape: predominantly cordones en abanico (i.e., soft sandy hills), plains, and depressions. The highest elevation in the “Cordones en Abanico” landscape, San Alonso has high plant community diversity: wire grass and broomsedge-dominated grasslands, wetland-associated forests, yatay poñi palm groves. Floating vegetation mats or embalsados can be found on both the north (Lake Parana and Carambola stream) and the south (Esteros del Iberá) boundaries, occupying a vast area.

Wildlife: more than 189 species of birds identified; 31 species of mammals present including howler monkeys, capybaras, marsh deer, crab-eating fox, pampas fox, otters, six-banded armadillo, nine-banded armadillo, maned wolf. Endangered species: San Alonso harbors populations of five endangered bird species: strange-tailed tyrant (Alectrurus risora), ochre-breasted pipit (Anthus nattereri), black-and-white monjita (Heteroxolmis dominicana), and several seedeaters (Sporophila spp.). Designated an Important Bird Area (IBA) by Aves Argentinas, 2005.

Conservation values: San Alonso protects the most intact wire-grass and yatay poñi palm grove natural communities in the Iberá Reserve. The reserve supports a healthy marsh deer population and reintroduced populations of pampas deer and giant anteaters. Located in an isolated area in the middle of the marshes, San Alonso is connected to more than 600,000 hectares without human or domestic cattle presence, offering ideal conditions for jaguar reintroduction to the Iberá. In order to achieve this, the CECY, an experimental Jaguar Breeding Center, has been built. San Alonso’s location on the Paraná lagoon and on the Carambola stream mouth provides good protection to populations of yacaré caiman (Caiman yacare) and to the populations of dorado (Salminus maxillosus) that migrate there sporadically.

Rewilding program: CLT biologists have recently reintroduced pampas deer, giant anteaters, and maned wolves at San Alonso. An experimental jaguar breeding center, which can host up to four captive jaguars, welcomed its first cats in 2015.

Facilities: Jaguar Breeding Center, San Alonso Biological Station with accommodations, guest house, and ranger facilities including two boat ports and an airstrip.

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Facilities: Jaguar Breeding Center, San Alonso Biological Station with accommodations, guest house, and ranger facilities including two boat ports and an airstrip.
Cambyretá

55,554 acres (22,482 hectares)

Landscape: dry and flooded grasslands, flooded scrubland, wetland-associated forest, marshes.

Wildlife: Abundant waterfowl (Jabiru storks, white-faced ibis, roseate spoonbills, herons, ducks), capybaras, marsh deer, foxes, caimans.

Endangered species: The reserve is home to black-and-white monjita (Heteroxolmis dominicana), strange-tailed tyrant (Alectrurus risora), and ochre-breasted pipit (Anthus nattereri), three endangered species associated with healthy grassland habitats.

Rewilding focus: Cambyretá is the site for CLT’s project to reintroduce the green-winged macaw (Ara chloroptera), a native species currently extirpated from Argentina.

Facilities: Cambyretá has a campground, nature trails, and two ranger stations, each with its own airstrip, barn, corrals, and housing for staff.

San Nicolás

Project of Conservation Land Trust–Argentina
and Fundación Flora y Fauna Argentina

19,904 hectares (2,222 hectares are owned by the Fundación Flora y Fauna Argentina with CLT having management responsibility).

Landscape: grasslands, flooded scrubland, wetland-associated forest, marshes.

Wildlife: marsh deer; many species of birds, especially waterfowl; the best-conserved population of yacaré caiman in the Corrientes Province.

Conservation values: San Nicolás is key to protecting much of the north Carambola Stream. Together with San Alonso and Guayaibí reserves, which are located on the opposite bank of the waterway, CLT protected areas effectively control poaching along much of the Carambola.

Facilities: park ranger post and information center, CLT administrative center for the west region, landing strip, campground, walking and equestrian trails.
Future Pumalín National Park

731,632 acres/296,081 hectares; acquired 1990–1998
Project of Conservation Land Trust
Lakes Region, Chile

In 1991, Doug Tompkins bought a large, semi-abandoned plot of land in the Reñihué Valley of the Chilean province of Palena. A mountaineer and conservationist who had been visiting Patagonia since the early 1960s, Tompkins wanted to protect the 42,000-acre tract, most of which was primeval rainforest, from future exploitation. After moving to Reñihué to live full-time, Tompkins began expanding the conservation lands in the area by acquiring additional properties from willing sellers. More than 99 percent of the park acreage was bought from absentee landowners.

The Conservation Land Trust, a charitable foundation endowed and led by Tompkins, subsequently added approximately 700,000 acres in nearly contiguous parcels to form Pumalín Park, which was declared a Nature Sanctuary on August 19, 2005, by then-president Ricardo Lagos. This special designation by the Chilean government grants the land additional protections to secure its ecological values and prevent development. The Conservation Land Trust later donated the protected lands to Fundación Pumalín, a Chilean foundation, for administration and ongoing preservation as a national park under private initiative. The eventual goal is to donate the entire park to become part of the Chilean national park system.

While nature-related philanthropy has a long tradition in the United States, large-scale private land acquisition for parks was unfamiliar in Chile, and initially generated skepticism and political opposition. Over the years of the project’s development, confidence has been built, both locally and nationally, as Pumalín Park’s public-access infrastructure of hiking trails, campgrounds, information centers, cafés, and cabanas began serving thousands of visitors annually.

Several small farms positioned strategically around the nature sanctuary contribute to the park’s stewardship. With activities such as animal husbandry, ecotourism, wool handicrafts, and honey production, these organic farms function simultaneously as de facto park ranger stations and visitor information centers. In this way both conservation and a contribution to the local economy are achieved. The project actively works to include neighbors of the park, to create a broad-based cultural appreciation for wilderness and biodiversity conservation, and to demonstrate how an agrarian economy, carefully matched to local conditions, can sustain biodiversity while creating economic opportunity.

Although Chile’s faunal diversity is relatively low compared to most South American countries, it is rich in flora, especially endemic species. The evergreen broad-leaved forest, known in Chile as the Valdivian rainforest, includes thousands of plant species including the majestic alerce tree, an endangered species protected by law. Pumalín is a key stronghold for the alerce. The average annual rainfall in the coastal forests of Pumalín Park is more than 235 inches. These exceptionally wet, original forests reach all the way to the ocean, something that is increasingly rare worldwide. Above the rich, green forests stand the snow-clad Andes, making for one of the most spectacular coastlines on Earth—a landscape of extraordinary grandeur and wildness.

This landscape, as preserved in Pumalín Park, offers Chilean and international visitors the opportunity to experience pristine nature and develop a heightened appreciation for wild beauty, which will, hopefully, inspire them to value and protect the natural world in their daily lives back home. Moreover, as an example of wildlands philanthropy on a grand scale—a place where private generosity is supporting public values—Pumalín Park is a model for other private conservation initiatives, large and small.
After a whirlwind of coordinated activity between Argentinean conservationists, provincial officials, and the national government, El Impenetrable was added to Argentina’s national park system in 2014. Created from a large private ranch, the park’s happy birth stemmed from a tragedy, the murder of former owner Manuel Roseo in 2011 by criminals who hoped to take his property. Following his death, the province of Chaco expropriated the land and prosecuted Roseo’s killers.

The Chaco region is the second largest forest block in South America after the better-known Amazon but suffers an even higher deforestation rate. With relatively few protected areas in this ecologically vital habitat, the idea of establishing a new national park from the former Estancia La Fidelidad property was quickly and widely embraced by the public and government officials. In a model public-private collaboration, Argentine and foreign conservationists, businesses, legislators, and nongovernmental organizations all contributed to the success.

Sofía Heinonen, president of the Conservation Land Trust–Argentina, was a key architect of the park effort. Through an agreement reached with the province of Chaco, CLT has worked with the Under-Secretariat of Natural Resources from the start of the process to establish El Impenetrable. CLT has been responsible for the logistics and administrative presence in the park area since December 2012, helping to carry out wildlife monitoring, provide training, and conduct public relations with private conservation donors and the press. CLT also provided monies to perform the land valuation appraisal and a significant part of the private funds raised to compensate the former landowner’s heirs.

The biggest national park in northern Argentina, El Impenetrable offers habitat for populations of large mammals such as the puma, maned wolf, giant armadillo, tapir, giant anteater, and three species of peccaries, and it might again be home to jaguars if a population could be reestablished. Hundreds of bird species including the crowned eagle, jabiru, blue-fronted amazon, Chaco chachalaca, skimmer, and rufous-fronted thornbird occupy El Impenetrable’s well-conserved native forest.

The presence of diverse environments within the park is key for its great biodiversity: it has upland woodlands of quebrachos, groups of locust trees, riparian forests, palm forests, cardón cacti forests, grasslands, and even one of the last wetlands of the region.

The Teuco River, with its regular flooding and year-round flow, plays a leading role in shaping the various natural communities and supporting wildlife populations during the dry season. El Impenetrable National Park is truly a natural jewel—with exceptional wildlife habitat that expands the already excellent national park system of Argentina, and a potential engine for nature-related economic development in one of the country’s poorest regions where local native and mestizo populations may benefit from ecotourism.
El Impenetrable National Park
Yendegaia National Park

A stunning piece of wild nature at the “uttermost part of the earth,” this former cattle ranch of more than 95,000 acres stretches from the Beagle Channel up into the Darwin Range at 54 degrees south. Southern beech forests, expansive grasslands, rugged coastline, wild rivers, and sublime mountains make Yendegaia one of the most spectacular places on the island of Tierra del Fuego.

The property first came to the attention of the Conservation Land Trust through the intercession of Scottish forest activist Alan Watson Featherstone and Graciela Ramaciotti, an Argentine conservationist. In 1995 they accompanied Doug and Kris Tompkins and other wilderness advocates on a multiday camping trip to explore the area. All were struck by its outstanding conservation potential and later that year Doug Tompkins founded a Chilean nonprofit to purchase the land, which was being sold by a jailed drug dealer. Financial support came from the Conservation Land Trust, Swiss philanthropist Ernst Beyeler, American conservationist Peter Buckley, and other donors. After some financial and administrative difficulties, the land was later conveyed to the Yendegaia Foundation, whose board of directors was composed principally of Pumalín Foundation staff. These experienced conservationists oversaw Yendegaia’s stewardship until it could be donated to the State.

During the administration of Sebastián Piñera, Doug Tompkins and President Piñera began discussions about a large donation of private conservation lands for addition to the Chilean national parks system. After a process of study and analysis, the government endorsed the idea of a new Yendegaia National Park comprised of the donated former estancia lands combined with roughly 112,000 hectares of adjacent government lands, resulting in a new protected area of 150,612 hectares (372,170 acres). The new park was designated in late 2013 and the donated lands from Fundación Yendegaia were formally accepted and incorporated into the new park in September 2014.

Besides offering incredible beauty, Yendegaia serves as a landscape bridge between two of Patagonia’s wildest natural areas—Chile’s Alberto de Agostini National Park to the west and Argentina’s Tierra del Fuego National Park to the east. Yendegaia now links two world-class wilderness parks, effectively creating an expansive, transboundary protected area along the Chile–Argentina border.
Douglas Tompkins first became intrigued by Perito Moreno National Park in 1968 as he passed by the area on a climbing expedition and saw the looming hulk of Cerro San Lorenzo above the Patagonian steppe. He didn’t actually visit the park until decades later, in 1991, when he and friends Yvon Chouinard and Rick Ridgeway explored the area.

Captivated by the park’s grandeur, the following year Tompkins negotiated the purchase of the 37,000-acre (15,000-hectare) Estancia El Rincón, a private inholding within Perito Moreno National Park. The goal for the purchase was to restore the ranch’s native grasslands, improve wildlife habitat, and eventually donate the land to expand Perito Moreno National Park. Efforts to add El Rincón to the Argentine parks system initially failed due to lack of interest from the government, and so the Conservation Land Trust, and later Conservacion Patagonica (to which the property had been conveyed,) waited for the right political moment. That came during the administration of President Christina Kirchner. Due to the leadership of Minister of Tourism Carlos Enrique Meyer, who oversaw the national parks administration, El Rincón was formally donated and added to Perito Moreno in 2013.

The Lacteo (“milky”) River runs through the main valley at El Rincón. The river is fed by the great glaciers covering Cerro San Lorenzo, one of the most majestic mountains in Patagonia. El Rincón is located on the southern slope of this mountain, the second-highest peak in the Patagonian Andes. Cerro San Lorenzo’s dramatic southeast face has tormented alpinists; it is of Himalayan proportions, exceedingly difficult and perilous, and remains unclimbed as of this writing.

Domestic livestock had overgrazed El Rincón since the land’s settlement by European pastoralists. In the nearly quarter century since the property was purchased for conservation and the livestock were removed, the grasslands at El Rincón have shown strong recovery, and the forest cover on each side of the valley is expanding. Biologists believe that the huemul, or South Andean deer, an endangered species, is beginning to recolonize the area, a welcome development. El Rincón and Perito Moreno National Park are an exceptional example of wilderness recovery and protection in an overdeveloped world.
Corcovado National Park

726,455 acres/293,986 hectares
Private lands acquired 1994, donated for national park 2005
Project of Conservation Land Trust and Peter Buckley
Lakes Region, Chile

The Conservation Land Trust, together with American philanthropist Peter Buckley, purchased roughly 208,000 acres (84,200 hectares) along Chile’s coast south of Chaitén in 1994. The land had been held by a European corporation whose principal owner, an Italian businessman, had targeted it for a massive development and logging operation. That ill-considered scheme eventually foundered, and the landscape remained nearly pristine. A small area along the coast had been logged in the early twentieth century, but the forest had recovered well and the property contained the largest stand of Guatecas cypress trees in Chile. In 1997, another 1,235 acres were added to the Corcovado-area holdings.

The Corcovado tract presented an incredible conservation opportunity. It was surrounded by a vast expanse of government land, mostly mountainous terrain, under the jurisdiction of the Chilean Armed Forces and left in its natural state. At the heart of this public land was the Corcovado Volcano, one of the most distinctive mountains in Chile. In 2002, through an intermediary, Conservation Land Trust founder Doug Tompkins approached then-president Ricardo Lagos with a proposition: If the private lands around Corcovado were given to the state, would the government contribute the adjoining federal land and create a new national park? The property was not vital to military readiness, and both President Lagos and General Juan Emilio Cheyre, the nation’s top military officer at the time, endorsed the idea.

Corcovado National Park, Chile’s sixth largest, was formally designated by President Lagos in January 2005. This expansive wild park exists largely because of his determination. Corcovado covers approximately 726,000 acres and contains some eighty-two lakes, many ringed with ancient forests where pumas haunt the shadows. The blackish coves where the Corcovado and Tic-Toc Rivers spill into the Bay of Corcovado are exceptional wildlife habitat. Immense colonies of shorebirds coat the beaches. Penguins scamperv about the rocks. Marine mammals, including seals and sea lions, thrive in the bay, which was discovered to be a crucial nursery area for blue whales, Earth’s largest animals. Assuring a continuity of protection for wildlife from ocean bottom to mountain peaks, in 2014 this coastal area became one of Chile’s first marine protected areas when the Tic-Toc Marine Park was designated by President Sebastián Piñera. This success followed more than a decade of advocacy by Carlos Cuevas, the Melimoyu Foundation, and other Chilean conservationists.
Corcovado National Park
Monte León National Park

Monte León, Argentina’s first coastal national park, was born in 2004 as the result of creative collaboration between Argentine and American conservationists, and a generous act of wildlands philanthropy. The land, a former sheep ranch comprising some 155,000 acres (roughly 66,000 hectares) including more than 25 miles of ocean frontage on the Atlantic, lies on the southern Atlantic coast of Patagonia south of the Santa Cruz River estuary. The property had long belonged to the Brauns, one of the most prominent landowning and ranching families in Patagonia history, but was desired by the Argentine national parks administration because of its wildlife and scenic values. Years of off-and-on negotiation with the Braun family, however, had produced little progress toward creating a new national park.

When Dr. Francisco Erize, a former director of the Argentine national parks administration, recommended the conservation project to Kris and Doug Tompkins, Conservacion Patagonica became engaged in the effort. A public charity headed by Kris Tompkins, Conservacion Patagonica supplied the funds for an Argentine NGO, Fundación Vida Silvestre Argentina, to formally acquire the property and subsequently transfer title to the national parks administration. (A key source of the land acquisition funding came from Kris Tompkins herself.)

A complicating factor was that the property needed to be formally ceded from provincial to federal jurisdiction to establish a national park; that required unanimous support of the provincial legislature—not something easy to achieve in rural Argentina, where anti-federal sentiment sometimes runs strong. Ultimately this vote was recorded, the land was bought and conveyed to public ownership, and a management plan for the new park was developed by a team of government officials and conservationists.

Monte León harbors vast colonies of birds—including Magellanic penguins—and marine mammals along the coast. Southern right whales cruise by on their annual migrations. Inland, the landscape is arid grassland typical of the Patagonian steppe. Its characteristic wildlife includes guanaco, puma, rhea, grey fox, and various small mammals and birds. After decades of intensive grazing by domestic livestock, the grasslands are recovering well. As a national park, this spectacular landscape will continue to regain wildness, and forever offer an experience to visitors similar to what Charles Darwin found when he and the crew of the HMS Beagle explored the area in 1834.
The Estancia Dor-Aike, a private ranch of approximately 81,500 acres (33,000 hectares), was purchased as a restoration project, and to add acreage to the newly formed Monte León National Park that Conservacion Patagonica had funded as a gift to the Argentine national parks system. A sheep ranch, the property had been overgrazed for decades but is an extraordinary example of the Patagonian steppe ecosystem. Dor-Aike's rolling grasslands offer scenic views and rich wildlife habitat, with armadillos, foxes, pumas, guanacos, and many grassland bird species present.

The property also offered lessons about the region's settlement and land-use history. Dor-Aike's northern boundary stretches along twelve miles of the Santa Cruz River. When the young Charles Darwin visited Argentine Patagonia while on the multiyear expedition he chronicled in *The Voyage of the Beagle*, Captain Robert Fitzroy anchored the ship at the mouth of the Santa Cruz and led an exploratory party upriver, passing by lands that many decades later would be settled as the Estancia Monte León. Darwin found the landscape "extremely uninteresting," but noted how puma tracks "were to be seen almost everywhere on the banks of the river."

Following Dor-Aike's purchase in 2002, livestock were removed so that the native grasslands could begin to recover, and roughly 7,400 acres east of Highway 3—lands contiguous with Monte León—were donated to the Argentine Parks Administration for inclusion in the new national park. In 2007 the Conservation Land Trust sold the remaining lands west of Highway 3 to a private buyer who pledged to keep the livestock numbers low and emphasize wildlife-friendly management practices.
El Piñalito Provincial Park

9,297 acres/3,764 hectares; acquired in 1992
Project of Cat Survival Trust & CLT
Misiones Province, Argentina

El Piñalito’s conservation effort began in 1990 by the Cat Survival Trust, a British-based wildlife advocacy group headed by Dr. Terry Moore. The protected area is lush, wet, subtropical forest located in Misiones Province, Argentina. The project initially faced a series of problems typical for a small non-governmental organization working in a remote area of an unfamiliar country. But by 1992, with the help of the Conservation Land Trust, the property had been purchased and a ranger employed. In 1997, Piñalito was designated a provincial park and subsequently was incorporated into the “Green Corridor,” a government-sanctioned habitat zone promoting conservation and sustainable development that cuts across the province from north to south.

The park is triangular in shape and extends to the Pepirí Guazú stream on the border with Brazil. To the north Piñalito borders land belonging to a logging company that has torn apart the native forest. To the south it borders another timber company, which has better managed its forest, maintaining habitat continuity through the biological corridor until the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, a protected area of roughly 584,000 acres (236,000 hectares).

Piñalito is full of wildlife, with five species of feline (jaguarundi, ocelot, margay, oncilla, and puma)—the reason this tract of forest attracted the interest of the Cat Survival Trust. Piñalito is also a refuge for endangered species such as the red howler monkey, which is nearly extinct in Argentina, and the Vinaceous Amazon, a colorful parrot whose existence is now threatened by habitat loss. Tree ferns are among the park’s noteworthy plants, as are various unusual orchids and bromeliads, and Parana pine trees, which formerly covered areas of the Misiones high plains and are greatly diminished throughout their native range. In recent times, due to hunting and habitat fragmentation, the jaguar has disappeared from the area, but with a bit of time and good conservation policies, this large carnivore might one day resume its crucial role in the ecosystem. Piñalito represents the only high-altitude conservation area in the entire Misiones Province, thus serving a key role in ecosystem protection.

Piñalito’s successful preservation is due largely to the tireless commitment of conservationist and neighbor Daphne Colcombet, and to Abel Gerber, the park ranger with very special talents who for decades has kept the park well protected, despite a very modest budget. Both Daphne and Abel deserve tremendous gratitude for fighting unending battles to guard the forest and its diverse wildlife.
This region of coastal Chile located around latitude 44°S is a complex coastal zone of canals and fjords, with many islands and amazing scenery. In most places, the evergreen Valdivian rainforest reaches the sea, and extends toward the interior of valleys covering the hills of lower altitudes. Above them rises the Melimoyu Volcano, its summit and snow-covered flanks looming above the green forest.

The military government in power during the 1980s carried out a colonization program for the Melimoyu area, after having annulled its status as Puyuhuapi National Reserve. After just a decade, only a few of the fifty families that had moved there remained. Through the years the Conservation Land Trust received many queries from potential sellers who had been part of the government’s ill-conceived settlement program, and had tired of trying to earn a living in such a remote place.

Between 1999 and 2005, Doug Tompkins purchased three contiguous tracts along the Canal Refugio, a spectacular interior fjord. Although some of the property had been degraded by logging and a cattle operation, it had great conservation potential. The livestock were removed, and the land began to heal. The conservation area was significantly expanded with acreage that the Pumalín Foundation received from the Chilean government in a land swap, in exchange, Doug Tompkins donated a large block of land around the Melimoyu Volcano.

Fundación Melimoyu, a nongovernmental organization founded by Chilean conservationist Carlos Cuevas (who was also a key player in the birth of Pumalín Park), has been pushing for expanded protections for the greater Melimoyu area. Ideally, a future Melimoyu National Park would be created. If that idea succeeds, the Tompkins Conservation-assembled lands in the area would be donated for inclusion in the new park.
Isla Magdalena
National Park Expansion

5,350 acres/2,166 hectares; tracts bought 1993–1999
Project of Doug Tompkins
Aysén Region, Chile

Isla Magdalena is a large and lovely island along the remote southern coast of Chile near Puerto Cisnes. The bulk of the island was protected as a forest reserve by the Chilean government in the 1960s, which was later upgraded to national park status in 1983. The park, which covers approximately 80 percent of the island, is wild and little visited. The national parks administration maintains no infrastructure or personnel there.

Private inholdings, mostly relatively small tracts owned by absentee landowners, cover the rest of the island. Between 1993 and 1999 Doug Tompkins acquired several of these inholdings for conservation. Six properties were subsequently donated to the state for inclusion in Isla Magdalena National Park. The remaining tract, Estero Pangal, which was purchased in 1994 and covers approximately 1,458 acres (590 hectares), remains in private ownership and is strictly protected for its wildlife habitat value.

The growing complex of protected areas in this part of Chile is a model for other nations to emulate. If a future Melimoyu National Park can be established, a string of wilderness jewels would dot the coast: Isla Magdalena, then Queulat National Park just to the east across Canal Puyuhuapi, then Melimoyu National Park immediately to the north across Canal Jacaf, with Corcovado National Park and Pumalín Park a short distance northward along the coast. This extraordinary system of wilderness parks safeguards an irreplaceable part of Chile’s national heritage, supports thriving wildlife populations, and is increasingly a magnet for adventure travelers.
El Cañi Sanctuary

El Cañi Sanctuary, in the Araucanía Region of central Chile, is modest in size at 1,294 acres. But it is noteworthy as an exceptional example of an old-growth Araucaria forest natural community, and also as one of the first privately funded protected areas in Chile. The Lahuen Foundation was formed in 1989 to acquire the initial properties for the Cañi; the Conservation Land Trust later assisted in expanding the reserve.

A group of wildlands philanthropists including Alan Weeden, then-president of the Weeden Foundation, Yvon Chouinard, founder of the Patagonia clothing company, and Doug Tompkins were invited by Ancient Forest International to join Chilean conservationists (and Lahuen board members) Adriana Hoffmann, Manfred Max Neef, Sergio Vergara, Nicole Mintz, and others to purchase and formally protect this native forest remnant. Other donors in Chile and the United States also contributed, and El Cañi Sanctuary soon became a pioneering native forest education project in Chile.

Situated roughly thirteen miles outside the popular resort town of Pucon, in the northern reaches of South America's temperate rainforest region, El Cañi Sanctuary sits at one of the highest elevations in an active volcanic landscape. “Cañi,” which means “the vision that transforms” in the native Mapuche language, is a lagoon-studded, verdant, collapsed caldera ringed by rock towers and filled with cathedral-like primary forest, home to many rare animal and plant species. The Araucaria, or monkey-puzzle pine, is a relict, coniferous holdout in a hemisphere where the forests have long since evolved to broadleaf species. Along with the ginkgo, it is thought to be the ancestral species with the most ancient lineage. Surviving almost unchanged for nearly a quarter-billion years, this marvelous tree from Jurassic times lives on in the Cañi, which provides an inspiring setting for environmental education.
Future Cerro Castillo National Park

341,411 acres/138,164 hectares
Administered by Chilean public lands agency CONAF
Aysén Region, Chile

The form of Cerro Castillo, one of the most distinctive mountains in southern Chile, is indeed reminiscent of a castle. Cerro Castillo National Reserve, the unit of public land surrounding the peak, is a stronghold for the endangered huemul, or South Andean deer, and other wildlife including pumas and Patagonian skunks. The mountain’s flanks are cloaked in deciduous forest dominated by beech trees; other notable plants include notro and calafate, the latter of which is the central character in a favorite Patagonian folktale.

Located in the Aysén Region south of Coyhaique near the village of Cerro Castillo, the reserve was created in 1970 and has an area of 138,164 hectares. Known for the trekking trails to its main summits, Cerro Castillo (2,318 meters) and Cerro Las Cuatro Cumbres (2,273 meters), the reserve also has modest facilities for camping.

Given Cerro Castillo’s outstanding scenic, recreational, and ecological values, Chilean conservationists are now calling for the government to upgrade it to national park status. Park advocates associated with the Pumalín Foundation and Conservation Land Trust are promoting this idea as part of the campaign to have the entire Carretera Austral designated as a national scenic highway. Branding the region as the “Route of Parks”—there are more than 20 current and proposed national parks between Puerto Montt and Cape Horn—is a way to help local communities as Chilean Patagonia develops its adventure tourism-oriented economy.
In 2001 the Conservation Land Trust acquired Cabo León, a property covering more than 64,000 acres [26,000 hectares] located on Riesco Island north of Punta Arenas in Chilean Patagonia. Riesco Island sits on the Seno Skyring, a large seawater sound. Nearly 80 percent of the valley land is covered by southern beech forest. Upland areas terminate in rock and ice. A remnant population of the endangered huemul deer is present on the property, along with puma, fox, and a host of small mammals. A long list of resident bird species complements a very diverse flora at the ecotone, or meeting place, of the forest and steppe ecosystems.

Cabo León’s conservation effectively stops logging on its side of Riesco Island, and although the eastern border of the property has been slightly damaged by logging, it is well on the way to recovery. One goal of the project is to inspire neighboring landowners to reduce unproductive cattle grazing and similarly allow their forests to restore themselves. With enough time and reforestation, this could begin to create a wetter microclimate eastward and help regenerate the desertifying pampa/steppe natural community, which has been badly overgrazed by sheep and cattle since European settlement of Patagonia.

The preservation of Cabo León came about after a series of complicated transactions. Ultimately, the Conservation Land Trust provided the funds to the Chile-based Yendegaia Foundation to buy and administer the land. This extremely rugged and wild landscape is now fully protected in private ownership, but should eventually be repatriated to the public.

Tompkins Conservation has offered to donate Cabo León for addition to the adjacent Alacalufes Reserve, which would then be upgraded to national park status and could be enlarged by more than a half million acres of adjoining public land. The resulting national park would be one of the largest protected areas in South America—a phenomenal new wilderness area exceeding 7 million acres—and a major addition to Chile’s national park system.

Moreover, with the annexation of Cabo León, road access to Alacalufes (currently accessible only by sea) would take shape. Thus a new publicly accessible national park would be established just 136 kilometers from Punta Arenas, the regional capital, diversifying and strengthening the tourism potential of the area.
Proposed Hornopirén National Park Expansion

5,189 acres/2,100 hectares  
Project of Pumalín Foundation

Hornopirén National Park could be a major attraction in the province of Palena but has never been adequately managed or promoted as a tourism destination that would benefit the local community and region. The park, covering some 48,232 hectares, was created in 1988. It is located in the municipality of Hualaihue, near the village of Hornopirén, 107 kilometers south of Puerto Montt on the Carretera Austral.

Despite containing natural marvels such as Unexplored Lake, which is surrounded by primeval alerce forest, the park receives few visitors, less than 2,000 in the year 2015. Currently, the park does not have a convenient public-access point next to the village or appropriate public-access infrastructure to support adventure tourism.

As part of a comprehensive proposal to donate privately acquired conservation lands to the Chilean park system for new and expanded national parks, the Pumalín Foundation has offered to give 108 hectares in the area of White River, a property that was acquired by the Conservation Land Trust in 1999 for this purpose of someday creating better public access to Hornopirén National Park. It is an ideal location for a ranger station, campground, and trailhead for a path to Unexplored Lake. As of late 2015, Pumalín Foundation staff and government officials were in discussions regarding this land donation and how to foster tourism and enhance park management through the logical incorporation of adjacent government lands into the park. These modest additions of roughly 2,100 hectares would add the beautiful, cone-shaped Hornopirén Volcano to the park, enhance conservation through the protection of more native forest, create better public access, and make the park easier to administer due to improved boundaries.

Completing the land donation and related expansion to the park should help enhance the brand of Palena as the “Province of Parks,” stimulate tourism, and directly benefit the towns of Hornopirén and Llanada Grande as well as bolster conservation of the park’s ecological values.
Rewilding means the mass restoration of damaged ecosystems. It involves letting trees return to places that have been denuded, allowing parts of the seabed to recover from trawling and dredging, permitting rivers to flow freely again. Above all it means bringing back missing species.

—George Monbiot
As a scientific discipline, the field of ecological restoration is relatively young, but the healing powers of nature are literally older than the hills. And those healing powers are amazing—landscapes badly damaged by past land-use practices often show remarkable resilience if exploitive activity is ended and natural processes are given freedom to begin the work of recovery. The key, of course, is to rush the sick patient to the hospital—that is, begin active or passive restoration before species go extinct.

In a world as damaged as the one modern humans are making, ecological restoration is a necessity. Everywhere there are opportunities to help wounded landscapes return to health by protecting habitat, controlling or removing invasive nonnative species, reintroducing missing wildlife (including keystone species such as large carnivores), repairing exploited and overused landscapes, and helping natural processes resume operating at a landscape scale. This idea of ecological restoration writ large—moving from a focus on isolated sites to functional ecosystems—has come to be known as rewilding. But while the goal of rewilding is to put missing pieces and processes together and then get out of nature’s way, the means to this end may include active restoration techniques and ongoing monitoring. Site-specific activities such as countering hillside erosion or rehabilitating a former gravel pit are small, incremental steps toward this larger vision of restored beauty and health. Once habitat productivity and security are assured, returning missing species to the system and helping them achieve sufficient population size to perform their normal ecological roles is the capstone to a restoration project.

At the Conservation Land Trust’s flagship initiatives in Chile and Argentina, and at Conservacion Patagonica’s future Patagonia National Park site in Chile, restoration/rewilding efforts are combining conservation science, passion, staff and volunteer labor, and creativity in the service of wilderness recovery. The specific techniques are unique to place: in the Valdivian rainforest it may be putting an iconic species, the alerce tree, back into the system. In a grassland system, it may mean getting the base level productivity of the ecosystem back into good shape so that herbivores such as pampas deer or guanacos can flourish, and then providing the ecological and social conditions for their predators to also thrive. In every case, the approach is one of humility, assuming not a managerial mind-set but a cooperative one. The overarching goal is restoring beauty and ecological integrity—a system that can perpetuate itself over time and allows for evolutionary processes to continue.

Helping Nature Heal

Restoration and Rewilding

Humanity can choose to live on a planet of Life instead of haplessly plunging toward a human colonized planet on dialysis. —Eileen Crist
The Alerce 3000 restoration project complements the Conservation Land Trust and Pumalín Foundation’s effort to protect the native Valdivian rainforest of southern Chile. Based at Vodudahue, a farm acquired and restored by Doug and Kris Tompkins in the early 1990s, the Alerce 3000 program includes a native tree nursery, which raises over 20 species, and a field reforestation program, which plants and monitors restoration areas. Alerce 3000 helps recreate species diversity of the native forest, focusing particularly on its namesake, the magnificent but endangered alerce (*Fitzroya cupressoides*).

Alerce trees can reach up to 200 feet in height and 16 feet in diameter, and can live for more than 4,000 years. Logged heavily for its rot-resistant wood, the alerce survives in only a few stands in isolated areas of its historical range. More than 30 percent of the remaining alerce forests are on private lands. Strictly protected (officially) since the 1970s, in practice the species has weak legal safeguards. Chile prohibits cutting live alerce trees, but allows the milling and sale of dead trees. CONAF, which oversees Chile’s forest policy and national parks, lacks the personnel and resources to fully protect the species.

The name “Alerce 3000” recognizes that restoring these giants of the Valdivian rainforest may take a millennium. The program’s native tree nursery, the first of its kind in Chile, collects seeds from various species in the nearby forest, which are germinated and grown into seedlings suitable for transplant. Alerce seedlings used for replanting in a particular valley are grown from seeds gathered in that same valley, continuing the unique genetic legacy established there. The nursery and its greenhouses have contained upwards of 150,000 plants including ulmo, Guaiteca cypress, canelo, and tepa trees. A companion reforestation program determines which areas of forest to target for restoration, focusing on areas of past human settlement where logging and land clearing for agriculture have degraded the forest.

Over the last five years, Alerce 3000 restoration work within Pumalín Park has focused on small areas that had been exploited for road construction material. Additionally, the project has promoted tree restoration throughout the region, becoming one of the suppliers of native plants for CONAF’s urban forestry program in the Lakes Region; in this capacity it has supplied more than 43,000 plants in pots, especially larch of different sizes. Likewise, the project has delivered an average of 12,000 native plants annually to various private entities.

In late 2015, with the sale of Vodudahue Farm to Chilean businessman and conservationist Nicolas Ibanez, the Alerce 3000 initiative transitioned to new ownership but with its mission intact—continuing to build a base of knowledge about forest restoration that can advance future conservation work within and beyond the Pumalín Park region. Mr. Ibanez, embracing the idea that forest restoration is work for the long term, even decided to call his new conservation foundation “Alerce 3000.”
Grasslands Restoration
at the Future Patagonia National Park

The Patagonia Park project in southern Chile’s Chacabuco Valley has been widely recognized as one of the largest grasslands restoration efforts on Earth. Located in a transitional area where southern beech forests meet the Patagonian steppe ecosystem, the valley retains its full complement of native wildlife including large mammals such as pumas, guanacos, and the endangered huemul deer. Helping the formerly overgrazed, degraded pastures return to productive wildlife habitat is foundational to the overall goal of ecosystem health and protection. The initial decade of work toward this end has shown tremendous progress.

The economic transition from sheep ranching to conservation began when Conservacion Patagonica purchased a large private ranch, Estancia Valle Chacabuco, in 2004. The vast majority of the former estancia’s 30,000 sheep and 3,800 cattle were sold, with the dispersal taking place over four years so as not to distort the local livestock market. A century of overgrazing the valley’s fragile grasslands, which were not well suited to raising livestock, had created a patchwork of invasive species, poor grass, and barren areas. Under the direction of a restoration ecologist, a recovery program was implemented, with initial efforts beginning in 2005.

Soil sampling indicated what level of restoration was needed for different areas. Research plots have been established and monitored, to test the effectiveness of reseeding and other erosion control practices. With livestock gone and natural recovery of the grasslands accelerating, an ongoing project to collect seeds from native grasses, especially the *coiron* species, has provided material for reseeding heavily damaged areas. Seeds of the three dominant tree species in the southern beech forest ecosystem are being collected to aid in reforestation efforts. Various erosion control techniques, including using mesh netting to stabilize soil on steep hillsides, have begun to reverse the damage caused by overgrazing and ill-considered roadbuilding.

Unusable remnants of ranch infrastructure such as barns, sheds, corrals, etc. were removed to bring back beauty to the landscape. In the most visible element of the work to recover the valley’s wildness, during 2005–2015 volunteers from around the world tore down hundreds of miles of ranch fencing, allowing wildlife freedom to roam throughout the area. While the full recovery of the Chacabuco Valley’s ecological integrity may take decades, the initial years of restoration work have produced extraordinary progress toward healing the land and bolstering wildlife populations, leaving project biologists surprised at the speed of recovery.
The Iberá region of Corrientes Province, Argentina, features a vast complex of freshwater wetlands, one of South America’s largest. A mix of grasslands, forested uplands, marsh, and open water, the landscape is exceptionally rich wildlife habitat. The 3.2-million-acre (1.3-million-hectare) Iberá Natural Reserve, a protected area designated by the province in 1983, is largely intact and healthy, but some negative influences, including global climate change, affect the long-term integrity of the region. Parts of the larger watershed have suffered from poor livestock management and overgrazing, habitat conversion (to nonnative tree plantations and rice farms), disruptions to the original hydrology, and spread of nonnative species. The proliferation of pine monocultures, whose seeds invade grasslands, is a notable growing threat to the Iberá. Populations of some native animals, including jaguars, have been eliminated or severely reduced since European settlement of Corrientes Province.

Since the Conservation Land Trust began acquiring private land for biodiversity conservation purposes at Iberá in the late 1990s, a large-scale grasslands restoration program has been under way. Conducted on numerous properties throughout the vast Iberá watershed, initiatives include restoring grassland productivity, controlling exotic species, and returning missing species to the ecosystem. Landscape restoration work focuses on undoing prior damage from overgrazing, agriculture (especially industrial rice farms), and industrial monoculture forestry plantations. Where overgrazing had created poor grasses and allowed proliferation of termite mounds and ant hills, CLT has employed various approaches to improve cattle management, from total exclusion in certain areas to carefully managing grazing pressure through lower stocking rates and pasture rotation.

Exotic water buffaloes have been successfully eradicated, but controlling other nonnative animals such as feral pigs, European boars, wild cattle, red deer, black antelope, and axis deer is an ongoing challenge. Similarly difficult is eliminating exotic plant species such as chinaberry, ligustrina, pine, and various grasses and herbaceous plants that have escaped from agricultural cropland.

Where monoculture plantations of nonnative pine and eucalyptus once stood, CLT is working on restoring grasslands and establishing habitat corridors. Controlled burning has been employed as a tool to help return the grasslands to a more natural fire regime and enhance habitat quality for pampas deer, marsh deer, greater rheas, and other grazing animals. Throughout its ambitious ecological restoration program, CLT biologists and outside experts who consult with the project are constantly assessing and improving their techniques to inform future land management and biodiversity protection practices.
Few scientific insights from conservation biology are more clear than the fact that roads are daggers into the heart of wilderness: when wild country is penetrated by a road the result is habitat loss and fragmentation, a conduit for invasive species, and an invitation for humans to exploit wildlife. The best antidote to these problems is, of course, not to build new roads into wilderness areas at all, but conservationists in various parts of the world are also developing successful techniques for removing and revegetating former roads.

As just one example of several such efforts at the Tompkins-owned farms near Pumalín Park, workers at Las Lomas Farm outside the village of El Amarillo have rehabilitated an eroding road cut (see accompanying photo series), healing the previous damage and gaining useful restoration experience. Where roads are needed to link human communities, however, they should be well designed and aesthetically pleasing. In southern Chile, road-building contractors often leave an ugly mess along the roadside. The Conservation Land Trust has developed expertise for roadside cleanup along public roads within and near the parklands it creates. The CLT-funded roadside improvement around Pumalín Park (photo series, right) sets a standard for government agencies to follow in their roadbuilding contracts, and helps support local pride and ecotourism.

For years Pumalín Park project staff have worked closely with Chile’s Ministry of Public Works, advocating that government agencies follow similar guidelines and make contractors follow high standards in the cleanup and visual appearance of roads. This work is ongoing. In 2012, Tompkins Conservation staff launched a campaign, with fellow conservationists and local business leaders, calling for the government to designate the entire Carretera Austral, Chile’s southern road, as a national scenic highway. The goal is to improve the scenic quality of the highway, enhance tourism, and boost local economies.
In May 2008, the Chaitén Volcano, which rises in the heart of Pumalín Park and was previously dormant for more than 9,000 years, burst into a massive eruption (photo, top left). The related ash and flooding devastated the nearby town of Chaitén and severely affected part of the park. Hundreds of thousands of tons of volcanic ash spewed into the air, creating a dramatic mushroom cloud and disrupting commercial airline traffic as far away as Uruguay. Although no one died as a result of the eruption, damage in the town of Chaitén was catastrophic: rainfall following the eruption carried tons of ash, which changed the course of the Rio Blanco and caused extensive flooding and infrastructure damage. The community, previously the largest in Palena Province, had to be evacuated at the time of the eruption and remained largely uninhabited for several years. By 2015, Chaitén’s population was roughly 1,700 people (less than half of its size in 1992), and the town was continuing to rebuild.

Although the Pumalín Park office and visitor center in Chaitén were largely spared by the flood, the destruction of the surrounding town made it necessary to close and dismantle those facilities, with their materials to be reused for future buildings.

Within Pumalín Park, the El Amarillo sector at the southern entrance experienced the greatest damage. Just months after a major landscape restoration project there had been completed, the eruption covered the area in feet of volcanic ash. Closing the park to the public for the 2008–2009 and 2009–2010 seasons permitted park employees to concentrate their efforts on the immense task of repairing damaged infrastructure and assisting natural recovery. Repeated cycles of diskimg ash-covered fields allowed the area’s heavy rains to progressively wash away ash until only a small quantity remained, which could be turned over into the soil and reseeded. Campgrounds had to be dug out and repaired. Ash-filled rivers had altered course and washed out large sections of road, which required complete rebuilding. A new visitor center and administrative office in El Amarillo to replace the facilities previously in Chaitén was completed in 2013, contributing to the overall transition of El Amarillo as Pumalín Park’s gateway community. Although the Chaitén Volcano remains somewhat active, as of 2015 the park is welcoming more visitors than ever, with reconstructed and expanded public-access infrastructure in the El Amarillo sector of the park, including new hiking trails and campgrounds.
More than sixty years ago, conservationist Aldo Leopold advocated for preserving wilderness areas because of their cultural, recreational, scientific, and ecological benefits. At a time when protected areas, most notably national parks, were still valued primarily for their scenery, and often managed in ways that compromised ecological integrity (including persecution of predators, for example), Leopold articulated the importance of wilderness areas to maintain their “distinctive faunas,” including carnivores.

The modern scientific disciplines of conservation biology and landscape ecology have built on foundations laid by Leopold and other early ecologists who came to view natural systems holistically, who saw that the workings of a forest or grassland depend on the complex interactions of soil, climate, natural processes, and the relationships of all the native creatures, not just organisms valued by people for economic or aesthetic reasons. A growing body of research confirms the critical role that large carnivores and large herbivores play as keystone species in both terrestrial and marine environments.

The areas where Tompkins Conservation and partners have focused their efforts during the past twenty-five years are generally wilder and more intact than most parts of the temperate world. But in every parklands conservation project undertaken, the landscape was not fully healthy: some native species were missing or persisted at population levels far lower than during presettlement conditions, or natural processes were compromised by human activity, or the land was scarred from past exploitation. Reassembling all the pieces of a healthy ecosystem—rewilding—is the top priority. Informed by the latest thinking in conservation science, teams of biologists are working toward this goal by restoring missing wildlife to the landscape in various projects stretching from northern Argentina to southern Chile.

In the relations of man with the animals, with the flowers, with the objects of creation, there is a great ethic, scarcely perceived as yet, which will at length break forth into the light and which will be the corollary and complement to human ethics.

—Victor Hugo
In Corrientes Province of northeastern Argentina, an ambitious, multipronged effort to expand protections for the Iberá marshlands has been under way since the Conservation Land Trust began purchasing degraded ranchland in the watershed in 1997. Besides acquiring and restoring land, CLT has launched public outreach and education campaigns, conducted scientific research and monitoring, and implemented an innovative wildlife recovery program that seeks to return native species to their former territory. These extirpated creatures include the giant anteater, pampas deer, collared peccary, green-winged macaw, jaguar, and other species.

In 2005 CLT biologists prepared a recovery plan for the giant anteater in the Iberá. Once widely dispersed across Corrientes Province, the species had been locally extinct since the 1950s. The plan was approved and launched as a joint initiative with the provincial wildlife authority. As the first-of-its-kind reintroduction effort in Argentina (and the first for this species anywhere on Earth), obtaining federal permits and permissions from other provincial governments to allow translocation of anteaters from existing populations elsewhere in the country was a major challenge. After these agreements were in place, the authorized translocation of giant anteaters began in 2007. Individuals were initially quarantined at a facility close to Corrientes City overseen by CLT wildlife veterinarians and then habituated before release into the wild at CLT’s Rincón del Socorro Reserve.

By October of 2015 the project had rescued 79 orphaned or injured anteaters. 2009 saw the first giant anteater born in the wild grasslands of Iberá after decades of absence. Released anteaters are adapting extremely well to their new habitat; the birth of at least 34 cubs has been verified. In October 2013, a new population was started in another sector of the Iberá at CLT’s San Alonso Reserve; subsequent reintroductions of rescued animals and the first cubs born there have quickly grown this population. Due to the tenacious efforts of the CLT team, there are now an estimated 60–70 giant anteaters living in two disjoint and steadily growing populations within the Iberá Nature Reserve.

Although the giant anteater was previously almost unknown to local people, the reintroduction program’s results and publicity have been so positive that Correntinos now name the creature as one of the region’s most loved inhabitants. This popularity was acknowledged by the Corrientes legislature in 2014 when it declared the giant anteater a Provincial Natural Monument, granting the maximum level legal protection to the species and tacitly endorsing all of CLT’s work to return giant anteaters to the Iberá.
The pampas deer, a small cervid native to South America, was formerly abundant from central Argentina to Brazil. Prior to European settlement, millions of deer occupied the pampas, or grasslands, region of Argentina. Centuries of hunting by humans and agriculture-related habitat change have made the pampas deer in Argentina an endangered species; only four isolated populations totaling less than 3,000 individuals remain. Corrientes Province holds the second largest of these populations.

Starting in 2006, Conservation Land Trust biologists have conducted systematic censuses of pampas deer around Iberá Natural Reserve, which is comprised of provincially owned public land and private land in the Iberá watershed. This research found that the species was extirpated in the reserve, and present only on private cattle ranches near it. A key threat is the continuing loss of grassland habitat as forestry companies convert local ranches to nonnative pine plantations. In collaboration with other nongovernmental organizations including Flora y Fauna Argentina, the Conservation Land Trust created a 1,322-acre (535-hectare) reserve for an existing population of pampas deer near the Iberá Natural Reserve, and has worked diligently to reestablish the species within the protected area.

Toward that end, in 2009 biologists relocated deer to Estancia San Alonso, a 26,000-acre CLT preserve deep in the heart of the Iberá. In subsequent years two additional translocations were completed. By the end of 2015 the birth of 48 fawns had been confirmed and a population of approximately 60 individuals was well established at San Alonso; at the current rate of growth the population will double every three years. A separate effort, begun in 2012, to establish a population of pampas deer at CLT’s San Nickolas Preserve was not successful because some individuals dispersed, with high mortality resulting. In 2015 biologists started translocations to reestablish the species at CLT’s Rincón del Socorro Preserve, a protected habitat of more than 28,000 acres adjacent to the village of Carlos Pellegrini.

These are just the beginning steps in a long campaign to create multiple self-sustaining populations and help pampas deer recover throughout the Iberá region and across their native range. Achieving that goal will depend on biological and cultural factors, and CLT is working on both, complementing its direct wildlife reintroduction and habitat protection work with outreach to local landowners, helping increase awareness about the deer’s precarious situation and promoting management techniques that increase deer survival while maintaining economic productivity.
The Iberá region, known for its characteristic savannas, grasslands, and wetlands, also harbors a lesser-known natural community—Atlantic Forest, the southernmost range of which extends into northern Argentina from Brazil. Rainforest was never dominant in the region, but especially on the northern side of Iberá and close to the Paraná River it supports a rich fauna and flora, distinct from the more open habitats. Through centuries of fire, logging, and cattle ranching this rainforest habitat got even more restricted. The degradation of relict Atlantic Forest was accentuated by the extirpation of the large fruit-eating birds that act as seed dispersers and forest builders: the green-winged macaw (Ara chloropterus) and the bare-faced curassow (Crax fasciolata). The Conservation Land Trust’s rewilding team hopes to return these missing species and the vital ecological processes they perpetuate to the northern, forested expanses of Iberá.

Of the two species, the green-winged macaw was the first to become regionally extinct. Report of the species being captured and traded in Argentina were common until the nineteenth century, suggesting that these beautiful birds disappeared more than a hundred years ago, mainly due to overhunting. With no wild populations of the species in Argentina from which to transplant individuals, the CLT team in 2014 worked with Argentinean zoos and wildlife rescue centers to acquire captive green-winged macaws for release into Iberá. After passing mandatory health-screenings, seven green-winged macaws were moved to an aviary at the release site where they spent several weeks getting used to the area and learning to feed on native fruits.

Following this acclimatization period, in October of 2015 they were released. It was likely the first time in more than a century that Correntinos saw these spectacular red, blue, and green birds fly over the vastness of Iberá. The release, which was attended by local authorities, neighbors, scientists, and bird-watchers, was a public relations success that helped to boost local pride and focus attention on a lesser-known part of Iberá.

Mortality, however, for the released macaws was unacceptably high; it was clear that captive-born birds needed more flight training and food searching skills to be able to live in the wild. The on-site aviary was subsequently expanded and the CLT team is developing training techniques that will improve the flying and feeding skills of these intelligent birds. More releases are planned for 2016.

Insights gained during the macaw reintroduction program will inform potential future efforts to reintroduce curassows to Iberá. The latter project is still in development, but the CLT team is highly motivated to advance regional rewilding by helping these colorful creatures return to the skies and establish self-sustaining populations in the relict rainforest along the margins of the great Iberá wetlands.
Peccaries (family Tayassuidae) are wild pigs native to the American continent, differing from the suids or pigs of the Old World. All three species of peccaries native to the Americas are present in Argentina. Of these, the collared peccary (*Pecari tajacu*) is the smallest species—roughly 44 pounds (20 kilograms), the most adaptable, and the one that has the largest distribution, being found from the southern United States to the center of Argentina. Collared peccaries inhabit areas that range from semideserts to rainforest, including mountain forests, savannas, and dry forests. They live in groups (typically 5–15 members) and are much smaller than the wild boar, or *Sus scrofa*, one of the most troublesome invasive species in Iberá and across the Americas.

In Corrientes, collared peccaries would likely have been common in the forested areas of the Iberá region but were extirpated during the last century. Given that collared peccaries are native to the area and that protected habitat allows for their re-establishment, the CLT rewilding team prioritized the species for reintroduction. After developing a recovery plan and gaining approval from provincial wildlife authorities, biologists released the first group of 10 peccaries at CLT’s Rincón del Socorro Reserve in early 2016. The site was chosen for this first release due to its interesting mix of forests, savannas, and grasslands.

The translocated animals, which underwent a quarantine period and health check, came from the Horco Molle Experimental Reserve of the University of Tucuman. That institution was a key collaborator in CLT’s successful effort to reintroduce giant anteaters to Iberá. A second group of peccaries, donated by the Native Fauna Station from the Government of Salta Province, has been released to add genetic diversity to the inceptent population. Subsequent releases of peccaries are anticipated for the coming years, with ongoing monitoring to understand how their ecological relationships affect the landscape. Building on the CLT rewilding team’s past successes, the peccary reintroduction project is intended not only to return a native creature to its home in the Iberá marshlands region, but to expand the base of knowledge and technical skill that will inform future species reintroduction efforts, including an imminent project to return tapirs to Iberá.
The maned wolf (*Chrysocyon brachyurus*) is one of the most charismatic and difficult-to-observe animals in the Iberá marshlands. The largest wild canid native to South America, the maned wolf looks like an oversized red fox on stilts. The species’ common name is a misnomer; the maned wolf being neither wolf nor fox but in a genus of its own. Considered a “near threatened” species, the maned wolf is apparently declining in number across its range due to habitat loss and direct persecution by humans.

Typically low in population numbers, maned wolves historically occupied the oft-flooded grasslands and shrubby forests of the Iberá region. When the Conservation Land Trust’s rewilding team started working in the Iberá in 2005, it was told that the species was extirpated from CLT’s San Alonso Reserve. Then, in 2011, a camera trap there recorded a photograph of a maned wolf. Subsequently, CLT biologists periodically heard its barking and were able to get a few more pictures.

In late 2013, staff of Corrientes’ Department of Natural Resources rescued a female maned wolf in the province’s capital. They contacted CLT veterinarian Gustavo Solis, seeking technical assistance, and thereafter offered CLT the opportunity to release the animal at San Alonso. After undergoing a medical checkup and being fitted with a radio collar, this individual was released in the reserve in February 2014. Radio telemetry monitoring confirms that the maned wolf, dubbed “Rita,” has stayed on the island of San Alonso, where she occupies a large home range encompassing more than half of the reserve.

As a result of this successful translocation, in late 2014 authorities with the National Secretary of the Environment expressed interest in releasing another maned wolf at San Alonso. That animal, a five- or six-year-old female that likely had been a domestic pet at one time, showed signs of old shotgun injuries. Wildlife officials with both provincial and national governments were present during the transport and release of this animal. After being named Koé, which means “sunrise” in Guaraní, the female was released and has remained in the southern part of San Alonso, partially overlapping territory with Rita. CLT biologists continue to monitor these individuals and have placed camera traps around the island, hoping to identify the sex of any wild maned wolves in the area and hoping to confirm offspring born to the released females.

In 2015, provincial authorities found a young male maned wolf, named Namby, illegally kept as pet in a house. They transferred the animal to CLT, the cub passed quarantine, and he will be released in San Alonso. While Namby becomes habituated to his new home on the island, Rita often visits him, waiting outside the prerelease pen, anxious for a new male to live in the reserve.

The Conservation Land Trust’s ongoing maned wolf recovery efforts reflect the excellent relationships that the organization has developed with government agencies, and how collaboration between public and private conservationists can advance protection for imperiled species. Through this collaborative effort, a species that had become extirpated from the heart of Iberá is presently recovering its presence in the area.
The lesser anteater (*Tamandua tetradactyla*) is smaller and more colorful than its relative, the giant anteater, and is broadly distributed across South America east of the Andes from Venezuela to northern Argentina. Also called the “southern tamandua,” the lesser anteater’s conservation status is far more secure as well, ranked as “least concern” on the Red List of Threatened Species compiled by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Compared to giant anteaters, which thrive in grasslands, lesser anteaters are quite arboreal, occupying forest and savanna habitats where they feed on termites and ants in trees in addition to those they find on the ground. Although native to Corrientes Province, where some populations are known to persist, lesser anteaters were considered to be extirpated from many forested areas in the Iberá marshlands region including the CLT–Argentina property at Rincón del Socorro.

CLT’s Rewilding Iberá project has not formally developed a lesser anteater recovery program but was enthusiastic about public-private collaboration when two individuals of the species were rescued by Corrientes wildlife authorities with aid from CLT staff veterinarians in 2014. The female and male anteaters came from different places in the province; they were captive animals illegally kept by people before being confiscated by the authorities, who then contacted CLT about relocating the anteaters to private conservation lands in the Iberá. In spring of 2014, they were released into a riparian forest at Rincón del Socorro. They were not fitted with radio-harnesses for tracking (the larger harnesses used by CLT for tracking giant anteaters did not fit) but at least one of the individuals was confirmed to be alive in November 2015 when recorded by a camera trap. Now that it is apparent that lesser anteaters can survive in the area, CLT biologists plan to release other individuals that are offered by wildlife authorities.

Although the lesser anteater translocation was fortuitous, not the result of long-term planning, it occurred due to the excellent relationships that the Conservation Land Trust has built with government officials and the proven track record of the Rewilding Iberá program.
Until the mid-twentieth century, the jaguar (Panthera onca) was a common presence in the Iberá marshlands region. The jaguars of Iberá were likely the last of their kind to live in Argentina’s vast grasslands. Presently, all the estimated 200 individual jaguars left in the entire country inhabit forest ecosystems. As with large carnivores around the world, the jaguars of Argentina were persecuted following agricultural settlement and their numbers plummeted due to direct killing and habitat loss. Today the jaguar lives on in place names, legends, and folk songs, but has not been a living presence in Corrientes province for decades. The Conservation Land Trust’s Rewilding Iberá program is working to change that reality.

In recent years, the conditions to accommodate a jaguar population in the Iberá have changed. With the regional economy diversifying beyond cattle ranching, the area is emerging as an important ecotourism destination where the nearly 600,000 hectares (roughly 1.5 million acres) under strict conservation status should enable this top carnivore to flourish without conflicts between jaguars and humans or their cattle. Once considered nothing but a problem for its human neighbors, the jaguar is fast becoming viewed as an opportunity for local development as a tourist attraction.

This is the context for CLT’s science team to contemplate reintroducing jaguars to the Iberá Reserve. The complexity of such an effort, however, requires a long process of planning and acquiring approval from provincial and national wildlife authorities. For more than four years, CLT staff have been laying the groundwork for jaguar recovery—consulting with national and international experts; visiting species restoration projects in other countries including Brazil, South Africa, Spain, and India; building a team of veterinarians and biologists with specialized knowledge; researching the public attitudes toward the jaguar in Corrientes; and completing the steps necessary to gain permission from wildlife officials.

In 2013, Corrientes authorities approved CLT’s formal proposal to launch its “Jaguar Project,” which outlined various facets of jaguar breeding, education, and related tourism potential in the Iberá Nature Reserve. The objective of this effort is to generate knowledge about how to breed jaguars under controlled conditions in a remote area of Iberá, and thereby create a source of animals for a reintroduced population that ultimately would live in the wild without depending on or becoming attached to humans.

The practical hurdles are not just ecological—breeding, habituating, and translocating wild cats—but sociological and cultural, as human neighbors and visitors to the Iberá region become accustomed to the returned presence of this iconic carnivore. Fortunately, while seeking to understand local attitudes toward possible jaguar reintroduction, the CLT team discovered that Correntinos, including many of the ranchers, generally have a patriotic identification with this large cat. In guaraní-speaking culture, the jaguar symbolizes a proud heritage of prowess and bravery. This cultural influence is strong within the local gaucho culture and also present in the broader society; social science research conducted for the jaguar project showed very strong majority
support for jaguar recovery among both rural and urban residents of Corrientes province.

Toward the end of 2014 the National Secretary of the Environment approved CLT’s Jaguar Experimental Breeding Center, which consists of four enclosures of 1,200 square meters each for breeders, two enclosures of 1.5 hectares each that include grasslands and forest for mothers and their offspring, and a large enclosure of 25 hectares where juvenile jaguars can hone their hunting abilities. Based on the results of this initial effort to breed and habituate jaguars, the authorities will decide if the animals born in the breeding center may be released in Iberá or other protected areas.

Throughout 2013 and 2014, while the required authorizations were being processed, a team of local construction workers began to build the captive breeding center facilities deep in the heart of the Iberá marshlands at CLT’s San Alonso Reserve. The remote location and the two rainiest years of the last decade made working conditions difficult but the team persevered, bringing construction materials to the site using boats, tractors, horses, and even ox-drawn carts. The resulting enclosures are state-of-the-art facilities for housing large wild cats.

Concurrent with the breeding center construction, new medical quarantine facilities, specially designed for these felids, were being built near Corrientes city. Once all of the administrative and infrastructural groundwork was complete, CLT biologists were ready to bring the first jaguars intended for breeding—which were to come from zoos, not extant wild populations.

On a celebratory day in April of 2015, with wildlife officials, local residents, politicians, and CLT staff present, the first jaguar, a female named “Tobuna,” was carefully transported to the breeding center. Tobuna, who was donated by the Batán Zoo near the city of Mar del Plata, was especially chosen for this role because she is the last female jaguar to have bred in captivity in Argentina. The translocation occurred flawlessly; Tobuna completed a quarantine period necessary to prevent pathogens from being introduced into either the breeding facilities or the Iberá ecosystem, and she has settled into her new life while waiting for a male partner, who arrived in early 2016.

It is still uncertain if jaguar recovery in the Iberá will succeed. For the CLT team, however, Tobuna’s arrival represented a special moment, capping years of meetings, trips, construction, and paperwork leading toward the start of handling jaguars. This is the first leg in a long journey that will involve much additional work and learning to perfect techniques for breeding jaguars that can live safely in the wild. As biologist Ignacio Jiménez Pérez, who coordinates CLT’s endangered species program, says: “at the end of this journey, we hope that the people from Corrientes and all of Argentina will feel proud that South America’s largest predator is no longer just a memory in our folklore, but a vital actor in the living landscape of the Iberá.”
After several years of conducting training courses on ecological restoration and protected areas management, to formalize these offerings in 2014 the CLT–Argentina team founded the Iberá Center for Biodiversity Conservation Leadership. The aim of the Center is to create a model program that trains both young professionals and experienced conservationists in large-scale ecosystem restoration and conservation. Supported by funding from CLT and two key partners, the Center operates within the Iberá Nature Reserve, located in Corrientes province in northeastern Argentina.

Since 2006, CLT has been implementing the most ambitious project in South America to restore populations of locally extinct large mammals. After nine years of work on habitat restoration and species recovery initiatives, the Iberá CLT team—roughly 60 biologists, veterinarians, technicians, and support staff—has gained extensive practical experience that it seeks to share with the conservation community.

CLT staff associated with the Iberá Center have taught more than 15 training courses for present and future leaders in biodiversity conservation. During 2014, seven courses were developed, through which training was provided to 63 people from different regions and different areas of conservation (NGOs, government, academia, private). The curricula is diverse—from conservation philosophy to introductory GPS/GIS skills to core programs on the compatibility of ecosystem rewilding and local development. Through 2015, approximately 100 students had participated in the Center’s internship program and training courses.

The experience of the CLT team in Argentina—through its wildlife recovery projects, public outreach, and ongoing protected areas management—confirms the complexity of conservation work. Complementing traditional academic training, the Center’s training programs are focused on “real world” experience, sharing the successes and failures that are inevitable when faced with the practical challenges presented by complex social and ecological systems. The daily work of conservation shows again and again the enormous potential of learning on the ground, and the importance of motivation and teamwork. The Iberá Center’s programs are an effort to demonstrate both passion for the work of conserving wild nature and to help share with colleagues an array of tools and techniques to successfully manage conservation projects.
The most widely distributed feline in the Americas, with an historical range stretching from the Magellan Strait in Patagonia to the Yukon Territory in Canada, pumas have long been revered as totem animals representing strength and cunning. They also have been long persecuted by humans who considered them a threat to people and livestock. A key insight from recent conservation science is that pumas and other large carnivores are vitally important as “top predators,” the creatures at the top of the food chain that help keep ecosystems healthy by regulating the abundance of herbivores and mid-sized carnivores.

Patagonian pumas are diminished from their presettlement numbers and distribution and have changed their predation habits due to the introduction of exotic prey such as domestic sheep and European hares. Pumas are now protected by law in Chile but historically have been killed, and still are, by ranching interests. The wildlife recovery program at the future Patagonia National Park places great importance on puma research and conservation, with a focus on understanding how pumas interact with other species (particularly the endangered huemul), their movement patterns, and how they affect the landscape.

When Conservacion Patagonica purchased the former Estancia Valle Chacabuco to begin the Patagonia Park effort, the livestock were sold and ecological restoration projects commenced. Gauchos who had formerly tended sheep and cattle were offered jobs as park rangers, helping to transition the landscape from extractive to conservation purposes. The puma monitoring project’s head tracker was for many years an experienced hunter who killed the wild cats that ranchers feared as a threat to their livelihood. He now uses his skills and experiences in the service of conservation-oriented puma monitoring.

Since 2008 a team of veterinarians and park rangers in the Chacabuco Valley has been capturing, releasing, and tracking pumas with GPS and VHF collars to understand their prey selection, movement patterns, and ecological interactions. Considering the area’s recent land-use changes—from ranching with more than 25,000 sheep and active predator control to a protected natural area with very few domestic animals and which prohibits all hunting of native wildlife—Patagonia Park offers a research setting unique in the world. The monitoring effort has produced interesting results, confirming that pumas in the park look to the native and abundant guanaco as their primary prey. Predation by wild cats on the endangered huemul is occurring but at acceptable levels. Another finding that emerged from the program’s radio tracking is that some pumas are being poisoned and killed in Argentina, where it is a legal practice, promoted with bounties.

The puma monitoring and conservation program has made major progress understanding and providing data about the local puma population’s ecological function, developing expertise about how to safely track and collar individual cats, and forging a cooperative working relationship with Chilean government wildlife officials.
Huemul Deer Recovery

The huemul deer, a wildlife icon that is featured on Chile’s national shield, was once widely distributed along the southern Andes of Chile and Argentina. A forest-dwelling deer with short legs and stocky build, the huemul is well adapted to the rugged, mountainous terrain of Patagonia, occupying habitats from the coastal lowlands up to 5,500+ feet (1,700 meters). Historically, overhunting and loss of habitat due to the conversion of lowland areas to agricultural production reduced huemul populations. During the past three decades, predation by domestic dogs and introduced diseases from domestic livestock have also played a major role in the species’ decline. Now endangered, it is estimated that no more than 2,000 individuals remain on Earth in scattered populations. Threats to remaining huemul habitat are increasing, especially from mineral and energy exploitation, infrastructure projects, and other land subdivision and development in Patagonia.

When Conservacion Patagonica launched the Patagonia National Park effort by purchasing the private ranch that would become the heart of the park, one of the primary motivations for the project was to expand protected habitat for the critically important population of huemul deer occupying areas along the northern shore of Lago Cochrane and neighboring Tamango National Reserve. Following the land’s purchase, one of the first conservation management actions was to remove domestic livestock from huemul habitat. The Chacabuco Valley/Tamango population today has an estimated 130 individuals, a significant percentage of the species’ total numbers. When completed, the park will cover nearly 700,000 acres of wild grasslands, forest, and mountains, dramatically increasing the connectivity between huemul subgroups and providing permanently protected habitat for these deer.

With the species’ fate hanging in the balance and each remnant population of huemul being crucial to preserve and augment, it is useful to understand the deer’s ecology, population trends, and current threats in each area where it persists. Conservacion Patagonica is managing a program with park wardens (who formerly were livestock workers) to monitor and track adults and fawns through radio telemetry. The data collected is invaluable to understand the deer’s survival rates, movements, and habitat use over time. The information gained thus far has confirmed that huemul sub-populations in the project area are increasing (in one site from five in 2005 to more than 25 in 2015) and that juveniles are dispersing into and the species recovering in newly available habitat. This model of park wardens dedicated to monitoring deer has proven to be effective, despite the difficulties of the related fieldwork.

While initial results are encouraging, the huemul recovery program at the future Patagonia National Park is focused on the long-term objective of restoring viable huemul populations throughout the species’ former range in the park and adjacent region. Ultimately, the measure of success will be when this iconic animal has returned to its rightful place of prominence in the wild forests of Patagonia.
Andean Condor Release

Rewilding Patagonia Park

Andean Condor Release

With a wingspan up to 10.5 feet, the Andean condor (*Vultur gryphus*) is a dramatic presence in the skies of Patagonia. Condors are exceptionally long-lived and have a very low reproductive capacity. The world’s largest vulture, they are primarily scavengers. In Patagonia, Andean condors typically feed on the carcasses of the formerly abundant guanaco, domestic sheep, and other small- and medium-sized mammals, playing a key role in recycling nutrients through the ecosystem. Globally listed as a “near threatened” species, condor populations are generally declining across much of their range due to human persecution. Thus Conservacion Patagonica was an enthusiastic partner with SAG (Chile’s agricultural and wildlife authority) and AvesChile to release three juvenile condors at the future Patagonia National Park.

In January 2014, more than a hundred people gathered to watch the three young condors take flight for the first time. The birds had been housed at the Raptor Rehabilitation Center in Santiago before coming home to Aysén. For two months the condors acclimated to their new surroundings at a prerelease facility midway up the Chacabuco Valley. Cristián Saucedo, Conservacion Patagonica’s Conservation Director, and Veronica Venegas, who oversees community outreach work, organized numerous visits of Cochrane schoolchildren to visit the condors in the weeks leading up to the release. Many of the students returned for the birds’ big day, bringing their families along.

When the enclosure was opened, the crowd of kids, neighbors, the park’s rewilding team, wildlife officials, and other conservationists enjoyed the show as the condors perched on a large boulder, stretched their wings, and investigated their surroundings before taking flight. Within minutes the condors were circling high above. Kris Tompkins, President of Conservacion Patagonica, said, “For a moment you see through the condor’s eyes, and think about what it must be like to fly for the first time. I had tears in my eyes.”

As ranching declines across the region (with associated decrease in domestic livestock carcasses available to wild scavengers), the local Andean condor population may decline until populations of native herbivores rebound. Patagonia Park, with its already-thriving guanaco herds, will likely be an important refuge for condors, and a major natural corridor for the species.

The released condors were fitted with tracking devices, which subsequently provided the park’s rewilding team with valuable information about the birds’ movements. During the initial months following release the condors stayed in the park vicinity but thereafter began to range more widely, on both sides of the Andes, and one of the individuals has roamed across a territory of more than 5 million hectares. While national parks and other conserved lands will be vital to condors, it is clear that developing condor-friendly management practices (i.e., no hunting, no poison, and disposal of livestock carcasses in the open) on private lands outside protected areas will be similarly crucial to long-term flourishing for Andean condors in Patagonia.
In 1834, when a young naturalist named Charles Darwin was on the multiyear expedition later chronicled in *The Voyage of the Beagle*, he collected a specimen of an ostrich-like bird in Patagonia. Farther north Darwin had observed the common rhea, a similar large, flightless bird native to the area. In southern Patagonia, he sought out its smaller, rarer cousin. Initially thinking it was a juvenile of the larger variety, Darwin and his fellows ate the bird, which a colleague had shot for their supper. When the misidentification dawned on him, Darwin gathered up the post-dinner remains, brought them back to London for analysis and reconstruction at the Zoological Society, and ornithologist John Gould named the species for him.

*Darwin’s rhea*, known colloquially in Patagonia as the “ñandu,” is today categorized as “least concern” on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, but its numbers have declined in recent decades. Recently, the species has been listed as endangered for the Aysén District of Chile. The Chacabuco Valley is home to one of the two remaining rhea populations in Aysén, and the wildlife recovery team at the future Patagonia National Park is focused on helping rheas recover. Conservacion Patagonica has established a park warden in charge of monitoring the population (which, as of 2015, contained roughly 20 individuals), identifying threats, and implementing management actions that advance ñandu recovery.

In conjunction with these activities, in 2014 Conservacion Patagonica constructed a captive breeding center for rheas, the first of its kind for wildlife in Aysén. The center’s initial residents were two orphaned chicks rescued by the Chilean border police plus several additional birds from a commercial rhea breeding center. The objective is to raise and release rheas to augment the present wild population and quickly increase the population of rheas in the park. With plenty of suitable habitat, the medium-term objective is for Patagonia Park to host three or four subpopulations of at least 20 individuals.
A consistent principle that informs all Tompkins Conservation activities is that the present eco-social crisis demands a response—that individuals who recognize the great unraveling of natural and human communities across the globe have a responsibility to act to stop it. Working to reverse the extinction crisis and build a more sane and sustainable civilization requires both defensive and proactive conservation strategies. Initiatives to produce food, energy, building materials, clothing, art and entertainment, and other necessities of life in a manner that supports local economies without degrading the landscape is the primary work for the twenty-first century. It is essential to reduce humanity’s impact on the global climate and natural ecosystems.

The large-scale parklands projects described throughout this book have been consciously designed to reflect this commitment to eco-localism—and demonstrate that wilderness and wildlife protection efforts can help solve ecological and social problems by integrating new models of local, durable, and ecologically sound economic activity. This movement toward eco-localism has taken many forms, from using native materials and landscaping for buildings, to developing new methods of organic agriculture suited for a particular place, to pioneering alternative energy systems appropriately scaled to produce electricity for farms and park infrastructure.

Whatever the specific project or activity, the goal of eco-localism starts with asking certain questions: What type of human activity is appropriate to this particular place and will allow wildness to continue to flourish? What kind of economic activity is consistent with local cultural traditions, uses local labor and materials, and will help sustain community integrity over time? Beginning with these questions starts a conversation about values—ecological, social, economic—that is crucial to have if there is any chance to turn around the industrial growth juggernaut that is devouring the natural world, and also begin to rewild human institutions.
Land Ethics

The Foundation of Eco-Localism

While the mechanisms used to conserve land and wildlife are many—from laws to economic incentives to social norms—most conservationists believe what Aldo Leopold articulated more than a half century ago, that individual citizens must develop an ethical relationship with land for conservation to succeed. Without personal affection and a sense of kinship with the diversity of creation, useful tools such as legal protections for wildlife or tax breaks for land conservation are not likely to preserve wild nature over time. People protect and sustain what they love, not simply because of tax deductions. And so building a culture of conservation is the fundamental long-term task of the conservation movement. Beauty, biodiversity, and wildness must be preserved not simply to support human well-being but to preserve the health of the entire biotic community.

Whether initiatives to promote eco-localism will succeed or not depends in large part upon cultural values, which evolve over time. In 2010, a limited-run, private edition book, *Land Ethics: Biodiversity & Wheat*, was published to communicate how Doug and Kris Tompkins’s conservation projects align with their personal land ethic. A key audience for the publication, produced in English and Spanish, was other large landowners in Argentina and Chile who have had little exposure to wilderness protection, ecological agriculture, or endangered species recovery programs. The book was an effective tool to describe the range of ecological and social values that are advanced by land conservation, and to counter various misconceptions about the parks and farming projects the Tompkinses have launched in South America. Throughout all their conservation work, Kris and Doug Tompkins have stressed the importance of a systemic critique of the status quo and, echoing Aldo Leopold, the need for a fundamental grounding in land ethics if conservation is to succeed.
Ecotourism

Whether tourism as a mass-market phenomenon can continue indefinitely as energy costs rise is unlikely, but at present tourism remains one of the largest sectors of the global economy. Harnessing the economic power of travelers and steering that revenue toward conservation is a highly useful endeavor in the near term. Nature and adventure-related travel is a growing sector of the overall tourism economy, and protected natural areas can be the economic drivers of regional economies. The national park system in Chile, for instance, received 2.7 million visitors to national parks in 2015 (645,000 foreigners) and the overall tourism sector, which is growing rapidly, directly provides 3.8 percent of national employment and a much higher percentage of jobs are indirectly tied to tourism.

Public-access parks in the Palena and Aysén regions of southern Chile are significant economic engines for the area. Pumalin Park and its surrounding farms are one of the region’s largest private employers. Pumalin attracts more than 70,000 visitors annually, nearly all during the short summer season. The park visitor center at Caleta Gonzalo, with its restaurant, cabanas, and onsite farm, supports local jobs tied to ecotourism. On the other side of Pumalin, El Amarillo’s transformation into a gateway community for the park has generated employment and increased property values. The Conservation Land Trust—Argentina’s design, construction, and donation of a municipal campground at Carlos Pellegrini village in the Iberá Natural Reserve, and work with other villages in the watershed on coordinated signage and marketing, have boosted ecotourism in Corrientes Province, Argentina. Conservacion Patagonica’s flagship effort to establish the future Patagonia National Park effort is working closely with local officials and businesspeople in the Aysén region, anticipating that the park will become a major tourism draw for adventure travelers to Patagonia.

With these and related efforts to boost ecotourism in areas formerly dominated by an extractive, resource-based economy, the goal has not been to stimulate tourist activity for its own sake. Rather, the objective is to help visitors appreciate wilderness and wildlife (and thereby support conservation efforts), and to help local communities see conservation as a productive use of the landscape that will help support vibrant regional economies.
Since the 1990s, when Doug and Kris Tompkins assembled the lands for Pumalín and began restoring adjacent farms to help buffer and protect the park, they have emphasized the connection between local economies and conservation. National parks and other protected areas, of course, can be engines of economic activity in a region because they foster ecotourism. And local businesses that link their products to conservation may tap this market of visitors while complementing the park’s mission to sustain wildlife, natural processes, and scenic beauty.

For many years, the Pillán Farm, which is situated at one end of the Bérlin Fjord, was the headquarters for overall administration of Pumalín Park and its neighboring farms owned by the Tompkins family. Those farms produced wool, berries, honey, and vegetables for on-farm consumption and support of the local agricultural economy. Under the label of “Pillán Organics,” the farms produced certified organic honey and jams, carrying labels that drew the link between sustainable agricultural production and parklands conservation, helping to educate consumers not only about organic production but also nature protection.

Wool from the farms has been used by local craftspeople to produce lovely blankets and clothing, which is marketed in the Pumalín Park visitor centers at Caleta Gonzalo, El Amarillo, Puerto Varas, and the new Patagonia Park headquarters in the Chacabuco Valley. These retail shops showcase numerous handcrafted goods from local cottage industries, as well as wicker baskets, ceramics, park T-shirts, maps, nature-focused books, and posters, with revenue from sales going back into conservation projects. While perhaps modest in scale as a commercial enterprise, these efforts help support local artisans and agricultural operations to help create a more durable local economy and one oriented to sustaining Chilean Patagonia’s natural splendor.
Encouraging Local Pride

Recognizing that the long-term fate of protected areas hinges largely on the attitude of local communities near them, the Conservation Land Trust has supported efforts to maintain or develop local identities rooted in the land. These projects take many forms, but generally promote a connection between community, natural beauty, and conservation. From building a village-owned campground to hosting a celebration and dance on the edge of the Iberá wetlands, CLT has found practical methods of reinforcing cultural links to the landscape. By sponsoring festivities that celebrate local traditions, CLT works with communities to pass along cultural heritage to the next generation, helping to resist the force of globalized popular culture.

In the Iberá region of Corrientes, Argentina, CLT has sponsored various initiatives to revitalize towns bordering the marshlands. Working cooperatively with mayors and other townspeople, CLT helped to renovate the town plaza of Carlos Pellegrini village. By enlisting the help of the community in designing and constructing the square, CLT ensured that the town felt fully invested in the project. The improved public space provides a central landmark and gathering place for the town, helping build community spirit. In the same village, CLT organized and supported the construction of a public-access campground on the edge of the area’s largest lake, providing the town with improved tourist infrastructure and a launching point into the wetlands.

In another area of the Iberá watershed, CLT constructed a new park ranger and biological field station at a formerly run-down cattle ranch. When the day came to hand over the facility to the local government, CLT organized a community celebration to mark the transfer. Nearly the entire population of San Miguel came to the ceremony, which included an asado (barbecue) and dancing. The day’s highlight was a performance by the dance troupe that San Miguel’s mayor had helped organize; almost all of the village’s young people participated in the group, learning traditional songs and dances and gaining pride in their rural heritage. This memorable celebration strengthened the bond between the villagers of San Miguel and the extraordinary landscape of Iberá.
In Chile, Tompkins Conservation-related efforts to build local pride and support traditional culture have taken various forms. During the years that elementary schools operated at Reñihué and Pillán farms, all the students there learned traditional songs and dances of the Palena region. For nine years, Doug and Kris Tompkins sponsored a Chilote folk festival at Reñihué: more than 400 people from Chiloé and Continental Chiloé would gather together for song and dance performances during the three-day, summertime gathering. Numerous different troupes from around the region would perform for the audience, which arrived by boat from various communities in the area. The festival included forums on the future of the Chilote identity and community, and traditional foods such as curanto, a shared meal of baked seafood. Attendees learned traditional dances such as the cueca.

Farther south, in the Chacabuco Valley, Conservacion Patagonica has for a decade sponsored an annual Huemul Hike. Hundreds of townspeople from Cochrane gather together for a walk through the Tamango Reserve into Valle Chacabuco, home of the future Patagonia National Park. The route passes through habitat of the endangered huemul deer, and allows local people to better understand their home region’s exceptional ecology, including its imperiled wildlife. At the end of the challenging two-day hike, all participants share an enormous asado to celebrate their accomplishment and celebrate as a community.

In a variety of ways, these projects aim to strengthen local communities not merely to attract outside visitors but, more importantly, to enhance local respect for the place, making these rural communities better, more beautiful, and more vibrant places to live.
El Amarillo Village Beautification

To improve quality of life, generate local pride, and stimulate a small-scale tourism industry, the Pumalín project developed a highly successful collaborative effort to beautify El Amarillo, the small gateway town at the park’s southern entrance. A community of a few dozen houses, a public school, and a church, El Amarillo formerly had no tourist infrastructure. Its location, however—roughly 15 miles south of Chaitén on the Carretera Austral, near the hot springs of El Amarillo, and neighboring Pumalín Park—makes it an ideal place to develop amenities for visitors. Since the 2008 eruption of the Chaitén Volcano shut down the nearby town of Chaitén where a park welcome center and administrative office had been located, the park infrastructure at El Amarillo has been upgraded to assume those functions. A new office and visitor kiosk, expanded maintenance and equipment structures, a new campground and trails for visitors have all been completed in recent years.

With stunning views of the Michimahuida Volcanoes and Tabiques Mountains, El Amarillo is perfectly suited to benefit economically from its scenic location at the edge of Pumalín Park, and has embraced its community slogan, “el centro del mundo”—the center of the world.

While taking care to honor local wishes, Pumalín project workers have constructed new essential amenities such as a supermarket and gas station, enhanced public use areas (including building bus shelters and a complete landscaping overhaul around the community school), and helped beautify private homes. While participation in the latter program is voluntary, almost everyone in the town has agreed enthusiastically to work with the Pumalín team of landscape architects, designers, and builders. This team talks to each family individually about their ideas for improving the town generally and their property specifically. As the crew repaints houses, gives facelifts to building facades, rebuilds fences, and plants trees and flowers, they work with residents to create a feeling of common purpose. In exchange for the free help fixing up private residences, the Pumalín project asks townspeople to agree to keep their house and yard tidy and well maintained. Thus the El Amarillo restoration team seeks to develop a culture of orderliness and pride-of-place, which will make the community attractive to visitors and locals alike.

El Amarillo’s transformation has been noted by other communities and government officials, who are considering similar initiatives along the Carretera Austral, the southern road traversing Chilean Patagonia.
Land Title Assistance
and the Birth of Iberá Provincial Park

To foster good land stewardship and neighborly relations, the Conservation Land Trust has developed programs in Chile and Argentina for assisting neighbors to secure legal titles to their land. In remote and recently settled “frontier” areas such as those of the Pumalín and Esteros del Iberá conservation areas, which are far from government administrative centers, land titles have been slow to be officially codified. Many rural people have no legal title to their property, and often live, farm, or graze livestock on parcels without surveyed property boundaries, which can lead to disputes between neighbors and poor land use. Although national governments have a procedure for granting titles, the process tends to be complicated, costly, and backlogged, often frustrating settlers to the point that they give up the effort.

In Chile, the Conservation Land Trust’s title assistance program originated as a means of encouraging landowner stability and careful stewardship of the landscape around Pumalín Park, which has more than one hundred neighboring properties. Although the park effort precipitated only a handful of disputes with neighbors over shared property lines, there were many conflicts between the neighbors themselves. CLT took the position that “good fences make good neighbors”—community harmony would improve if people had inviolate legal titles for the land they lived on. At the same time, formal ownership would encourage residents to take a long-term view and care for their property.

At the start of the process, a backlog of nearly 50,000 land title requests sat on bureaucrats’ desks in the Ministry of Public Lands. The government’s slow bureaucratic proceedings.

Although a slow and costly effort, it achieved 100 percent success. All land titles were finalized, leaving settlers secure of lasting ownership. This also helped pave the way for Pumalín Park to receive formal “nature sanctuary” status from the Chilean government in 2005 during the administration of President Lagos. Through years of experience, CLT has learned how to solve community problems related to land titles and has advised other NGOs throughout the world on setting up land title security programs that benefit nature and people.

Based on the success of the Chilean work, CLT–Argentina launched a similar effort in 2007 in the Iberá marshlands region in northeastern Argentina. There, as in Chile, the absence of clear property boundaries and official land titles has led to frequent infringement on the public lands within the Iberá Natural Reserve. Neighbors’ cattle often illegally enter the public wetlands, which is perceived as common land up-for-grabs, whereas the actual government land is supposedly protected as a reserve. Lack of clear land titles can prompt disputes between neighbors and contribute to poor governmental stewardship of public land.

Through years of painstaking effort, CLT–Argentina’s title assistance team worked through the arduous and expensive task of checking, verifying, and in some cases securing titles for settlers in and around the Iberá Reserve. Cross-checking measurements, titles, and on-the-ground coordinates is time-consuming but the most accurate approach. Ultimately, all the information was recorded, private properties delineated, and the research effort showed that roughly 350,000 acres (550,000 hectares) within the existing Iberá Natural Reserve were government-owned lands. Having a clear understanding of private and public lands in the region allowed local conservationists to pressure the government to designate those public lands as Iberá Provincial Park in 2009. It was a great advance for conservation in the region, having equivalent protections as a national park.

Although CLT lacks any official power to settle land claims, its research and work has been integral in helping establish a stable landowner community in the Iberá region and CLT has begun a similar effort around El Impenetrable National Park as well. Legally established titles and borders will create better relationships between neighbors and eliminate the need for government intervention to defend landowners. Land ownership rights in Argentina are legally very well defined. It is only the lack of actual land titles that leaves a murky and potentially contentious condition, harmful to the community, to the province, and to the landscape. A rigorous private effort complemented by effective governmental action to verify titles will eliminate this cause for contention.
Support for Communities

The Conservation Land Trust–Argentina team in the Iberá region has collaborated with government agencies, and provided technical assistance and funding to establish new park ranger stations, improve signage, and enhance public roads and airstrips that are used to access and patrol the Iberá Natural Reserve. CLT has also worked with all ten municipalities within the reserve; in one example, CLT provided expertise to the township of Carlos Pellegrini, the most-visited village, to draft its local planning regulations, replace exotic ornamental trees with native species, and incorporate green space and scenic road design principles into its economic development strategy. Other local villages subsequently approached CLT for technical assistance.

To help expand a budding ecotourism industry, CLT has organized training courses on wildlife-related guiding, reserve management, agrotourism, and cultural heritage interpretation. CLT has also invested directly in public-access infrastructure, designing and building a municipal campground for Carlos Pellegrini village that sets high standards for design and quality construction. This installation was donated to the local government with the idea that revenues from user fees can be used for the campground’s maintenance and other aesthetic improvements in the village. This collaboration was very successful; the new recreation facility on the edge of the lagoon is popular, and the project set a good example for other communities within the reserve.

Similarly, in Chile’s Chacabuco Valley, the Conservacion Patagonica staff has sought to develop a strong partnership with local officials, CONAF (the Chilean forest service), nearby landowners, and the community. An annual celebration, the Huemul Hike, is one initiative to help local citizens gain knowledge about the Patagonia National Park project by directly experiencing the landscape. The year 2015 marked the tenth anniversary of the hike, which has become a popular event concluding with a celebration in the town of Cochrane’s main plaza.

Conservacion Patagonica has also donated new mattresses for the medical hospital in Cochrane, and has provided scholarships for ten area students to continue their studies. The hope is that these young adults will return to the region with the skills necessary for contributing to conservation or ecotourism work, and become part of a growing class of professionals who can develop the Aysén Region in a way that sustains its wildness and ecological integrity.

Since the Pumalín Park project’s inception, the Conservation Land Trust and Fundación Pumalín have actively supported local communities with a wide variety of efforts, from purchasing garbage and recycling cans in Chaitén, to helping community members paint their houses, to assisting local churches and schools with beautification projects. The most prominent example has been the multiyear, comprehensive effort to revitalize the village of El Amarillo and position it as the gateway community for Pumalín Park.
Almost as long as conservationists have been working to preserve parklands, there have been related efforts to create scenic highways that help people travel to, through, and between parks and other conservation lands. The explosion of automobile-based tourism in the United States a century ago was linked to the burgeoning national parks movement, and even today the most-visited unit administered by America’s national park service is a scenic highway linking two national parks. Designated scenic roads designed to enhance tourism are now widespread around the globe, from Norway to South Africa and Australia.

Tompkins Conservation has built on this legacy by promoting scenic byways as a tool to promote aesthetically pleasing, appropriate development in Chile and Argentina. During the Lagos administration CLT submitted the first-ever proposal for “scenic highway” designation in Chile, for the 75-kilometer section of the Carretera Austral—Chile’s southern highway—that runs through Pumalín Park. The CLT and Pumalín Foundation team initiated the concept of making the entire Carretera Austral into a scenic highway and have advanced that idea with government officials and businesspeople along the route. In 2012–2013, the editorial team associated with Tompkins Conservation produced, in Spanish and English editions, *The Carretera Austral: South America’s Most Spectacular Road* as part of a campaign to popularize the idea. Promoting the road as the gateway to Patagonia’s “Route of Parks” has gained momentum among tourism boosters.

Such a designation would cost the national government virtually nothing, but could significantly boost ecotourism in the Palena and Aysén regions if road-building practices were improved, scenic vistas protected, and signage along the route standardized. Traveling the Carretera Austral could become one of the world’s great road trips, as people would come not only to visit Patagonia’s extraordinary parklands but also to visit the small communities along the route. Additionally, Conservacion Patagonica is promoting the idea of designating the secondary road through the Chacabuco Valley, which connects to the Argentine border, as a scenic byway.

In 2011. CLT–Argentina, the provincial government of Corrientes Province, the national government, and 13 local municipalities agreed to establish the “Iberá Scenic Route” of more than 1,300 kilometers circling the marshlands region, and to cooperatively market the area’s ecotourism brand. An associated map, coordinated signage, and a poster campaign promoting the Iberá Natural Reserve’s wildlife values that CLT produced are elevating the region as an ecotourism destination both within Argentina and for foreign visitors. Along the way, visitors find interpretive centers and ranger stations, guiding and lodging services, and other ecotourism-related infrastructure. This effort is helping local residents orient their economy around the natural values of the area, enhance a regional identity, and build a culture that values conservation.
Guard Dog Program
at the Future Patagonia and Pumalín National Parks

At Reñihué, Kris and Doug Tompkins’s farm adjacent to Pumalín Park, and at Patagonia Park in the Chacabuco Valley, guard dogs are used to deter predators. The guard dog program at Patagonia Park has been particularly ambitious and successful, raising Great Pyrenees both for use in the park and to be distributed to livestock producers around the region.

When the former Estancia Valle Chacabuco was purchased to launch the park project, the vast majority of the ranch’s livestock were sold. But in keeping with the tradition of Patagonian estancias providing meat as well as wages to workers, a flock of roughly 1000 sheep was retained to help feed park staff. The animals suffered significant depredation from wild predators, mainly pumas and culpeo foxes. Wildlife takes priority in the park so nonlethal means of deterrence were necessary; it was decided to try livestock guardian dogs, an old technique used in Europe and Asia but uncommon in Patagonia. Under the leadership of veterinarian Paula Herrera, Conservacion Patagonica’s guard dog breeding and training program began in 2008 with acquired dogs and marked its first litter of Pyrenees puppies born in 2011. Three litters followed, and through the years 30 puppies have been trained and given away to promote the use of livestock guardian dogs in place of traditional methods of predator control. These dogs are now working all over Patagonia, from Valdivia to Villa O’Higgins in Chile and in Argentina from Rio Negro to Calafate.

The guard dog’s job is to place itself between an approaching predator and the herd, barking aggressively and communicating the danger. The dogs become part of the herd and routinely mark their territory with urine and feces, alerting other animals that these areas are off limits and constantly protected. At the project’s outset the park’s resident gauchos were skeptical, but attitudes changed after a few days of working with the puppies and observing their bonding with the sheep. Predation on the flock lowered dramatically from 50 sheep per month, and over successive years remained low, down to roughly three sheep per year. Mortality due to predators has decreased to 1.3 percent of all livestock during 2009–2015.

As the park infrastructure nears completion, the domestic sheep flock will shrink and eventually be eliminated. In the interim, however, using guard dogs has allowed the park project to produce food for workers and to generate income from selling wool and surplus meat. Moreover, the dogs are now one of the most attractive ambassadors of Patagonia Park, helping to demonstrate that there is a “predator friendly” alternative for raising livestock while living harmoniously with native carnivores.
Producing, transporting, consuming, and wasting energy profoundly affects the natural world and health of people. The overall footprint of the energy industry is huge and growing, with well-known toxic effects, the most notable of which is a warming planet due to human-produced greenhouse gas pollution.

At the future Patagonia National Park, Conservacion Patagonica’s energy consultants and architectural team developed a plan for the park’s infrastructure that depends on energy efficiency and renewables. The first goal was to design all buildings for maximum conservation with excellent insulation and tight construction, far better than the regional standard. All electrical appliances and water pumps are highly efficient, and visitors are encouraged to conserve water and electricity. All of the buildings employ super high efficiency LED bulbs, which use a fraction of the energy of traditional lighting and contain no mercury. Electricity for the park facilities is being generated on-site with a 20 kilowatt micro-hydro turbine that was installed in 2005, as well as solar panels and a backup diesel generator. Various park buildings were fitted with high-tech parabolic solar concentrators to produce both hot water and electricity, which were anticipated to contribute 100 percent of the park headquarters’ domestic hot water. Due to the manufacturer going bankrupt (but is back in business again), this system was dormant for some time but is expected to be operational after a redesign. Small-scale wind generation and a possible hydrogen system for vehicles are also contemplated for Patagonia Park’s ultimate energy mix.

Conservacion Patagonica has partnered with Rocky Mountain Institute to draft a blueprint for an entirely renewable and self-sufficient energy system for the future Patagonia National Park, in which all electricity, heating, and fuel for park vehicles and heavy machinery are produced from the natural resources of the park itself. If funding can be raised to implement the system, it will minimize the park’s carbon footprint and reduce long-term operational expenses. A future, energy-independent Patagonia National Park will provide visitors with a working example of how energy systems of the twenty-first century should (and can) function. This experience will be a pilot project for other protected areas in Latin America and around the world.

Appropriately scaled mini-hydro plants also produce power at Pillán Farm, Caleta Gonzalo, and other Pumalín-area farms formerly owned by Doug and Kris Tompkins, some in combination with a photovoltaic system. High efficiency LED lighting is also being incorporated into the private Tompkins-owned farm projects in Argentina. In all of these installations, the goal is to develop practical, appropriately sited, and replicable examples of energy production at a local scale.
Developing a Culture of Conservation

It is a truism among conservationists that the fight to protect wilderness and wildlife must be waged over and over—those who would destroy a natural area need only succeed once, but wilderness defenders must stay ever vigilant against threats to nature. A key front in that ongoing battle is the war of ideas—especially about what constitutes “progress” and how human beings should relate to the rest of Earth’s living diversity. Is it ethical that we act like Lords over Creation, or should people strive to be “plain members and citizens of the biotic community,” to use Aldo Leopold’s phrase? If one accepts that human activity is precipitating a global extinction crisis—and the scientific consensus on that point is clear—what policies, programs, and personal actions can effectively turn society toward rapprochement between humans and wild nature?

These questions can only be answered if they are asked, that is, if there is a spirited public discussion about how people should treat the land. Moreover, most conservation activists understand that even as they fight today’s battles to defend wild places and creatures, the only long-term hope is to develop a culture of conservation—a time when society values nature and consciously chooses to leave enough habitat for other species. Creating such a culture requires broad public understanding of natural systems (ecological literacy) and broad public support for wildlands preservation. Education and outreach programs that reach many constituencies, but especially young people, are vital to achieving this end.

The Tompkins Conservation team is constantly working with journalists, explaining its various initiatives, and articulating the ecological and economic value of protected areas. The Conservacion Patagonica staff in Chile has ongoing outreach efforts targeting local community leaders, and public education programs that help teach citizens about the benefits of parklands. Similarly, the Conservation Land Trust—Argentina staff have designed and implemented a far-reaching program of community engagement employing print media, radio, websites, traveling puppet shows and education displays, and by developing curricula for local schools that helps interpret the Ibera marshlands’s biodiversity. These efforts are helping build alliances between local people, NGOs, and government agencies to advance the cause of conservation.
Outreach Through Art

Combining performance and visual art with conservation messages is a successful technique that the CLT-Argentina team has used to promote conservation in Corrientes Province. CLT hired an experienced theatre and art teacher to work with schoolchildren in Iberá area villages including Carlos Pellegrino, Concepción, Loreto, and the hamlets of Yahavere, Galarza, and Uguay to develop their own theatrical productions. In thirteen different towns kids chose traditional tales, wrote plays based on them, and performed the original theatre works in their communities. Along with the performances, the children designed and created sculptures of locally endangered or extinct species, setting the stage for a discussion about the region’s ecology, native wildlife, and threats to the marshlands.

CLT also commissioned Kossa Nostra, an award-winning puppet troupe from neighboring Misiones Province, to develop and perform a traveling show in 2008 and 2009. Built primarily on beloved stories and cultural values of the Iberá region but also weaving in subtle messages about biodiversity, protected areas, and endangered species, the rousingly funny show toured to eleven communities throughout Corrientes, playing twenty shows and reaching more than 6,000 people. The show was a tremendous success, causing a widespread positive impression across the province.

In Chile, CLT commissioned the Caracolito theater troupe to visit rural schools around Palena Province, performing various comedic skits that delivered environmental messages in lighthearted ways. From dancing animals to speaking trees, these performances brought ecological lessons to life and encouraged kids to think about wildlife and environmental degradation. CLT sponsored the troupe, which was originally from Valparaiso, for several years, allowing them to interact with thousands of children in south Chile.
Educating children about the ecological, economic, scenic, and climatic values of healthy ecosystems is fundamental. Tompkins Conservation efforts to assist local schools in teaching about land and wildlife preservation have taken different forms, but share a recognition that habitat protected today will only remain secure in the long run if there is widespread support for conservation.

**Patagonia Park**

In concert with ongoing efforts to help Chilean Patagonia benefit from adventure tourism linked to the region’s world-class national parks, Conservacion Patagonica has sought to build strong partnerships with local communities. This dedication to engagement is reflected in the successful outdoor education program headquartered at Patagonia Park in the Chacabuco Valley, which is serving schoolchildren and helping teachers incorporate outdoor education into their science and physical education curricula. Launched in 2014 with support from a U.S.-based environmental foundation, CP’s outdoor education program has focused on youth in the nearby towns of Cochrane and Chile Chico, both gateway communities to the future Patagonia National Park. Environmental educators with the park project regularly host schoolchildren for nature walks where they learn about native plants and animals and the regional landscape. This type of basic natural history education and active learning is vital to developing broad-based community support for the park effort, as well as inculcating a greater appreciation for Chile’s natural heritage.

**Iberá Region**

To increase the ecological literacy of citizens within and around the Iberá Natural Reserve, CLT has developed educational materials for public school teachers in the communities scattered throughout the watershed. The key issues covered in the curriculum materials include biodiversity, interconnectivity within a common basin, protected areas, sustainable production, cultural heritage, and endangered species. A series of 30-minute-long DVDs based on these topics were produced, both in Spanish and in the aboriginal guaraní language, appropriate for teachers and students. A complementary written teacher’s guide accompanies the DVDs. These outreach materials have been distributed to more than 130 schools and other institutions, and have been widely viewed in Corrientes-area classrooms, at public events, and on TV.

CLT–Argentina staff have organized nine training courses in seven localities attended by more than 65 educators to help local teachers incorporate these and other educational tools into their lesson planning. As part of these courses, participating teachers agreed to create their own environment-related projects at their schools. At least fourteen initiatives developed by local teachers have resulted from these outreach courses, some of which transcended the school population to include other community stakeholders.
Project Schools

The large-scale conservation projects at Pumalín Park, Íberá, and the future Patagonia National Park require substantial teams of workers to develop and manage, and are far from population centers. Of necessity, these projects have established small schools (typically 5–20 pupils) for the children of employees and neighbors, where ecological education complements the strong, traditional schooling the children receive.

Elementary schools on the Pillán and Reñihue farms, in the Chacabuco Valley, and at Rincon del Socorro in Argentina have taught dozens of young children reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, and English. These project schools have been privately funded by the Conservation Land Trust or Conservacion Patagonica but follow a government-sanctioned curriculum; students must pass a series of examinations to legitimize their studies, which they have done with great success.

Graduates from the various project schools tend to be among the best-prepared students when they move on to regional high schools. Some neighboring families in both Chile and Argentina have opted to enroll their children in the conservation project schools rather than local public schools.

Learning about nature occupies a central place in the school day. Children study native animals and plants in science lessons, and draw pictures of favorite animals during art classes. Through outdoor play and nature walks, sometimes guided by park rangers or science staff, students develop an appreciation for biodiversity. Teachers emphasize human connections to the landscape, and engage children in the mysteries of nature. Pupils also learn the basics of agriculture by helping in the garden and hone their skills in traditional dances and music. These components of their education help foster the development of a land ethic and deep connection to place in the next generation.

In addition to educating children, several of the project schools also offer courses in literacy for adult workers. These after-hour classes allow employees to complete a basic education through a combination of tutoring and self-directed study. As part of the volunteer program in the Chacabuco Valley, volunteer English teachers have offered language classes to all children and employees interested in preparing themselves for the ecotourism component of the future Patagonia National Park.
Kids’ Gardening Programs

Every school associated with one of the Conservation Land Trust or Conservacion Patagonica’s parklands projects incorporates some hands-in-the-dirt gardening into the curriculum. By providing children with the opportunity to plant their own garden, these programs engage children to produce food, engage in meaningful work, and learn about sustainable agriculture.

At Estancia Rincón del Socorro in the Iberá marshlands region, the children at the CLT project school tackle the challenge of raising their vegetables in the challenging soil and climate conditions of northeastern Argentina’s subtropical landscape. Launched in 2006, the school’s garden program is integrated with the large organic garden and orchards that supply fresh food to the inn, CLT staff, and estancia workers. At the beginning of the school term, each student receives a small garden plot, choosing what vegetables to cultivate. During the term, they go through the process of fertilizing and cultivating soil, sowing seeds in the nursery, transplanting seedlings into their prepared garden bed, nurturing the growing plants, countering any disease or pests, and, finally, harvesting produce. One afternoon per week after school all the children meet with the head gardener to tend their plants. It is quickly apparent that the results achieved are directly linked to the effort expended, and a spontaneous competition generally ensues. The children like to brag on the size and quantity of their vegetables and see who has the nicest looking garden. As the growing season concludes, the participants especially enjoy the experience of walking home and surprising their parents with a basket full of peppers, tomatoes, lettuce, strawberries, pumpkins, cucumbers, and even watermelons—the result of their own skill and labor.

At the Pillán and Reñihué schools near Pumalín Park, classes in canning and jam-making accompanied the kids’ garden projects. Working in the gardens at those farms several afternoons a week, students developed an appreciation for where their food comes from and learned useful agrarian skills, such as how to preserve food for the long winter months.

At the project school established in the Chacabuco Valley, kids help out tending the greenhouse that provides fresh vegetables to the community there, learning how to grow produce despite the short season. By introducing schoolchildren to the satisfaction of growing their own food, all these programs promote a fun and delicious form of eco-education.
Volunteering
at the Future Patagonia National Park

The transformation of a degraded former ranch in Chile's Chacabuco Valley into a national park offering world-class scenery and wildlife habitat is being powered in large part by volunteer conservationists from Chile and around the globe. Since 2005, more than 750 people have participated in Conservacion Patagonica's volunteer program, working on ecological restoration projects and gaining an introduction to large-scale conservation. The outdoor retailer Patagonia, Inc., where Kris Tompkins was formerly the longtime CEO, initially helped established the program by allowing employees to volunteer for the park project. People from many countries—Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, the U.S., Canada, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, and others—have donated their labor to the park's development. About half of the volunteers are Chileans, eager to contribute to their country's expanding national park system. Ranging in age from 18 to 70, volunteers have come as individuals or as part of organized groups from the National Outdoor Leadership School and various universities. Over the years, the volunteer program has removed hundreds of miles of old ranch fencing, allowing wildlife freedom to roam through the area. Usable wire fence material is sold or donated to neighboring ranches, while fence posts are reused for construction or collected for firewood to reduce pressure on the region's forests. Besides tackling the grueling (but fulfilling) task of fence removal, volunteers have built some of the park's new hiking trails and engaged in ecological restoration work including collecting native seeds, reseeding damaged areas, transplanting bunchgrasses to stop erosion, and helping control exotic species. Volunteer labor has also been key to control invasive pine trees, more than 12,000 of which have been removed from endangered huemul deer habitat. Some volunteer groups dismantle old buildings and other ranch infrastructure that cannot be used for park operations, salvaging materials for reuse. Some volunteers participate in research to collect baseline information about the ecology and archaeology of the area. Other volunteers have helped construct pens for the Darwin's rhea breeding center, and provided manpower for livestock work, giving visitors the chance to experience and learn about the valley's gaucho culture. Despite their diverse ages, backgrounds, and nationalities, the individuals who take part in the volunteer program have found that hands-on work to build a new national park is a transformative experience in a stunning landscape.
We can no longer pretend that agriculture is a sort of economic machine with interchangeable parts, the same everywhere, determined by “market forces” and independent of everything else. We are not farming in a specialist capsule . . . we are farming in the world, in a webwork of dependences and influences probably more intricate than we will ever understand.

—Wendell Berry
During twenty-five years of conservation work in South America, Kris and Doug Tompkins and colleagues have focused primarily on preserving biodiversity by creating new national parks and other protected areas. But a strong complementary area of work has focused on restoring damaged agricultural landscapes, particularly where well-managed farmlands could serve as parkland buffers or demonstrate more ecologically minded management practices to other landowners. Guided by the principle of “conservation as a consequence of production,” these farms demonstrate the possibility of producing food while supporting the health of the surrounding ecosystem. With personal funds, Kris and Doug Tompkins have acquired roughly two-dozen different farms and ranches. Tompkins-associated nonprofits including the Conservation Land Trust and Conservacion Patagonica have bought several other agricultural properties when all or part of the lands were to be integrated into park projects.

Whether small farms in southern Chile or large ranches in northern Argentina, the acquired properties have been, in almost all cases, significantly degraded by past agricultural practices. Land abuse, unfortunately, is ubiquitous, so there is ample opportunity for collaboration with natural processes to rebuild soils, stop erosion, and expand diversity in the agricultural landscape. Buying abused agricultural land provides an opportunity to restore and redesign the farm or ranch for productive uses, apply a diversified, organic management regime, and create both ecological and social benefits. The result is jobs for people, useful products for the community, and, hopefully, a deeper agrarian ethic instilled in the broader culture.

“Restoration is a passion for us,” Doug Tompkins has said, “and brings enormous satisfaction—it is a way of putting one’s land ethic into action, and demonstrating social responsibility that hardly can be topped.” A successfully restored farm is not theoretical; it is a tangible example for all to witness. The restoration effort often stimulates nearby landowners to improve their management practices. Restored landscapes not only are good for the soils, water, forests, and flora and fauna of the place, restoration also brings back the beauty that was compromised or absent before. With beauty comes pride of place and the will to defend one’s home region against the recurrence of abuse and future threats. The representative sample of farm restoration projects that follows reflects the idea that there is an urgent ecological and social imperative to help damaged lands return to good health.
Aesthetics in the Agricultural Landscape

One of the tragedies of industrial agriculture—beyond the fact that it has degraded and simplified ecosystems—is that it has made the world far more ugly than it should be. Few artifacts of human activity are more heinous, morally and aesthetically, than confined animal feeding operations, the so-called “factory farms” which are really animal concentration camps used to mass-produce meat. Similarly, the vast monoculture croplands promoted as modern and efficient by corporate agribusiness and its academic boosters have eliminated the beauty and complexity typical of traditionally farmed landscapes in many places around the globe.

The rapidly expanding movement toward local, diversified, organic farming offers not just more ecologically sustainable and wildlife-friendly agricultural landscapes, but also a resurgence of beauty on farms where conservation is a consequence of production. “For beauty,” as Sandra Lubarsky has written, “is the value that is intrinsic to the ecological paradigm.” In all of the farmland projects developed by the Conservation Land Trust and Kris and Doug Tompkins personally, aesthetics is a central criterion. Building off of the examples of aesthetically pleasing agrarian landscapes from various regions, they have created farms that are inspiring places to live and work. Well-designed, orderly gardens and architecturally elegant buildings consistent with the vernacular style of the region, along with careful layout of pastures, croplands, and forests combine to produce exceptional beauty and productivity.
Wendell Berry, the great writer and prophet of sustainable agriculture, has written: “eating is an agricultural act.” There are few questions more relevant to a society’s future prospects, its durability and health, than how it chooses to inhabit the landscape, grow food, and treat the people who do the growing. The life of farming people, the health of the land and wildlife, the cultural life of nations, and the fate of the planet’s living diversity are affected. Engaging people in the production of healthy, delicious organic food represents a simple but powerful mode of strengthening their connections to the natural world.

Many of the pressing problems facing nature and people are linked to industrial agriculture, which reflects a worldview that emphasizes ever-increasing specialization, efficiency, and economic growth based on technological innovation. The problematic effects of industrial agriculture have been so thoroughly analyzed—topsoil loss and degradation, water and air pollution, rural depopulation and the rise of corporate agribusiness, inhumane treatment of livestock, and a food stream increasingly laden with pesticides and herbicides—that there is no need to recap here.

Industrial agriculture’s negative ecological and social effects have spawned a reactionary movement, a groundswell of support for local, diversified, organic farming. That movement is broad in composition, comprised of both people who want to grow quality food and people who want to eat it. Good food, the calories that fuel a child’s imagination and growth, springs from healthy soils, which is to say, from excellent farmland. Farmland can only stay excellent over time if farmed by knowledgeable people who enter into a conversation with a particular place and ask what nature will allow there. Health—not a narrow emphasis on production and profit—is the overarching objective.

All of the farming operations in Chile and Argentina profiled here use this standard of “nature as measure” for what type of productive activity is appropriate and sustainable. Typically this means adopting strict organic management practices with no chemical inputs, expanding crop and livestock diversity, using composting and vermiculture to enhance soil fertility, and carefully managing livestock to avoid disease and predator losses. And at the center of farm life—vegetable gardens and orchards produce food for on-farm consumption. The result of this work? A bountiful harvest.
Organic gardens are typically the heart of the Tompkins family farm projects profiled in the following pages. Large, diverse, and aesthetically pleasing gardens sensitize residents and visitors to the importance of safe, nutritious food, and serve as a key component of the continual effort toward self-sufficiency. Employees gain a sense of pride and a respect for healthy food as they learn how to grow vegetables. Gardens are also integrated into the public-access infrastructure of several of the parklands projects.

Each garden has been developed to flourish in the specific climactic conditions of its site; the gardens at Reñihué Farm, for example, have been refined and expanded several times since 1993 when they were established. They may be the most productive organic temperate rainforest gardens anywhere, producing abundant crops despite receiving 20 feet of rainfall annually. The expansive gardens at Rincón del Socorro in northeastern Argentina offer a different challenge—overcoming the high pest concentrations typical of that subtropical landscape. This challenge is being met with organic management only, and the garden supplies delicious vegetables for guests of a nine-room ecotourist lodge, and for lodge employees and conservation project staff occupying ten nearby residences. For all of the gardens, the overarching goal is beauty, efficiency, diversity, and easy maintenance. On-site composting, greenhouses, vermiculture, and integrated orchards are common features to the gardens at the various farms. Interns and some volunteers from Chile, Argentina, and beyond often work in the gardens, learning organic gardening techniques and sometimes fulfilling course requirements.
All of the Tompkins and CLT-owned agricultural properties in Chile and Argentina place foremost emphasis on restoring and maintaining soil health—thus, all employ some type of composting system using on-farm inputs. Several of the farms are also employing vermicompost (worm composting) systems. Vermicomposting transforms a mixture of food waste, animal manure, plant clippings, and other organic material into high-quality, nutrient-rich fertilizer. The addition of specific earthworm species to the composting container speeds up decomposition as the worms ingest and break down organic matter. The resulting soil comprised of worm castings is rich in microorganisms, which convert nutrients present in the soil into plant-available forms. As a substitute for industrially produced chemical fertilizer, the products of vermicomposting are higher in nutrients and microorganisms and better for root growth and structure, while requiring no fossil fuel energy to produce.

Different types of vermicompost systems are used on the various farms, matching the scale of the operation. In every case, the organic matter to be composted is spread out to a thickness of less than one meter so that earthworms can move easily through the material. On the cultivated polyculture farms in Argentina, large facilities process agricultural waste and animal manure using a species of earthworms native to the subtropical climate. The compost is used as a soil supplement on fields and orchards. On the smaller farms in southern Chile near Pumalín Park, vermicompost facilities mix food scraps with mulch, plant clippings, and sheep bedding, and then spread the material out in covered tanks. Within four months, earthworms have transformed the organic matter into fertilizer for the vegetable gardens, greenhouses, and berry plantations.
Well-suited to the climate and vital for pollination, bees have played a central role in the agricultural operations at the Reñihué, Pillán, Voduñahue, and Hornopirén farms, where hundreds of beehives have produced commercial amounts of honey annually. Marketed under the label “Pillán Organics,” this honey—certified organic by the rigorous, Switzerland-based certifier IMO—represents the union of production and conservation. Bees feed on the flowering trees of the farms and nearby Pumalín Park’s expansive forest; the exceptional flavor and purity of the resulting honey serves as one of its chief selling points.

The Pillán Organics apiaries produce ulmo honey, composed primarily from the nectar of the ulmo tree, and native forest honey, a polyfloral honey that combines the nectar of dozens of flowering tree species. Both varieties are amber-colored, with smooth crystallization and a creamy texture. The honey’s distinctive taste reflects its birthplace in the heart of pristine Valdivian temperate rainforest. Far away from industrial farms with their heavy use of agrochemicals and genetically modified organisms, the Pumalín apiaries produce some of the purest honey in the world, and have remained healthy in recent years when beekeepers in North America and elsewhere have been plagued by Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). A kind of honeybee plague that causes sudden, high levels of mortality in apiaries, CCD is thought to result from multiple stressors, some of which are linked to industrial agriculture. The apiculture practices at Pumalín-area farms currently or formerly owned by Kris and Doug Tompkins embody the absolute opposite values as the industrial beekeeping operations that provide pollination services to corporate agribusiness’s monoculture crops.

All steps of honey production take place on the farms, helping to create a thriving local economy. Beehives from the four farms are brought to a central processing facility at Pillán. After honey has been separated from honeycombs, the wax is melted down and reshaped for use the next year as starting material in beehives. The certified all organic wax processing facility at Pillán is likely the first of its kind in South America. Keeping the wax free of toxic residues helps keep the bees healthier, and, in keeping with the farms’ overall philosophy of animal husbandry, it is assumed that healthy, unstressed bees will be happy bees. The honey is heated and purified before being bottled in aesthetically pleasing reusable glass jars.

With the 2015 sale of Pillán Farm to Nicolas Ibañez to be operated by his Alerce 3000 foundation, it is anticipated that Pillán Organics honey will continue to serve as a delicious introduction for consumers to learn about Pumalín Park and other regional conservation efforts, including local food production.
On all of the previously profiled farms and ranches in Chile and Argentina, organic management practices are complemented by a standard of animal care that is intended to create tranquil, healthy, and happy lives for the domestic animals living there. Moving cattle without dogs, shouting, or excessive noise, and incorporating other low-stress techniques helps set a tone of humane treatment for all creatures on the farm or ranch. Another goal is to instill a care and respect for farm animals in the younger generation of farm workers that also influences their attitude toward wildlife.

In order to increase and maintain agro-diversity, careful consideration is given to what breeds of livestock are best adapted for local conditions. Livestock that thrive on native grasses in each particular landscape are both economically and ecologically beneficial. While in Tompkins family ownership, a bull-rearing operation at the Aña Cuá Ranch in Argentina improved the genetics of cattle herds on associated ranches in the Iberá region. A continuing effort is under way to boost birth and survival rates, weight gain, and animal health through excellent husbandry and better genetics. Similarly, a ram-breeding program at the Vodudahue Farm on the coast of southern Chile improved the genetics of sheep herds at related farms near Pumalin Park.

Animal Husbandry
Reñihué Farm

1,749 acres/708 hectares; acquired in 1991
Project of Kris and Doug Tompkins
Lakes Region, Chile

Situated in the valley between the Negro and Reñihué Rivers in the Reñihué Fjord of southern Chile, this 1,749-acre farm was the first agricultural property in South America bought by Doug Tompkins. He purchased it in 1991 from a Swiss family, which had bought the farm from the original German settlers who founded it in 1935. When acquired, the farm was in bad shape, with massive erosion scars from cattle grazing, burned-out areas of forest, and degraded pastures. After nearly a quarter century, the farm is productive again, with pastures of healthy, nutritious grass for livestock. Around the edges of fields, native forests now thrive.

Reñihué has been the primary home of Kris and Doug Tompkins. After the land’s purchase they began transforming it into a model organic farm and beautiful place to live—a process the couple would replicate many times in later years with other degraded farms. To preserve the architectural integrity of the farm, several buildings were carefully renovated and rebuilt: the main farmhouse required two years of work, but emerged as a fine example of the regional Chilote architectural style. New farm infrastructure, from employee housing to sheep barns and machinery sheds, complemented the style of existing buildings: simple, nonindustrial, and in tune with place. Built mostly of lumber from the surrounding forest and recycled wood, both new and restored buildings feature local materials weathered by rain, wind, and sun. As on most farms in the area, the buildings use woodstoves for heat, hot water, and cooking. A generator provides a few hours of electricity each evening to the main house and other farm buildings.

Two organic gardens with woodstove-heated greenhouses provide fresh vegetables year-round for farm residents and a steady stream of guests. Worm composting produces a rich fertilizer for the gardens. A flock of sheep and herd of cattle provide wool and meat.

Because access is by air or sea only, an airstrip and hangar help keep the farm operations running. Reñihué also acts as an informal park ranger station for the Reñihué Valley, one access point for Pumalín Park. On clear days it enjoys spectacular views of the 7,887-foot, snow-capped Michimahuida Volcano, the centerpiece of the park. The local forests contain a rich diversity of indigenous wildlife including pumas and pudu deer, and the waters of the fjord are home to dolphins, sea lions, whales, and many species of fish.
Pillán Farm

Situated at the geographical center of Pumalín Park and its associated farming operations, the 1,215-acre Pillán Farm between the Comau and Reñihué Fjords in southern Chile served for more than a decade as the administrative headquarters for the park and its Tompkins-owned buffer farms. It also hosted the production center for honey and jams marketed under the “Pillán Organics” label.

The honey made in Pillán came from beehives located on various farms in the Pumalín area, derived from native flowering trees. The honey-making facility extracted honey from hundreds of beehives, and purified and bottled the product for sale throughout Chile and abroad. A jam-producing facility created a range of jams including strawberry, blueberry, gooseberry, murta, and red currant.

These small-scale, handmade products came from crops that do not degrade the ecosystem—on the farm or beyond—and helped build a sustainable local economy. Besides the honey and jam operations, Pillán has small herds of sheep and cattle, as on other farms in the area. Careful pasture management is critical to maintaining healthy grasslands, given the unusually high rainfall of 20 feet a year.

Before the farm’s acquisition, Pillán had undergone its share of suffering: both cattle grazing and industrial salmon operations had abused the land and adjacent seascape. With years of concentrated restoration work and careful stewardship, the farm’s beauty and biodiversity rebounded. Pastures are verdant, native forests are healthy, and the infrastructure has received a major facelift. Most of the productive activity is concentrated in the middle of the farm’s acreage, leaving 80 percent of the property in wild condition, dedicated to wildlife habitat and home to a rich variety of flora and fauna. Well-designed homes, built in a local style with recycled materials, were constructed for park and farm employees. Pillán now is both productive and aesthetically pleasing, enjoying sensational views of the Pillán Fjord, the snow-capped Michimahuida Volcano, and the high peaks between Huinay and Vodudahue.

In late 2015, a package of properties including the Pillán, Vodudahue, and Hornopirén farms was sold to Chilean businessman and conservationist Nicolas Ibanez, to be operated as model organic farms by his nonprofit Fundación Alerce 3000.
Vodudahue Farm

3,710 acres/1,502 hectares; acquired 1994–1999; sold in 2015 to Nicolas Ibanez for Fundación Alerce 3000 Project of Kris and Doug Tompkins
Lakes Region, Chile

Nestled in the dramatic Vodudahue Valley extending from the Comau Fjord in the Chilean Lakes District, this 3,770-acre farm has one of the most spectacular settings possible: the enormous granite faces towering above the valley have led visitors and locals to call it the “Yosemite Valley of Chile.” Beginning in the seventeenth century, Jesuit missionaries crossed over the Andes by traveling through this valley. Centuries of human settlement and exploitation left the land in rough shape. Now, beneath the impressive mountains, the restoration of this once-degraded area is far along. Vodudahue has been transformed into an orderly, highly diverse operation dedicated to harmonizing production with ecology and conservation.

When purchased, the collection of valley farms that now make up Vodudahue were in shambles, scarred by erosion and littered with burned tree trunks from the shortsighted practices of settlers. Returning productivity, ecological integrity, and beauty to this farm required years of work restoring sheep pastures, rebuilding soil health, planting crops (primarily fruits) that can tolerate the high annual rainfall, and rebuilding infrastructure and housing. Because the farm is accessible only by air or sea and not by road, the restoration efforts focused on developing a self-contained farming operation using local materials.

The farm breeds high-quality rams specifically adapted to the local climate and pastures. A small garden provides fresh vegetables for those living on the farm. Apiaries round out the farm’s diversified operations, producing honey and pollinating the orchards and grass fields. For several years the farm hosted an innovative program that produced liquid biostimulants—essentially a carefully brewed compost tea—that was used onsite and marketed off the farm to improve soil health. The farm also serves as an informal Pumalín Park ranger station, watching over the Vodudahue and Barcelo River valleys.

Since 1998, Vodudahue has been home to the Alerce 3000 project and its native tree nursery, which collects seeds from the surrounding forest then germinates and nurtures seedlings for use in reforestation efforts. Nearly two dozen native species emerge from its greenhouses, among them the threatened alerce trees. This program not only supports native forest recovery, but also provides the forestry students who intern there an opportunity to do hands-on restoration work and develop an appreciation for wild forests.

In late 2015, a package of properties including the Pillán, Vodudahue, and Hornopirén farms was sold to Chilean businessman and conservationist Nicolas Ibanez, to be operated as model organic farms by his nonprofit Fundación Alerce 3000.
Rincon Bonito Farm

326 acres/133 hectares; acquired in 1999; sold in 2013 to José Claro
Project of the Conservation Land Trust Lakes Region, Chile

Tucked away in the mountains of Pumalín Park’s northeast sector, Rincon Bonito is one of the most remote farms in the area. Situated in a back valley on the banks of the Ventisquero River, the 526-acre farm has no road or sea access. The nearest village is eight hours away on horseback, so farm residents must enjoy the solitude of a rural agrarian life.

Geographic isolation, however, did not protect the valley from heedless deforestation by settlers in the 1940s and 1950s. When bought by the Conservation Land Trust in 1999 it required a huge restoration effort in order to live up to its name—“Beautiful Corner.” Some old trees had survived the slash-and-burn practices, but for the most part, the fields were barren. A dedicated team of farmers planted flowers and fruit orchards, worked to restore the fields, and cultivated a vegetable garden for farm residents. At the same time, buildings and fences had to be rebuilt; bringing in outside materials is practically impossible so local resources were used to create elegant, well-crafted structures. Although this process required some patience and ingenuity, the results speak for themselves: With its infrastructure in harmony with the surroundings, the farm is beautiful in its simplicity and order.

Run entirely on animal traction, Rincon Bonito relies on hay production for fuel. Summers are devoted to baling hay and storing it away for winter months. The farm operates almost entirely self-sufficiently, a model of a small-scale local economy attuned to the surrounding ecology. The farm has also served as a de facto ranger station for Pumalín Park, addressing the need for a presence in that area to watch for forest fires and deter timber poaching.
Hornopirén Farm

Hornopirén Farm, comprising 855 acres of mountains, forests, pastures, and riverside habitat, lies outside of the village of Hornopirén in the province of Palena, Chile. Only about 5 percent of the farm’s acreage is devoted to agricultural production; the rest remains in its pristine state, providing habitat for wildlife. The farm serves both as a model for preserving Chilean Patagonia’s wild nature and for developing a sustainable local economy based on small-scale organic production.

From 2000 to 2002, the farm was assembled from properties of five different owners. When acquired, the property bore the scars of bad aquaculture, agriculture, and forestry practices: Industrial salmon farming polluted the waters and littered the beaches, and an old gravel pit, an illegal municipal garbage dump, and an illegal alerce sawmill degraded the landscape. The first priorities were to report the dump and improve the road, so that the difficult project of restoring the farm could begin.

The gravel pit and dump were reforested using native species. Stumps in the fields were removed, and erosion control measures implemented to create verdant pastures for sheep. The central farmhouse—built in a style typical of the region—and other infrastructure, from fences to sheds, were rebuilt. Appropriately sized herds of cattle and sheep contribute to the farm’s productive diversity, which includes honey, fruit orchards, and a large garden that grows vegetables for on-farm consumption and sale in the town market. The formerly degraded farm’s rebirth has been amazing to witness.

As the Palena region’s economy transitions toward ecotourism and visitor traffic along Patagonia’s “Route of Parks” increases, camping facilities and other services for visitors to Hornopirén National Park will be needed in the area. The farm has already undergone a remarkable rebirth as a place of sustainable production and conservation, and its contributions to the local economy and local ecology are likely to grow into the future.

In late 2015, a package of properties including the Pillán, Vodudahue, and Hornopirén farms was sold to Chilean businessman and conservationist Nicolas Ibanez, to be operated as model organic farms by his nonprofit Fundación Alerce 3000.
Bordering the vast Iberá marshlands in northeastern Argentina, Estancia Aña Cuá was a major restoration project. Bought as part of a package of lands scheduled to be converted to nonnative pine plantations, this 25,000-acre cattle ranch had been neglected by its previous owners. Through years of careful restoration and investment in its infrastructure, Aña Cuá was transformed into one of the best ranches in Corrientes Province.

When purchased in 2002, Aña Cuá had been virtually abandoned for a decade. Corrals had disintegrated. Fields previously used for cultivation or grazing had succumbed to invasive species, facilitating a mass invasion of ants that had left pastures covered in enormous anthills. Nearly 1,000 acres of citrus orchards had been abandoned. The houses were dilapidated. Even the cows looked in bad shape, a ragtag herd overgrazing the grasslands.

The needed rehabilitation work was extensive. Rescuing the citrus orchards turned out to be hopeless, so virtually all of the orchard trees were pulled up and native grasslands restored. The 2000 acres of pine and eucalyptus monocultures planted on the ranch were similarly removed. Although monumental jobs, these efforts proved remarkably successful, owing in part to the quality soils of the area. Years of mechanical cutting reduced exotic species, and low stocking rates helped the grasslands recover. Bit by bit, natural beauty was returned to a landscape once destined for the ugliness of industrial tree plantations.

The ranch’s infrastructure was also rebuilt. New, efficient corrals were constructed to aid the local gauchos in caring for livestock. During the rebuilding of the ranch headquarters, material from old buildings was recycled to create pleasing, carefully designed new buildings. Mature old trees and expansive views give the main house, which had to be built from scratch, a sense of history and natural elegance.

The restoration of Aña Cuá reflects an understanding of the social responsibilities of land ownership, which do not stop at mere production, but extend to stewardship of all the flora and fauna of the landscape and to cultivating beauty as well as crops or animals for market. In 2010, the property was sold to another local rancher. Although few examples of grassland restoration in this region existed before, the work at Aña Cuá demonstrated the possibility of success, bringing production and conservation into harmony, and increasing land value from careful attention to land health and aesthetics of farm infrastructure.
Estancia El Tránsito is a shining example of conservation-oriented management and ranch restoration in Corrientes. Created from three separate properties—Caabi Rincon, El Fortin, and the original El Tránsito ranch—this expansive conservation property acts as a buffer zone to help preserve the adjacent biodiversity-rich Iberá marshlands. More than 22,000 acres have been taken out of livestock production to be managed strictly as an ecological reserve.

Originally established in 1921, the once-venerable El Tránsito had fallen into a state of disrepair when purchased in 2001. The Perez-Compans Forestal company planned to transform the ranch’s native grasslands into an exotic industrial monoculture pine plantation. Saving the land from this fate required buying the entire forestry company—a massive acquisition of 272,000 acres in multiple properties. Many of these parcels have been resold, while El Tránsito has been consolidated and revitalized as an exceptional ranch incorporating significant natural areas.

Rebuilding the ranch required extensive work on many fronts: corrals were dysfunctional, hinges broken, wood rotten, and houses dilapidated. Exotic eucalyptus trees had to be removed. Four gauchito stations were rebuilt or built anew, and three new corrals constructed. More than 60 miles of fencing were built to keep cattle out of the wetlands. Roads, airstrips, hangars, and machinery sheds also demanded attention.

At the ranch headquarters, much effort went into the construction or renovation of elegant homes. A skilled team of masons, painters, cabinetmakers, and finish carpenters crafted the interiors of the buildings. Landscaping transformed the grounds surrounding the houses, and a meticulously constructed quincho, for the traditional asados (celebratory barbecue feast), was built to provide a gathering place for residents.

In 2015 the ranch supported 4,500 cows and calves living in harmony with the abundant wildlife of the area. An excellent team of ranch hands and managers take pride in their work, as they maintain the longstanding traditions of the region. Employing thoughtful organic management, El Tránsito serves as a model of a cattle operation where the overarching goal is to maintain ecological integrity across both the domesticated and wild parts of the landscape.
Las Rosas Farm sits just outside the village of El Amarillo, the gateway community to Pumalín Park’s southern sector. With its equev views of the surrounding mountains, the farm is a jewel, but it was not always a showplace. When acquired in 2008, the property was in rough condition, with buildings and fences in disrepair.

A major restoration effort commenced. Some of the former structures were dismantled or rehabilitated. A new machinery shop was erected, followed by a large vermiculture facility where the resident worms produce a potent soil amendment for use in the farm’s gardens and orchards. Beautiful, regionally appropriate fencing made from local, natural materials was constructed. New herds of sheep and cattle were sized appropriately to the land’s carrying capacity and managed carefully so as not to cause soil erosion in the pastures. Roughly a third of the farm’s acreage has been left wild, covered in native forest, with the remainder in pastures, orchards, and gardens.

Under the direction of farm manager Hector Oyarzún, the farm’s greenhouses, raised-bed gardens, and central namesake rose garden produce bountiful flowers and fruit including blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, and apples. The final piece of infrastructure to be completed at Las Rosas is a principal residence, which as of 2015 was under construction.
Laguna Blanca Farm

7,418 acres/3,003 hectares; acquired in 2007
Project of Kris and Doug Tompkins, Dolores Perea-Muñoz and Eduardo Chorén
Entre Ríos Province, Argentina

Laguna Blanca is undergoing a dramatic transformation from industrial monoculture agriculture to extremely diverse organic polyculture. Comprising more than 7,000 acres at the confluence of the Feliciano and Parana Rivers in northeastern Argentina’s Entre Ríos Province, the farm embodies an extremely ambitious vision to combine erosion control terracing, agro-ecological production, and regionally appropriate farm architecture to create a vibrantly beautiful agrarian landscape.

When bought in 2007, Laguna Blanca was begging for restoration: Its infrastructure needed attention and its excellent soils were eroding away through careless management. At the farm headquarters, many new buildings—a office, kitchen area, quincho (the traditionally thatch-roofed outbuilding for outdoor barbecues with fireplace for grilling meats), employee housing, barns, machinery sheds, and bodegas—have been completed. To stop erosion, terraces were built, tracing contour lines to create level fields, in which many varieties of grains—including oats, flax, corn, sunflower, sorghum, barley, and wheat—are now grown. The unusual and colorful patchwork created by this arrangement of grains not only delights the eye but also reduces weeds without relying on agrochemicals. After only a few years in this new system, the farm is producing impressive yields of high-quality organic grain, sharing with neighbors and other producers its progressive and successful agricultural practices.

In addition to growing numerous grains, Laguna Blanca also includes orchards with numerous fruit and nut species (including olives, hazelnuts, citrus, apples, pecans, and almonds), at least twenty species and varieties of grains, aromatic and herbal species in its experimental plots, a wide assortment of horticulture crops, grazing pastures for sheep, and apiculture. In the orchards, the grasses that surround the trees are cut and baled for hay. The farm is working to implement chemical-free, organic, no-till production, something that has almost never been done at commercial scale.

Ultimately, Laguna Blanca will produce a wide line of products as a consequence of the diversified approach to organic production. More than simply an appealing theory, this polyculture system is already proving its practicality and intelligence, as the interactions between various crops, the soil, and the native wildlife improve yields, eliminate the need for expensive and dangerous agrochemicals, and help maintain a vibrant ecosystem. Moreover, the efforts here have been noted by not only local farmers but organic producers around the globe, in part due to the extraordinary beauty created as a by-product of the farm’s erosion control terracing and diversity in cropping.
Campo Malambo Farm

2,595 acres/1,050 hectares; acquired in 2009
Project of Kris and Doug Tompkins
Entre Ríos Province, Argentina

Just down the Paraná River from its “sister” farm, Laguna Blanca, Campo Malambo was bought in late 2009 with a similar intent—to transform a conventional farm into a highly diverse, beautiful, and wildlife-friendly example of organic production.

With roughly half its acreage forested and half arable, Malambo had been subjected to many years of industrial agricultural practices prior to its purchase. Application of agrochemicals propped up a fixed rotation of maize, soybeans, and wheat. As at Laguna Blanca (and most farms in Entre Ríos Province), soil erosion was a significant problem. The first and foremost task was to create a system of permanently vegetated terraces to reduce field size and slow any water sheeting across fields. To recuperate fertility of the degraded soils, a crop rotation plan was put into practice. Green manures with vetch, red clover, and triticale were sown to keep the soil covered throughout the year and to increase organic matter and overall fertility. As cash crops, maize, sorghum, soybeans, and sunflowers (both oil-bearing and confectionary varieties) were sown during the summer season. Winter crops included wheat, oats, barley, triticale, flax, and coriander. Each erosion-countering terrace was sown with a different crop making the Malambo landscape very colorful and attractive.

While the initial years of Malambo’s transformation to highly diverse organic production offered useful experience, finding a balance between innovative practices and farm revenue initially proved difficult and in 2012 there was a policy change. A population explosion of doves and parakeets, which were increasing every year, caused severe damage to the crops, making it very difficult to produce a profitable harvest. Thus Campo Malambo transitioned to cattle farming.

The new rotation for pastures is 3–4 years sown in a perennial mixture including alfalfa, red and white clover, lucerne, and cockfoot. Thereafter an annual forage plant is sown for one year, and then back to the pasture mix. The cattle are grazed with care and frequently rotated, with movable electric fences used to direct grazing pressure and distribute soil-fertilizing cattle dung across different terraces and pastures.

After their weaning, calves from the Tompkins-owned El Tránsito Ranch in Corrientes Province are trucked to Campo Malambo. Due to the high-quality pastures and excellent drinking water brought to the surface by windmills, the cattle show excellent weight gain. After 12–14 months on the farm the female calves are inseminated; after pregnancy is verified they are sent back to El Tránsito to calve. Male calves stay at Malambo a few months more until they reach their target selling weight and are sold in the organic market for export.

The Malambo farm headquarters, with newly built employee housing, barns, and machinery sheds, sits on the banks of the Paraná River, making for lovely views and adding to the aesthetically pleasing surroundings for the farm’s employees and visitors alike.
It’s the action, not the fruit of the action, that’s important. You have to do the right thing. It may not be in your power, may not be in your time, that there’ll be any fruit. But that doesn’t mean you stop doing the right thing. You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result.

—Mohandes K. Gandhi
A consistent principle that undergirds all Tompkins Conservation activities is that the present eco-social crisis demands a response—that individuals who recognize the great unraveling of natural and human communities across the globe have a responsibility to act to stop it. Working to reverse the extinction crisis and build a more sane and sustainable culture requires both defensive and proactive conservation strategies.

Doug Tompkins’s initial conservation activism sprang from his love for wilderness and experience as a mountaineer. Climbing trips around the globe provided a disturbing view of how wild nature everywhere was under assault by human activity. His ecological worldview deepened during the 1970s and 1980s through a self-guided immersion in ecological literature including the writings of Norwegian philosopher and mountaineer Arne Naess, father of the deep ecology movement. “I suppose it was logical, given my love affair with mountaineering and adventuring in the wilderness,” Tompkins has written, “that the influences of Arne Naess, John Muir, David Ehrenfeld, Paul Shepard, Henry David Thoreau, Aldo Leopold . . . and many others put me so firmly on a “deep” ecological path.

By the late 1980s Tompkins saw how the consumer culture that he’d helped promote as a businessman was but another destructive manifestation of an industrial growth economy toxic to nature. He decided to sell his stake in the fashion company Esprit that he’d cofounded, and use his wealth to endow an environmental foundation with an activist orientation. Along with the writer and activist Jerry Mander, Tompkins created a foundation in 1990. Since its inception, the Foundation for Deep Ecology (FDE), whose name and ethos comes from the deep ecology platform articulated by Arne Naess and George Sessions, has embodied the idea that strategic philanthropy can support innovative, biocentric activists tackling the root causes—not merely the symptoms—of ecological destruction.

Over the years Doug and Kris Tompkins’s activism has taken multiple forms—through grantmaking, campaign work, support of legal efforts to defend wild places, direct habitat protection, ecological restoration projects, investing in the intellectual infrastructure of the conservation movement, and helping to develop durable, local economies based on sustainable agriculture. This work has been accomplished through multiple organizations and with countless partners, but a common thread is a commitment to action—vigorous and uncompromising advocacy on behalf of wild nature.

Belief into Action

There are two sides: the agents of waste and the lovers of the wild. Either for life or against it. And each of us has to choose.

—Jay Griffiths
The Deep Ecology Platform

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: inherent worth, intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes.

2. Richness and diversity of life-forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.

3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.

4. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.

5. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease.

6. Policies must therefore be changed. The changes in policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.

7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent worth) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.

8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to participate in the attempt to implement the necessary changes.

—Arne Naess and George Sessions
Since 1990, the Foundation for Deep Ecology (and its antecedents under different names) has made more than 1,900 grants to nonprofit organizations working to protect wilderness and wildlife, promote sustainable agriculture, and oppose pernicious forms of technology such as genetic engineering. As of 2015, these grants totaled more than $56 million. In its early years, FDE granted under a fairly broad array of categories, but later in the 1990s its funding program was streamlined into three main program areas: Biodiversity and Wildness, Ecological Agriculture, and Globalization and Megatechnology.

Biodiversity and Wildness program grantees included organizations that promote large-scale parks and wilderness recovery such as the Wildlands Project (now Wildlands Network), the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Y2Y), and RESTORE: The Northwoods, as well as leading champions of endangered species such as the Center for Biological Diversity and Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. Ecological Agriculture grants have gone to pioneers in sustainable agriculture including The Land Institute, Occidental Arts and Ecology Center, and the Wild Farm Alliance. Globalization and Megatechnology program grantees have gone to pioneers in sustainable agriculture including The Land Institute, Occidental Arts and Ecology Center, and the Wild Farm Alliance. Globalization and Megatechnology program grantees include the International Society for Ecology and Culture, the Foundation on Economic Trends, and the International Center for Technology Assessment. (A comprehensive list of the hundreds of nonprofits FDE supported during its first decade can be found in the report, “Foundation for Deep Ecology: The First Ten Years.”) By the early 2000s, with Doug and Kris Tompkins’s conservation work focused on Chile and Argentina, FDE’s granting focus shifted almost entirely toward South America, helping to support groups and campaigns fighting development of various kinds including industrial forestry, aquaculture, and massive hydroelectric dams proposed for Patagonia’s wild rivers. FDE continued to maintain its book-publishing program based in North America and periodically made grants to campaigns using its books as educational tools to stimulate activism on conservation issues.

In 1992, Doug Tompkins created a separate nonprofit foundation, the Conservation Land Trust, primarily to be the legal entity responsible for creating Pumalín Park, the huge protected area on the Chilean coast that he had begun assembling as a de facto national park under private initiative. (A Chilean nonprofit, Fundación Pumalín, was established later as a sister organization.) CLT subsequently has developed numerous parklands creation and associated ecological agriculture projects. While its funds are usually targeted toward its own land conservation and restoration initiatives, CLT has also occasionally served as a grantmaker to other conservation organizations and campaigns. During its history, CLT has made more than 180 grants, in total directing roughly $51 million in funds toward projects that save habitat, protect species, or promote conservation philanthropy.
Atypical for environmental grantmakers, the Foundation for Deep Ecology has consistently directed a portion of its budget to helping build the intellectual infrastructure of the conservation movement. This type of idea incubation is a longstanding strategy of the political right in America, where a host of foundations and think tanks support free-market and libertarian capitalism and a corporatist policy agenda. On the political left, such investments have been spotty, and within the environmental movement there has been very little institutional funding for journals, think tanks, and symposia that could help build a deeper, more effective response to the plunder of the Earth by challenging the fundamental ideas and worldview of the despoilers.

During the foundation’s first decade it invested in a wide variety of such efforts, supporting numerous journals (Wild Earth, Resurgence, Plain, and Adbusters to name a few), books (The Case Against the Global Economy, Deep Ecology for the 21st Century, Turning Away from Technology), conferences and symposia, and ad campaigns. FDE-sponsored gatherings of leading thinkers led to the formation of several independent NGOs including the Wildlands Project, the International Forum on Globalization, and the Jacques Ellul Society. Various initiatives were at least tangentially bolstered by FDE work in this area of intellectual infrastructure. For example, the foundation’s book Welfare Ranching, which laid out the case for ending subsidized livestock grazing on Western public lands, became a key educational tool of the national public lands grazing campaign.

During a time period when mainstream environmentalism has increasingly stressed human health and welfare, focused on market solutions, and been largely unwilling to address controversial issues such as human overpopulation and rapacious corporate capitalism, FDE has funded activist groups and campaigns that forthrightly critiqued the status quo, unapologetically defended the intrinsic value of wilderness and wildlife, and promoted a deep systemic critique.

After FDE’s North American grantmaking program was downsized, during the past fifteen years the foundation’s primary program work in the United States has been its in-house publishing program as part of the overall effort to strengthen activism on biodiversity, wildlands, agriculture, and energy issues.
Turning Point Project

In 1999, the Foundation for Deep Ecology, working closely with Public Media Center and the International Center for Technology Assessment, helped create the Turning Point Project—an independent NGO that mounted an ambitious communications advocacy campaign. FDE, other foundations, and hundreds of individual donors supported that campaign, which created a series of print ads and a related website addressing numerous manifestations of the eco-social crisis confronting humanity. These issues, which had received little mainstream media attention, fell under five broad categories: the global extinction crisis, genetic engineering, industrial agriculture, economic globalization, and megatechnology.

During a six-month period, running from late 1999 into the new millennium, the Turning Point Project placed twenty-five full-page ads in the New York Times. More than eighty leading activist groups signed on to segments of the campaign, contributing ideas and financial support. Several of the ads individually generated more than 100,000 responses via mail, email, and the Turning Point website. The campaign was influential in developing public opinion about a variety of issues that had largely escaped substantive public discussion, but had profound consequences for nature and people.
As part of its program to invest in the intellectual infrastructure of the conservation movement and strengthen activism, the Foundation for Deep Ecology has supported numerous conferences, symposia, and events over the years. In many instances, the foundation conceived and organized seminal gatherings of conservation leaders that led to ongoing conservation initiatives or independent organizations. Other times, FDE-supported events helped activists build alliances, and better coordinate their actions to defend the natural world.

A few of the many events and conferences organized or funded by FDE or the Conservation Land Trust include:

- Envisioning a Sustainable World Population, a 1991 symposium of leading thinkers convened by the foundation to discuss overpopulation as a driving force of the extinction crisis
- North American Wilderness Recovery Strategy Summit, a 1991 gathering of wilderness activists and conservation biologists hosted by Doug Tompkins to discuss large-scale wilderness recovery; the meeting led to the formation of the Wildlands Project (now Wildlands Network)
- IFG Teach-ins and Seminars: two 1994 meetings organized by the foundation led to the creation of the International Forum on Globalization, which helped birth and grow the anti-economic globalization movement
- Zero Cut Funders’ Briefing, a FDE-organized foundation gathering in 1997 to expand support for NGOs that were working to end commercial logging on public land
- Wild Thinking for the 21st Century, a 1998 FDE-hosted gathering of conservation visionaries to discuss the future of wild nature
- Wildlands Philanthropy Meeting, a 1998 FDE-organized symposium and funder’s briefing that brought together practitioners and supporters of privately funded land conservation
- Environment, Development, and Politics, a FDE-organized teach-in held in Chile in 2000 featuring Vandana Shiva, Martin Khor, Wes Jackson, Jeremy Rifkin, and others
- Sustainable Forestry: Forestry Plantations and Native Forests, a 2006 two-day seminar in Santiago cosponsored by CLT and the Chilean Centro de Estudios Publicos that discussed the ethics and practices of sustainable forestry in Chile
- IFG Confronting the Global Triple Crisis Teach-in, a 2007 multiday event in Washington, DC, partially funded by FDE that addressed the intersection between peak oil, climate change, and global resource depletion and extinction
- Aquaculture Activists Gathering, a 2008 mini-summit hosted by the foundation that brought anti-aquaculture activists from around the globe to meet at Pumalín Park in Chile; the group exchanged information and discussed strategy for opposing industrial aquaculture’s negative ecological and social effects
- Wildlands Philanthropy Forum, a 2008 symposium coproduced by the Conservation Land Trust and the National Park Foundation, which brought together an eminent group of conservation leaders and donors; a related evening party launched the FDE-sponsored book Wildlands Philanthropy: The Great American Tradition
- IFG Techno-Utopianism and the Fate of the Earth Teach-in, a two-day forum in New York City in 2014 that brought together leading voices from around the Earth to challenge the unquestioning embrace of technology
During the early 1990s, it became obvious to many activists that biodiversity loss and other global environmental threats were exacerbated by economic globalization. The goal was to open all doors for financiers and multinational corporations to exploit the world’s remaining natural resources as fast as possible, wherever they were, ship them across oceans for processing, and then ship resulting products among continents—to feed an insatiable hunger for never-ending growth, an absurd dream on a finite planet. Economic globalization was accelerating the looming crises of climate change and resource depletion. Globalization contributed to the spike in species extinctions, degraded the overall quality of life, and threatened successful local economies and indigenous cultures. All of this activity was promoted by an expanding architecture of global “free trade” in institutions and agreements including the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, North American Free Trade Association and the like, dedicated to eliminating restrictions on corporate and banking activities.

In response, the Foundation for Deep Ecology added a program area focused on the dangers of modern global economic ideology. FDE convened an extraordinary series of exploratory private strategy meetings, bringing leading environmental and social activists together with economists and scholars from every continent, to share ideas on how to slow the juggernaut. These soon led to the formation in 1993 of the International Forum on Globalization (IFG), which shared offices with the foundation. Jerry Mander became its first director, and an international board was formed among leading activists from around the planet including Vandana Shiva (India), Martin Khor (Malaysia), Maude Barlow (Canada), Helena Norberg Hodge (Sweden), Lori Wallach and John Cavanagh (United States), Sarah Larraín (South America), Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (Philippines) and the late Teddy Goldsmith (United Kingdom), among many others.

IFG published seminal critiques of economic globalization, offering effective new language to build a movement. IFG also sponsored giant public “teach-ins,” including a huge three-day event at Riverside Church in New York, and one in Seattle during the landmark anti-WTO protests of 1999, helping spawn similar protests throughout the world. The burgeoning anti-globalization movement logged a string of major victories, helping stop or slow down such major corporate development schemes as the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), the Doha round of the WTO, and numerous regional and bilateral trade agreements, and public policies. IFG was also the first American nongovernmental organization to hold major public protest events focused on climate change. IFG also formed a coalition of hundreds of groups that was instrumental in finally gaining passage, after twenty years of effort, of the landmark United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.
Consistent with its mission to inform, educate, and inspire action on behalf of wild nature, the Foundation for Deep Ecology launched, soon after its founding, an in-house publishing program. Since releasing its first title, *Clearcut: The Tragedy of Industrial Forestry* (with Sierra Club Books) in 1993, the Tompkins Conservation publishing program has conceived, produced, and funded more than 25 books on conservation topics, anchored by a series of large-format volumes. Following in a tradition pioneered by conservationist David Brower who used exhibit format books to support the Sierra Club’s advocacy work in the 1960s, FDE staff and colleagues have modernized the genre, producing award-winning books to inspire and educate activists.

Doug Tompkins, during his years building Esprit into a leading fashion company, had developed two exhibit-format books that won awards for their innovative design. When he became immersed in conservation activism, he recognized how a large-scale combination of dramatic photographs, attention-grabbing captions, and informative essays could catch attention to environmental issues. The foundation’s publishing program aims to raise the level of conservation activism by laying out the arguments against various deleterious practices and industries with a deep systemic critique and bearing witness to the widespread destruction they create.

Divergent in their focus, the FDE-produced books all share a common perspective: The assaults on wild nature, whether from industrial forest clear-cuts or monoculture farming or mountaintop-removal coal mining, are symptoms of a globalized industrial growth economy that everywhere is chewing up the planet’s beauty and biodiversity. All of these atrocities stem from a flawed worldview and the social and economic systems it has spawned.

A quarter century of experience now confirms the effectiveness of this format as a publications centerpiece of activist campaigns. In numerous cases through the years, FDE worked closely with visionary groups such as Post Carbon Institute and Population Media Center to produce a book useful to their efforts, and then helped fund the associated campaign (see populationspeakout.org for example). Since 2008, beginning with the book *Wildlands Philanthropy*, the publications program has also developed a series of elegant books that are positive in tone, featuring superb nature photography celebrating specific protected areas. This “parklands series” is produced on behalf of FDE’s sister foundation, the Conservation Land Trust. By publishing very high quality books on the national parks that Kris and Doug Tompkins have helped create and potential additional national parks that their conservation work might birth in the future, the publishing program is helping raise the public profile of the national park systems in Chile and Argentina, generating political momentum for their continued expansion.
La Tragedia del Bosque Chileno
(The Tragedy of the Chilean Forest)

Adriana Hoffmann, one of Chile’s leading conservationists, a former executive director of the Chilean forest advocacy group Defensores del Bosque and former head of Chile’s National Environmental Commission (CONAMA), states in her introduction to La Tragedia del Bosque Chileno that the book Clearcut inspired her to produce a photo-format volume on the sad plight of Chilean forests. FDE, along with the Weeden Foundation and various other funders contributed the financial resources that allowed Defensores del Bosque to publish an incisive critique of contemporary forestry practices in Chile, and articulate a positive future vision for native forest conservation and restoration. Similarly influential but longer and more comprehensive than Clearcut, this book covered industrial forestry’s effects on Chilean ecosystems including negative trends in soil health, biodiversity, and beauty. Its 400+ pages of photos and essays carefully documented the destructive practices of an extractive industrial economy, and proposed alternatives that are restorative and sustainable.

Contributors: Edited by Adriana Hoffmann; Felipe Orrego, photo coordinator. With essays by Carlos Cuevas, Sara Larraín, David Ehrenfeld, Juan Pablo Orrego, Jerry Mander, Chris Maser, Reed Noss, Vandana Shiva, Michael Soulé, Douglas Tompkin, and others. Published by Ocho Libros Editores, Ltda., 1998. (Spanish only.)

Clearcut
The Tragedy of Industrial Forestry

Clearcut was the first book project conceived, funded, and produced by the Foundation for Deep Ecology. The goal was to create a visually provocative activist tool that exposed the savagery of industrial logging on both public and private lands. With more than a hundred double-page spreads depicting industrial forest carnage from Georgia to Maine and California to Alaska, Clearcut presented a dramatically different view of North America’s forests than coffee table books had presented up to that time. Clearcut took readers behind the ”beauty strips”—those scenic sections of lush forest along roads in the United States and Canada that forestry companies leave intact, masking from view the devastation beyond. The book clearly established that rapacious logging was a pressing issue in North America, not just in the Amazon and other parts of the tropics. Second, it packaged evidence of an outlaw industry’s ecological crimes in a format widely accessible to activists, policymakers, and the general public. Finally, it put the forest products industry on the defensive. In 1995 the American Forest and Paper Association published a look-alike answer to Clearcut entitled A Closer Look. That book attempted to discredit Clearcut and put forth the dubious argument that industrial forest practices are beneficial to forests because they mimic natural events such as wildfires and hurricanes. Clearcut was the centerpiece of a national outreach and educational campaign, with FDE distributing 12,000 copies at no charge to conservation activists, policymakers, and the media.

Welfare Ranching
The Subsidized Destruction of the American West

Despite extensive documentation about the ecological, human health, and climate change consequences of a meat-based diet, livestock production has drawn limited scrutiny from environmental organizations, government agencies, and the public at large. Welfare Ranching illuminated the ecological damage that domestic livestock cause to Western public lands, analyzed the grazing system’s economic absurdity, and considered how sound public policy has been circumvented by the cowboy myth’s traction grip on the public imagination. The book also addressed global livestock issues and the Midwest feedlot system, which dominates American agriculture. The effects of livestock grazing are subtle and less obviously abusive than, say, a clear-cut forest or mountain-top-removal coal mine. Many of the ecological changes associated with livestock production occurred a century ago, and society has accepted the altered landscape as normal. Few people realize that the desert washes they see across the Southwest were once lovely streams shaded by cottonwoods or willows, or that sagebrush-covered valleys in Montana may have had a nearly continuous cover of grass a century ago. The effects of livestock grazing—biodiversity loss, soil erosion, and water pollution—are cumulative rather than immediate. With conservative estimates showing that federal taxpayers subsidize over $1 billion in direct costs to the ranching industry every year, Welfare Ranching gave this important issue the attention it deserves, and was a centerpiece of a larger educational campaign linking livestock production to water pollution, species endangerment, and habitat loss.


For more information visit www.publiclandsranching.org.

Fatal Harvest
The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture

Fatal Harvest comprehensively documented the destructive effects of the current industrial food system, offering a critique of monoculture farming, genetic engineering, pesticide use, irradiation, and other aspects of corporate agribusiness. To increase public awareness about the ecological, cultural, economic, and health ramifications of the global industrial farming system, FDE collaborated with the International Center for Technology Assessment and its Center for Food Safety (CFS) to produce the book. CFS founder and executive director Andrew Kimbrell, an author, attorney, and activist, spearheaded the research team and project. Leading experts on sustainable agriculture contributed essays and photographs. From shattering myths about the conventional food system to cataloging its impacts (issue by issue, and crop by crop) to providing an alternative vision of ecological agriculture, Fatal Harvest made a powerful case for diversified, organic farming techniques as well as for the restoration of local knowledge including agrarian and wild values. The book’s final section offered a variety of perspectives on efforts to integrate wildlife-friendly practices with organic production, as well as developing more regionally diverse systems of production and distribution. The book’s innovative graphic design taught the reader to look at an agricultural landscape and recognize the differences between an industrial approach versus truly ecological agriculture, which uses nature as measure and where conservation is a consequence of production.


The Fatal Harvest Reader

A concise, text-only version of the larger book suitable for college course adoption, The Fatal Harvest Reader gathered the essays from Fatal Harvest, which comprehensively described the unsustainable nature of the globalized industrial food system. (Island Press, 2002)
Wildfires have helped shape North America’s landscapes since the dawn of time. They are a force that humans cannot fully control, and thus understanding, appreciating, and learning to live with wildfire is ultimately the wisest public policy. With more than 150 dramatic photographs, *Wildfire: A Century of Failed Forest Policy* explored the topic of wildfire from ecological, economic, and social/political perspectives while also documenting how past forest policies have hindered natural processes, creating a tinderbox of problems today. More than twenty-five leading thinkers in the field of fire ecology provided in-depth analyses, critiques, and compelling solutions for how society can coexist with wildfire. Using examples including the epic Yellowstone fires of 1988, the ever-present southern California fires, and the Pacific Northwest’s Biscuit Fire of 2002, the book examined the ecology of these landscapes and the policies and practices that affected them such as fire suppression, prescribed burns, salvage logging, and land-use planning. Overall, the book aimed to promote the restoration of fire to the landscape as a major ecological process.


**The Wildfire Reader**

The Wildfire Reader presented, in a text-only paperback edition, the essays from *Wildfire*, offering a concise overview of fire landscapes and the past century of forest policy that has affected them. (Island Press, 2006)
Will Patagonia’s wild rivers be dammed, developed, and industrialized to produce electricity for distant markets? A broad coalition of activists from around the world said “no!” In 2007, HidroAysén, a company controlled by the international energy conglomerate Endesa, proposed to construct five massive hydroelectric dams along the Baker and Pascua Rivers. The power generated would flow north toward Chile’s population centers, requiring a 1,400-mile-long high voltage transmission corridor that would fragment wildlife habitat in more than a dozen national parks and reserves. A coalition of more than eighty conservation organizations including the Pumalín Foundation and Conservacion Patagonica joined the fight to save Patagonia’s wilderness character and keep its rivers wild and free. As the educational centerpiece of the anti-dams campaign, which ultimately stopped the dams project after seven years of vigorous opposition, the coalition released an exhibit format book, *Patagonia Chilena ¡Sin Represas!* (“Chilean Patagonia Without Dams!”), which was produced with funding and editorial support from the Foundation for Deep Ecology and Conservation Land Trust. With striking images and essays from many of Chile’s leading conservationists, the book outlined the unacceptable ecological and cultural impacts that such megadams and associated transmission infrastructure would cause, arguing that Chile’s energy needs can be met without destroying one of the grandest natural landscapes left on Earth.


For more information visit [www.patagoniasinrepresas.cl](http://www.patagoniasinrepresas.cl).

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The growing popularity of motorized recreational vehicles such as jet skis, dirt bikes, four-wheelers, snowmobiles, dune buggies, swamp buggies, rock crawlers, etc.—collectively termed thrillcraft—has become a major threat to the American landscape. *Thrillcraft: The Environmental Consequences of Motorized Recreation* documented the ecological, economic, political, and cultural effects of this growing problem with a focus on public lands. Essays by scientists, economists, activists, and social critics outlined the many ways that thrillcraft are degrading America’s natural heritage. More than one hundred graphic photographs depicted the motorized assault destroying ecosystems from the Florida Everglades to the Alaskan tundra. *Thrillcraft* also examined the cultural roots that have fostered such a cavalier attitude toward nature. Many Americans, from childhood, are taught to treat public lands as outdoor gymnasiums, where they increasingly search for challenges using machines rather than their own muscles and minds. These petroleum-produced thrills are acquired at the expense of the land, its beauty, and silence. *Thrillcraft* sounded a clarion call to protect wildlands, traditional recreation, and peace and quiet from this growing nuisance. Charting a vision for the future, the book recounted the stories of successful campaigns that succeeded in eliminating or reducing motorized recreation on public lands.


For more information visit [www.stopthrillcraft.org](http://www.stopthrillcraft.org).
In *Wildlands Philanthropy*, photographer Antonio Vizcaíno and writer Tom Butler took readers on a visually spectacular tour of natural landmarks from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego and around the globe. With more than 350 pages, 170 color photographs, and a large-format design with exquisite production values, *Wildlands Philanthropy* told the inspiring stories of people who saved extraordinary places. From Muir Woods National Monument to Acadia National Park, from beloved icons to obscure natural areas, the forty parks and nature sanctuaries featured in the book represent the incredible diversity of wildlife habitats that have been saved through private initiative during the past century. The amazing people who invested their passion and wealth to secure these scenic treasures come from every walk of life and every corner of the country, suggesting that everyone—regardless of means—can join this great American tradition of individual action on behalf of wild nature. The deluxe edition of *Wildlands Philanthropy* received various honors including a Benjamin Franklin Award for best coffee-table book and Nautilus Book Awards grand prize. A paperback edition was published in spring 2010.


*For more information visit www.wildlandsphilanthropy.org.*

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**Plundering Appalachia**

*The Tragedy of Mountaintop-Removal Coal Mining*

*Plundering Appalachia* delivered a searing expose, in words and images, of mountaintop-removal coal mining, arguably the most egregious ongoing assault on American ecosystems. Mountaintop removal is strip-mining on steroids—a radically destructive form of surface mining whereby coal companies bulldoze the forest, decapitate the peaks with explosives, push the shattered rubble into adjacent valleys, and destroy the ecologically crucial headwater streams that had been there before. With large-format photography and engaging writing, *Plundering Appalachia* illuminated Big Coal’s assault on the people and wildlife of the region, included first-person testimonies from coalfields residents about life in the shadow of mining operations. The book dissected the coal industry’s role in the energy economy and its contribution to global warming, and celebrated the growing resistance to mountaintop removal and the myth of “clean coal.” After working closely with leading anti-strip-mining activists to develop the book’s content, FDE granted several thousand copies of *Plundering Appalachia* to local, regional, and national NGOs working to end mountaintop removal and also made related grants to support their education campaigns on the topic.

*Plundering Appalachia* was a Nautilus Book Awards silver medal winner, an IBPA Benjamin Franklin Awards finalist, and was named the Independent Publisher Book Awards “Outstanding Book of the Year” in the “Freedom Fighters” category.


*For more information visit www.plunderingappalachia.org.*
ENERGY
Overdevelopment and the Delusion of Endless Growth

Where does the seemingly limitless energy that fuels modern society come from? Will tomorrow bring ever-more fossil-fuel burning and nuclear plants, a “green energy” future powered by wind turbines and solar panels, or significant energy constraints?

ENERGY: Overdevelopment and the Delusion of Endless Growth offered a compelling introduction to “energy literacy,” helping readers see through industry hype and reject rhetoric inconsistent with the realities of society’s energy predicament. ENERGY took an unflinching look at the systems that support humanity’s insatiable thirst for more power (and the ideas behind those systems) along with their unintended side effects. With large-format color photographs and the writings of more than thirty leading thinkers on energy and society, the book illuminated the costs, benefits, and limitations of all our energy options. Ultimately, ENERGY offered not only a deep critique of the current system—which is toxic to nature and people—but also presented a hopeful vision for a new energy economy that fosters beauty and health, emphasizes community-scale generation, and supports durable economies, not incessant growth.

Contributors: Edited by Tom Butler and George Wuerthner, Introduction by Richard Heinberg; with essays by Wes Jackson, Wendell Berry, Sandra Lubarsky, Lester Brown, James Hansen, Sandra Steingraber, Juan Pablo Orrego, Amory Lovins, Bill McKibben, and many others.

The ENERGY Reader

The ENERGY Reader, in a paperback format suitable for course adoption and book discussion groups, collected all of the essays from the photo-format edition, along with bonus material including additional essays and endnotes.

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CAFO (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation)
The Tragedy of Industrial Animal Factories

A follow-up and thematic companion volume to Fatal Harvest, CAFO provided an unprecedented view of concentrated animal feeding operations—“CAFOs”—the factory farms where increasing amounts of the world’s meat, milk, eggs, and fish are produced. The CAFO model of intensive production in which animals are forced to endure miserable conditions is an ethical and ecological tragedy. The system is dependent upon rampant use of antibiotics and steady streams of subsidized industrial feeds. Industrial livestock production is now a leading source of climate-changing emissions, causes rampant freshwater and ocean pollution, and contributes significantly to diet-related diseases such as obesity and the spread of food-borne illnesses. Featuring more than 400 photographs and thirty essays by leading thinkers on food and agriculture, CAFO provided a behind-the-scenes journey into the dismal world of animal factory farming. More importantly, the book offered a compelling vision for a healthier food system—one that is humane, supports farmers and communities, and is safer for people and nature.

CAFO was awarded a 2011 Nautilus Gold Award in the category of Conscious Media/Journalism/Investigative Reporting as well as an IPPY (Independent Publisher Book Awards) prize in the category “Most Likely to Save the Planet.” FDE granted more than 7,000 copies of CAFO and The CAFO Reader to activists, and the outreach campaign associated with the book supported grassroots organizations around the country working to halt the spread of factory farms in rural communities.

Contributors: Edited by Daniel Imhoff; with essays by Wendell Berry, Wenonah Hauter, Fred Kirschenmann, Anna Lappe, Michael Pollan, Eric Schlosser, Matthew Scully, and many others.

The CAFO Reader

Contributors: Edited by Dan Imhoff; with essays by Wendell Berry, Wenonah Hauter, Fred Kirschenmann, Anna Lappe, Michael Pollan, Eric Schlosser, Matthew Scully, and many others.

CAFO and The CAFO Reader were copublished with Earth Aware Editions in 2010.

For more information visit www.cafothebook.org.

Where does the seemingly limitless energy that fuels modern society come from? Will tomorrow bring ever-more fossil-fuel burning and nuclear plants, a “green energy” future powered by wind turbines and solar panels, or significant energy constraints? ENERGY: Overdevelopment and the Delusion of Endless Growth offered a compelling introduction to “energy literacy,” helping readers see through industry hype and reject rhetoric inconsistent with the realities of society’s energy predicament. ENERGY took an unflinching look at the systems that support humanity’s insatiable thirst for more power (and the ideas behind those systems) along with their unintended side effects. With large-format color photographs and the writings of more than thirty leading thinkers on energy and society, the book illuminated the costs, benefits, and limitations of all our energy options. Ultimately, ENERGY offered not only a deep critique of the current system—which is toxic to nature and people—but also presented a hopeful vision for a new energy economy that fosters beauty and health, emphasizes community-scale generation, and supports durable economies, not incessant growth.

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The ENERGY Reader

The ENERGY Reader, in a paperback format suitable for course adoption and book discussion groups, collected all of the essays from the photo-format edition, along with bonus material including additional essays and endnotes.

Contributors: Edited by Tom Butler, George Wuerthner, and Daniel Lerch; Introduction by Richard Heinberg.

ENERGY and The ENERGY Reader were copublished with Watershed Media in association with Post Carbon Institute in 2012.

For more information visit www.energy-reality.org.
The Carretera Austral
South America's Most Spectacular Road

The Carretera Austral, Chile’s “southern road,” which stretches 750 miles (1,200 kilometers) from Puerto Montt to Villa O’Higgins is perhaps the most beautiful, yet least-known major road in South America. The Carretera links together the small communities of Palena (the southern half of the Lakes Region) and Aisén (Chile’s eleventh region). If it were designated, maintained, and marketed as a “national scenic highway,” it would be a tremendous asset for ecotourism development in Chilean Patagonia. In support of that idea, Carretera Austral: South America’s Most Spectacular Road presented a sumptuous visual tour of Chilean Patagonia as seen from the road. Photographer Linde Waidhofer took multiple trips over the course of four years to capture the region’s exceptional beauty. Following its publication, the Pumalín Foundation and Conservation Land Trust hosted a series of promotional events along the Carretera, distributing the book to local businesspeople and elected officials, helping to foster support for a scenic highway designation for the road. This idea has continued to gain momentum as the region moves to an adventure tourism-based economy, with the Carretera Austral being seen as the portal to Patagonia’s “route of parks.”


Giant Anteater
A Homecoming to Iberá

The giant anteater is an oddly charismatic creature. A threatened species that has been eliminated from much of its native range in South America due to habitat loss and hunting, anteaters survive in parts of northern Argentina but decades ago became extinct in Corrientes Province. The Giant Anteater: A Homecoming to Iberá told the remarkable story of how the species has been reintroduced to the Iberá wetlands region, one of the most fecund wildlife habitats in the Americas. Conceived and implemented by the Conservation Land Trust, this ambitious project relocated anteaters from other provinces to restore a population in the Iberá Natural Reserve. Overcoming daunting political and cultural challenges—this was the first effort to reintroduce an extirpated species to its former range in Argentina—the project has captivated hearts and minds around the world. The giant anteater’s homecoming to Corrientes is a crucial first step toward ecological restoration for the Iberá region—as conservationists help the landscape recover its original integrity and richness, with natural processes and all its native creatures present and flourishing.

Chile’s Corcovado National Park is one of the last great wilderness areas on Earth. Standing like a sentinel above this paradise of shimmering lakes and primeval forest is the Corcovado Volcano, whose striking form has been a landmark for travelers along the Pacific coastline in southern Chile since prehistoric peoples settled the region. Modern visitors have called the mountain “the Matterhorn of South America.” In Corcovado National Park, landscape photographer Antonio Vizcaíno captured the beauty and wildness of a landscape almost untouched by humans. Designated in 2005 by President Ricardo Lagos, the park was born of an innovative public-private collaboration spurred by a land donation from the Conservation Land Trust and Peter Buckley to the State for the purpose of creating a national park. At the time, it was the largest-ever donation of private land to Chile’s system of protected natural areas. With a foreword by Lagos and essays by other principals in the park’s creation, Corcovado National Park told the stories of a remarkable national park’s birth. CLT and Pumalín Foundation staff hosted a successful book-launch event in Santiago headlined by President Lagos and including the book’s other contributing writers following the book’s release.

Contributors: Photography by Antonio Vizcaíno; essays by Ricardo Lagos, Douglas Tompkins, Juan Emilio Cheyre, Carlos Cuevas, and Tom Butler. Published in 2012 by the Conservation Land Trust in Spanish and English editions; distributed in Chile by Ocho Libros Editores, elsewhere by Goff Books.

On behalf of Conservacion Patagonica and the Conservation Land Trust, the Tompkins Conservation publishing team is producing an ongoing series of large, photo-format books on parks and conservation philanthropy. Previously published volumes include Wildlands Philanthropy: Corcovado National Park, Monte León National Park, Perito Moreno National Park, Yendegaia National Park, and Iberá: The Great Wetlands of Argentina. In development as of 2015 are volumes on El Impenetrable National Park, Pumalín Park, and Chile’s future Patagonia National Park. The series is intended to increase awareness of conservation history, to celebrate key personalities who established parks and protected wildlife, and to support nongovernmental organizations working for land and wildlife conservation, primarily in Argentina and Chile. These countries have a rich, century-long history of park creation, and various volumes in the parklands series will share with the world the fine conservation examples that Argentina and Chile have already protected—or might someday safeguard—in their national park systems.
Esteros del Iberá
The Great Wetlands of Argentina

The Iberá marshlands region of Corrientes Province is the foremost wildlife habitat in Argentina and one of Earth’s great natural treasures. One of the largest freshwater wetlands in South America, comprising more than 2.5 million acres, the Iberá was forged from ancient geological forces and the long-ago wanderings of the mighty Paraná River. The region is now a focus of conservation activity—including a campaign to create a new Iberá National Park. While the area is remarkably unspoiled, innovative restoration activities implemented by the Conservation Land Trust–Argentina are augmenting wildlife populations and returning missing native species—such as the giant anteater and the jaguar—to their rightful homes in the landscape of shining waters.

Photographer Juan Ramón Díaz Colodrero spent years documenting the region’s birdlife and other wild creatures. In Esteros del Iberá, his photos invited readers into the heart of the Iberá. Essays by the key players who helped birth the new park complemented Vizcaíno’s images.


Monte León National Park

Where the arid grasslands of southern Argentina meet the Atlantic Ocean, the wild winds and waters of Patagonia have sculpted a magical landscape: Monte León National Park. Established in 2002 through public-private collaboration, the park’s creation was prompted by a gift from Kristine Tompkins, the former CEO of the clothing company named for this legendary region at the bottom of the Earth. Encompassing roughly 177,500 acres with 25 miles of shoreline, Monte León is now held in trust for future generations as part of Argentina’s national park system. In Monte León National Park, photographer Antonio Vizcaíno took readers on a visual tour of the park’s natural features, exploring the wildlife, landforms, and textures—and the sublime quality of light—where land meets sea. Essays by the key players who helped birth the new park complemented Vizcaíno’s images.

Contributors: Photography by Antonio Vizcaíno; Foreword by Enrique Meyer; with essays by Silvia Braun, Claudia Campagna, William Conway, Francesca Erize, Patricio Gaudini, Kristine Tompkins, and Antonio Vizcaíno. Published in 2013 by the Conservation Land Trust in Spanish and English editions; distributed in Argentina by the Riverside Agency, elsewhere by Goff Books.
Perito Moreno National Park

Perito Moreno National Park is among the oldest yet least-known national parks in Patagonia. Named in honor of explorer and founder of Argentina’s national park system Francisco “Perito” Moreno, the park remains a wild stronghold in a world where untrammeled nature has grown increasingly rare. In Perito Moreno National Park, photographer Antonio Vizcaíno captured the sublime beauty of an alluring landscape.

Essays by experts on park history, Perito Moreno himself, and the Patagonia region complemented Vizcaíno’s photography. Perito Moreno National Park was published to help elevate the public profile of Argentina’s excellent and still-expanding national park system, and to mark the expansion of Perito Moreno. In 2013, Douglas Tompkins and the Conservation Land Trust donated a key inholding of roughly 37,000 acres, the former Estancia El Rincon, to help complete the park.

Contributors: photography by Antonio Vizcaíno; with essays by Douglas Tompkins, Adolfo Fabián Del Castillo, Eduardo Romillo, Alejandro Setret, Rafael Sauter, Claudio Bertaniatti, Emily Wakild, and Antonio Vizcaíno. Published in 2014 by the Conservation Land Trust in Spanish and English editions; distributed by Goff Books.

Yendegaia National Park

Designated in 2014, Chile’s newest national park was prompted by a donation of private land on the grand island of Tierra del Fuego to the Chilean national park system. The second major national park in Chile resulting from the conservation philanthropy of Kris and Doug Tompkins, Yendegaia National Park covers roughly 372,000 acres between existing parks in Chile and Argentina, establishing a globally significant transboundary protected area. With outstanding photography and essays by experts on regional ecology, Patagonia history, and the new park’s birth story, Yendegaia National Park is a landmark volume about this iconic landscape. During multiple expeditions in various seasons, photographer Antonio Vizcaíno recorded the harsh beauty of Yendegaia, where glacier-carved peaks, untamed rivers, windblown steppe, and Earth’s southernmost forests combine to create a biologically unique landscape. For both armchair adventurers and intrepid travelers planning a trip to Chile, Yendegaia National Park invites readers to experience one of the planet’s most remote and wild places.

Is it time to embrace the so-called “Anthropocene”—the age of human dominion—and to abandon tried-and-true conservation tools such as parks and wilderness areas? Is the future of Earth to be fully domesticated, an engineered global garden managed by technocrats to serve humanity? The schism between advocates of rewilding and those who accept and even celebrate a “post-wild” world is arguably the hottest intellectual battle in contemporary conservation. In Keeping the Wild, a group of prominent scientists, writers, and conservation activists responded to the Anthropocene boosters who claim that wild nature is no more (or in any case not much worth caring about), that human-caused extinctions are an adequate replacement for natural landscapes. The book’s contributors argued that these “new environmentalists” embody the hubris of the managerial mind-set and offer a conservation strategy that will fail to protect life in all its buzzing, blossoming diversity.


Protected natural areas historically have been conservationists’ primary tool to save land and wildlife. Parks and reserves set apart to remain forever wild stand in stark contrast to those places where the human activity, technology, and development prevails. But even as the biodiversity crisis accelerates, a growing number of voices are suggesting that protected areas are passé. Conservation, they argue, should instead focus on lands managed for human use—“working landscapes”—and abandon the goal of preventing human-caused extinctions in favor of maintaining “ecosystem services” to support people. Protecting the Wild offered a spirited rebuttal, instead calling for a dramatic expansion of protected areas. Using case studies from around the globe, the volume argued that protected areas are crucial for biodiversity and human well-being, vital to countering anthropogenic extinctions and climate change. Experts from five continents reaffirmed that parks, wilderness areas, and other reserves are an indispensable—albeit insufficient—means to sustain species, subspecies, key habitats, ecological processes, and evolutionary potential. A companion volume to Keeping the Wild, Protecting the Wild provided a necessary addition to the conversation about the future of conservation in the so-called Anthropocene.


When every problem facing humanity, from poverty to violent conflict over resources, is exacerbated by a ballooning human population, why is the demographic explosion ignored by policymakers and the media? Why, when every problem facing nature, including ecosystem loss, species extinctions, and climate chaos, is caused by human overpopulation, is the root of the problem mostly ignored by the global environmental movement? The photo-format book Overdevelopment, Overpopulation, Overshoot (OVER) attempted to reignite a conversation about overpopulation. Produced in collaboration with Population Media Center and the Population Institute, OVER was designed as the publication centerpiece of the Global Population Speak Out. A campaign to put population concerns back into the public discourse. Framed by essays by population experts, the heart of OVER was a series of photo essays illuminating the depth of the damage that human numbers and behavior have caused to the Earth—and which threatens humanity’s future. FDPE, granted more than 3,000 copies of OVER to the Speak Out, which were distributed to activists around the globe, and also provided major support to the campaign. The associated media effort generated millions of page views of excerpts from the book.


For more information visit populationspeakout.org.
During its early years, the Foundation for Deep Ecology’s publishing and media program made numerous grants to help support leading thinkers in the conservation movement who were writing books, and also helped fund promotion efforts for key works. Some examples include *The Resurgence of the Real* by Charlene Spretnak, *The Spell of the Sensuous* by David Abram, *Beyond Beef* by Jeremy Rifkin, *The Culture of Denial* by C. A. Bowers, and *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century* by George Sessions.

Over the past fifteen years, FDE’s primary program work in the United States has been its in-house publishing program. In addition to the large-format books it has conceived and published on biodiversity, wildlands, agriculture, and energy issues, FDE has in several cases sponsored translations of books that deserve wide readership around the globe. Examples of this include Russian and Spanish editions of William Catton Jr.’s classic, *Overshoot: The Ecological Basis of Revolutionary Change*, and Spanish and English translations of Saral Sarker’s book *The Crises of Capitalism* (from the original German).

In recent years, the foundation’s publishing program has also helped produce various short-run publications for conservation projects developed by sister organizations in the Tompkins Conservation family of nonprofits. These include a booklet about the scenic highway proposal for Chile’s Carretera Austral, and small books about Patagonia Park in Chile and about El Impenetrable National Park in Argentina, designated in 2014.

Other Publishing Projects

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Framing their vision in terms of patriotism, national security, and economic development, for decades some Chilean politicians have dreamed of completing a land-only road connection to the south of the country. The Carretera Austral, Chile’s “southern highway,” experiences a roughly 100-kilometer gap south of Hornopirén in Palena Province, a lightly settled region of rugged mountains. That roadless gap is where Pumalín Park (and the adjacent Huinay Foundation property that bisects Pumalín) stretches from the Pacific Ocean to the Argentine border.

The entire province had less than 20,000 residents before the Chaitén Volcano erupted in 2008, and has likely lost a quarter of its population since. The nearby town of Chaitén, Palena’s largest community, was badly damaged and officially evacuated following the eruption. Ferries and a limited road network currently serve the coastal towns and interior villages that are scattered across the province. The need for an intelligent and enhanced road and ferry system that establishes connectivity for area residents, especially along the coast, has long been a pressing social need.

For fifteen years, coastal communities and activists associated with the Pumalín Park project have advocated for a direct, coastal route road that would link local communities and support tourism. Despite the significant economic, safety, and efficiency advantages of a coastal highway—which would incorporate existing roads, add new sections where necessary, and link the network with two well-managed ferry crossings—different presidential administrations and Ministry of Public Works officials have promoted building an “interior route” section of new highway through Pumalín Park, mainly due to sovereignty concerns. Conservationists might well have campaigned against that proposal because of its obvious destructive potential to one of Earth’s great wilderness areas, but a growing coalition of Chilean activists are instead taking a positive approach, arguing that a coastal route can establish better transportation connectivity for Palena Province at a fraction of the cost and much more quickly. A coastal road would be far shorter in length and certainly safer than a winding highway through high mountains. Moreover, building the coastal route today in no way prevents an interior route from being constructed in the decades to come if traffic warrants and resources are available.

The idea of completing an all-land, interior route has been higher and lower on the list of political priorities for the Ministry of Public Works through the years, affected by natural events such as the eruption of the Chaitén Volcano as well as economic realities. Reconstruction of vital transportation infrastructure in the central region of Chile took top priority following the 2010 earthquake. In recent years the Ministry has conducted basic engineering studies of the unbuilt road and focused on paving the existing road all the way to Caleta Gonzalo. Whether future governments will revive the idea of an interior highway through Pumalín Park remains to be seen, since better options, such as modern and fast ferries, are finding positive acceptance in different regions of Chile. The Palena connectivity campaign is committed to continuing its advocacy for a coastal-route highway on economic, ecological, and social grounds until the road and ferry system is fully implemented.
The fight over whether a consortium of transnational corporations would be allowed to develop massive hydroelectric dams in Patagonia was the biggest environmental battle in Chilean history. HidroAysén, a company controlled by the Spanish energy company Endesa (which is itself a subsidiary of the Italian corporation Enel), in 2007 unveiled its plan to construct five huge dams along the Baker and Pascua Rivers. The sparsely populated Patagonia region didn’t need the power; a 1,400-mile-long transmission line was proposed to transport electricity north to Santiago. This massive development project would have industrialized Chilean Patagonia, diminishing its wilderness character. The power transmission corridor would have fragmented wildlife habitat, cutting through more than a dozen national parks and reserves. If approved, the dams would have scarred an extraordinary region and opened the door to industrializing other Patagonian rivers to power the wasteful and energy-intensive growth of Chile’s urban central region.

A large movement of Chilean NGOs and activists fought the dams scheme with tenacity and creativity for years, countering that the ecological and cultural impacts of such megadams and energy transmission infrastructure are unacceptable—that the nation’s energy needs can be met without destroying one of the greatest, intact, wild landscapes on Earth. Conservationists of course understand that the era of megadams is over—distributed, community-scale energy production based on renewables is the wave of the future. The anti-dams coalition educated the public that the dams proposal was a subsidy for northern industrial interests and would harm Patagonia’s potential for economic development based on ecotourism and incredible scenery. The majority of the Chilean people ultimately opposed damming Patagonia’s rivers.

The Pumalín Foundation and Conservacion Patagonica were key members of the Council for the Defense of Patagonia, a coalition of more than eighty organizations that collectively fought the dams proposal. The Patagonia Chilena ¡Sin Represas! (“Chilean Patagonia Without Dams!”) campaign produced detailed technical comments in response to the Environmental Impact Assessments that HidroAysén had submitted, delaying the project and forcing the company and government regulators to better examine the project’s impacts. Dam opponents waged a large-scale media campaign, using hundreds of billboards throughout Chile, full-page ads in local and national newspapers, radio and TV spots, and online updates to raise public awareness and generate support. An exhibit format book, Patagonia Chilena ¡Sin Represas!, was published as the campaign’s education centerpiece, with funding and editorial support from Tompkins Conservation. The Foundation for Deep Ecology also supported several of the Chilean NGOs spearheading the dams fight.

In June of 2014, following seven years of vigorous opposition by conservation activists, HidroAysén was denied government permits to implement its dam project. This victory reflected the maturation of the Chilean environmental movement and the international attention that the campaign generated about the threat to Patagonia’s wild rivers.
Defending Iberá

Protecting the great Iberá marshlands ecosystem of northeastern Argentina includes not only conserving land and restoring missing wildlife, but also enforcing environmental standards in the area. When an agribusiness company illegally constructed a causeway through the marshes, CLT-Argentina spearheaded a campaign to uphold the law and reverse the ecological damage. The conflict began in 2005 when Haciendas San Eugenio SA acquired a ranch within the boundaries of the Iberá Provincial Reserve, near the Medina lagoon. Without any permits and in flagrant disregard for the integrity of the protected area, the company sent heavy equipment to begin constructing an elevated earthen roadbed or “terrapléén” through the marshlands. Within days the machines had caused extensive damage to the fragile wetlands, the new causeway effectively severing the natural flow of water through the area.

With the help of CLT, Bruno Leiva, a local settler, secured a legal injunction to stop the construction. But the company paid no heed to the court and quickly built more than 13 miles (22 kilometers) of causeway while appealing the decision. In August of 2009, Argentina’s Supreme Court made a final decision on the case, firmly ordering the demolition of the entire causeway. Throughout this extended legal battle, the courts have unequivocally sided with CLT and its allies, issuing consecutive victories for the conservationists. Many times, the court ruled unanimously that the company must pay to remove the causeway and repair the damage, but the company has fought this decision in every possible way.

CLT helped convene a large coalition of nongovernmental organizations to fight for immediate demolition of the illegal network of “terrapléens” in the marshlands. Internet organizing, road blockades, street demonstrations, poster and billboard campaigns, and public education efforts demonstrated the public outcry over this blatantly illegal assault on Iberá’s wildness. Eduardo Machiavello, the ironically named president of Haciendas San Eugenio SA, ignored these protests, his company incurring huge legal bills from refusing to follow the law. CLT and allied conservationists continue to fight for the full demolition of the causeway, which as of 2015 had only been partially removed. The dispute attracted national media attention, helping to position Iberá as one of Argentina’s most critical areas for conservation.
Institutional Outreach and Partnership with Governments

Many of the land and wildlife protection projects launched by the Conservation Land Trust and Conservacion Patagonica require cooperation with public agencies. A great amount of organizational effort is expended to foster good working relationships with the governmental and nongovernmental representatives that affect conservation policy in Chile and Argentina. Working proactively to develop cooperative relations, and inviting local and national politicians, government authorities, opinion leaders, and scholars to visit the projects, has served as a key tool for developing support for land conservation.

The CLT–Argentina team has worked tirelessly to establish a productive collaboration with provincial and federal officials; it took two years just to negotiate the bureaucracy and secure the necessary permits for translocating giant anteaters into Corrientes Province, and another three years to get provincial and national authorizations to start an on-site jaguar breeding program. In Chile, the Pumalín project team has extensive experience building infrastructure, including scenic roads and campgrounds, and so has offered its valuable expertise to public agencies doing road and bridge construction projects in south Chile. One CLT staff person works full-time as a roads watchdog, monitoring transportation projects, and advocating that public roads are built to high ecological and aesthetic standards. Experts from CLT’s Alerce 3000 project have participated in the national Alerce Consultative Committee, which develops strategies for preserving that species. Pumalín project staff members have also collaborated with the Global Environment Facility’s Evergreen Project, advising on issues of forest conservation, public and private conservation areas, and sustainable forestry. By sharing expertise in these forums, team members can influence larger conservation policy.

While some Tompkins-related initiatives have generated controversy and contributed to tension between conservation activists and public agencies, CLT has worked diligently to develop a good working relationship with the Chilean and Argentinean parks administration. Various public-private partnerships have resulted. Notable successes include the creation of Monte León, El Impenetrable, and Patagonia national parks, as well as the expansion of Perito Moreno National Park in Argentina, and Corcovado National Park and Yendegaia National Park in Chile. The designation of Pumalín Park as a nature sanctuary and creation of Ñire Lagoon Provincial Park also resulted from long years of conservation work and cooperation with government officials. The ongoing Tompkins Conservation initiatives to establish more national parks and advance wildlife recovery builds on this foundation of public-private partnership.
Voices for Nature in the Media

After Doug Tompkins moved to South America in the early 1990s and the Conservation Land Trust began purchasing lands for Pumalin Park, the effort encountered significant opposition from pro-development boosters and right-wing politicians. This kind of reaction to conservation projects is typical around the world. The late U.S. Congressman Morris Udall once quipped that he’d “been through legislation creating a dozen national parks, and there’s always the same pattern. When you first propose a park, and you visit the area and present the case to the local people, they threaten to hang you. You go back in five years and they think it’s the greatest thing that ever happened.”

But unlike in the United States, where there was a long tradition of private individuals and groups buying land for nature reserves, Chile had almost no experience with wildlands philanthropy. Skepticism about a foreigner’s land purchases turned to fanciful speculation. Wild rumors circulated about Doug and Kris Tompkins’s intentions. A few politicians spouted incendiary, xenophobic rhetoric at them. The controversy unintentionally made Doug Tompkins one of the most famous people in Chile, and offered him a microphone to become a leading public spokesman for conservation causes.

The nonsensical claims that were made about Kris and Doug Tompkins were personally unpleasant for the couple, but the result was positive for the country. Before the 1990s, Chile had never had a sustained, national conversation about conservation policy—specifically, about the need to comprehensively preserve the country’s biodiversity. How protected areas are crucial to that objective, and how unfettered industrial growth generates a host of negative social and ecological effects. Doug Tompkins’s celebrity gave him a media platform to talk about these issues. His vigorous opposition to industrial aquaculture, industrial forestry, and various proposals to exploit Chile and Argentina’s natural heritage has made Tompkins a desirable source for journalists.

By intentionally challenging business as usual, and forthrightly critiquing existing economic models, and taking principled but sometimes lonely positions on the leading edge of environmental debates, Tompkins strategically provoked controversy—which attracts media interest—giving conservation issues public attention that they would not have otherwise received. In this way, a societal debate is fostered, and more mainstream environmentalists have room to pull public policy in their direction.

Over the last decade, Kris Tompkins has become a globally known conservationist in her own right as the president of Conservacion Patagonica, and her media profile, too, has risen. With their willingness to be public voices on environmental policy, the Tompkinses have contributed, beyond their foundation-related philanthropy, toward building the intellectual infrastructure of the conservation movement, articulating ideas that percolate through society via the media, which, hopefully, will move public policy toward greater harmony with wild nature.
The Tompkins Conservation teams in Chile and Argentina put tremendous effort into public outreach that articulates the value of wild nature, educates communities about sustainable agricultural practices, generates local support for conservation, and rebuts misinformation about their activities. This has taken many forms, including print, billboard, radio, and TV advertising opposing the massive hydroelectric dams and power lines proposed for Patagonia, similar media communication on other environmental issues in Chile and Argentina, and ongoing work with journalists.

In both countries CLT and CP have worked extensively with local radio stations, seeing radio as an important means of communication in remote areas, which supports localized thinking and dialogue. Local radio programs can help maintain community traditions and cohesion while providing news. In Chile, CLT has sponsored numerous radio programs in Chiloé and continental Chiloé that discussed agro-ecology, small-scale artisanal fishing, and various topics in environmental conservation. In the town of Cochrane, gateway community to the future Patagonia National Park, Conservacion Patagonica sponsors several radio programs annually to inform regional residents about the park effort’s progress, endangered species programs, and opportunities for community involvement. More frequent public service announcements help keep local citizens up-to-date on CP activities, and build support for this work.

In Argentina, CLT has worked with local radio stations to create programs led by opinion leaders within the communities of San Miguel, Concepción, and Ituzaingó; these radio shows highlighted conservation issues around the Iberá Natural Reserve while involving and empowering local speakers. CLT also funded and produced two daily radio shows with a wide listenership in the province—among both urban and rural audiences—covering environmental issues with particular attention on the Iberá marshlands. Conservation news and CLT initiatives are being communicated at the local, provincial, and national levels through electronic bulletins and press releases that are often picked up by provincial and national newspapers. Public response to these bulletins has been excellent, especially to the news of positive actions such as recovery efforts for the giant anteater, pampas deer, and jaguar. A CLT-produced electronic and printed bulletin highlighting conservation news and achievements is also helping build cohesion and a sense of common purpose among the wider Iberá conservation community.
The use of well-conceived, freely distributed posters has been a low-cost, high-impact tool for Chilean and Argentine conservationists working on various activist campaigns, including the fight to block proposed megadams on the Baker and Pascua Rivers in Patagonia.

Between 2005 and 2015, posters have also been used very effectively to reinforce a regional identity linked to natural values in the regions where the Conservation Land Trust and Conservacion Patagonica are working to expand parklands. Doug Tompkins initially designed and CLT funded a poster series featuring exceptional photography of Pumalín Park and other regional protected areas. The poster series' tagline, “Palena: Province of Parks,” effectively communicated that Palena offered some of Chile's most beautiful and best-protected country. Widely distributed and displayed by businesses and individuals around the province, the poster series contributed to local pride about Palena's ecological and cultural attributes.

Following the successful poster campaign for the Palena region, a similar effort was launched for the Corrientes Province in northeastern Argentina. Beginning in 2007, the Conservation Land Trust-Argentina produced a series of posters with powerful images of wildlife native to the Iberá marshlands. A common tagline, “Corrientes, La mas Linda” (“Corrientes, the Most Beautiful”), associated provincial identity and pride with the Iberá Natural Reserve and its globally noteworthy wetlands. The absence of any institutional logos elicited a very positive response to the posters, even from people and organizations that were not conservation minded. Building on this success, CLT has used the same concept—one powerful image, simple text, and no institutional identification—to create posters featuring the endangered species that it is working to restore in the reserve, including giant anteaters and pampas deer.

In recent years, this evolved into a larger effort to promote ecological and cultural restoration, linking ecotourism-related economic development to the Iberá region's wildlife heritage. The “Corrientes Vuelve a Ser Corrientes” (“Corrientes Becoming Corrientes Again”) campaign also used freely distributed posters, which have been wildly popular around the region. As of 2015, CLT had distributed thousands of these posters to citizens, public buildings, stores, and schools all over the Iberá basin and Corrientes Province.
The Conservation Land Trust, Conservacion Patagonica, and Foundation for Deep Ecology have long shared the web design and DVD production capability of graphic designer Andrés Stubelt, whose work is central to electronic media communications about various projects and activist campaigns. In addition to building and maintaining the primary Tompkins Conservation website, Stubelt has constructed and maintained many other associated sites, as well as assisting other conservation NGOs with their web communications.

While a medium passing out of use today, DVDs were used for several years by Tompkins Conservation for various communication purposes: DVDs were produced to distribute curriculum materials about the Iberá marshlands to schools around Corrientes Province and as part of the anti-Patagonia dams campaign. Other topics included the process of making parklands, the birth of the Patagonia National Park, and the need for a new model to replace the current, Earth-destroying economic system.

Several books in the Foundation for Deep Ecology’s publishing series have also included companion DVDs. The DVD presentation for Thrillcraft depicting motorized recreation’s destruction of public lands has been widely viewed online and during public presentations sponsored by conservation groups across the United States. The short film made to accompany Wildlands Philanthropy was distributed to hundreds of land trust groups in the United States, and was chosen for screening at Washington, DC’s Environmental Film Festival. The DVD produced with the book Plundering Appalachia has similarly been used by organizations campaigning against mountaintop-removal coal mining, and was chosen for the 2010 Wild and Scenic Film Festival.

The Iberá project used the medium particularly effectively due to the skills of documentary filmmaker Marcelo Viñas. After creating 20–30-minute documentaries on the CLT team’s efforts to reintroduce pampas deer, giant anteaters, collared peccaries, and jaguars to Iberá, the short films were distributed on DVD to the public and key stakeholders. The giant anteater documentary was especially successful in appeasing fears about the intentions of Tompkins Conservation/CLT work in the region. This film helped turn the tide of public opinion, bolstered local support for rewilding efforts, and even inspired several people to donate anteaters to the reintroduction project.
Awards

For their conservation achievements through the decades, Kristine and Douglas Tompkins have received numerous awards and honors. While not comprehensive, the following is a representative sample:

- Naitun Award from Artistas Pro Ecología—Doug, 2006
- Good Steward Award from the International Conservation Caucus Foundation—Kris & Doug, 2007
- World Rainforest Award from Rainforest Action Network—Kris & Doug, 2008
- Honorary Membership to the American Society of Landscape Architects—Doug, 2007
- David Brower Award from the American Alpine Club—Doug, 2008
- Environmental Award from the Bruno H. Schulte Foundation—Kris & Doug, 2008
- Environmental Leader of the Year from Latin Trade—Doug, 2009
- Honorary Degree from the College of Idaho—Kris, 2009
- International Visionary Award from Scenic Hudson—Kris & Doug, 2010
- International BAUM Special Award from B.A.U.M. (German Association for Environmental Management)—Kris & Doug, 2010
- New Species Award from the African Rainforest Conservancy—Kris & Doug, 2012
- Bird Life International Conservation Achievement Award—Kris & Doug, 2013
- Mohonk Preserve, NY, Long View Conservation Award—Kris & Doug, 2015
- The Kel Institute for the World Economy, Global Economy Prize—Kris & Doug, 2015
If anything can save the world, I’d put my money on beauty.

—Doug Tompkins
What judgment can be made about a conservation program after just twenty-five years, when the work of ecological recovery need last for millennia? Perhaps just this: It is a promising start! The range of projects described in this volume is testament to the power of belief leading to action. Spirited people working in concert to protect wild places and creatures can achieve remarkable gains, despite the array of obstacles conservationists face.

Philanthropy and advocacy are a powerful combination for conservation—and as Doug Tompkins often said, if the ten thousand richest people on Earth were to put the majority of their personal wealth and influence into the fight to save wild nature, the world could change overnight. Such a groundswell of nature-oriented activism could stop the global extinction crisis faster than government action, faster than a cultural shift, faster certainly than waiting for an unsustainable economy based on perpetual growth to collapse and be replaced with a durable economy harmonious with the diversity of life.

And speed is of the essence, when every day species fall into the endless night of extinction due to humanity’s overexploitation of the planet’s ecological wealth. But despite the negative trajectory of land health globally due to ever-increasing population pressures, “there is no time,” as the late, great philosopher Arne Naess wrote, “for overly pessimistic statements that can be exploited by passivists and those who promote complacency.” Naess believed the broad campaign to achieve peace between humans and nature would be long and difficult, and thus it is critical to begin the work of deep systemic change immediately and with vigor. “How much is left of nature,” he wrote, “obviously depends upon what we do today and tomorrow.”

All of the conservation projects undertaken by the Foundation for Deep Ecology, Conservation Land Trust, Conservacion Patagonica, Pumalin Foundation, Yendegaia Foundation, and Kris and Doug Tompkins personally, reflect this spirit. The health of the biotic community in the centuries to come depends upon the actions of humans living today. For the Tompkins Conservation team, it is a privilege to be making significant, tangible steps toward building a future culture that fosters wild beauty and integrity.
The current global extinction crisis, and the calamity of human-caused climate change that is bound to accelerate it, raises a fundamental question: What kind of work should a person do in these momentous times?

For a quarter century, hundreds of people have labored alongside Kris and Doug Tompkins to create new national parks, restore degraded farmland, help imperiled species recover, and defend the natural world through deeply informed activism. On behalf of Tompkins Conservation team members past and present, we can say this is meaningful, rewarding work.

These efforts continue, and will even accelerate in the coming decade. Tompkins Conservation is results-oriented. Building on an established record of success, the current projects under way are poised to add many millions of hectares to the national park systems of Chile and Argentina, complete one of the world’s largest grasslands restoration initiatives, reintroduce missing species, and continue publishing and grant-making that supports ecocentric thinking and activism.

The path forward may be challenging but the destination is clear: We work toward the day when jaguars again roam in the Iberá wetlands, when the full diversity of life again flourishes along the Route of Parks in Patagonia, and when the human communities of our focal regions are vibrant within a context of healthy ecosystems. In sum, we strive to restore and sustain beauty, believing, as the great field biologist Olaus Murie wrote more than sixty years ago, “evolution is our employer.”
The People of Tompkins Conservation
Tompkins Conservation
Organizational Leadership

FOUNDATION FOR DEEP ECOLOGY
Private foundation focused on activism and grantmaking; incorporated in California.

Directors
Kristine Tompkins
Quincey Tompkins Imhoff
Debbie Ryker

THE CONSERVATION LAND TRUST
Private foundation focused on land and wildlife conservation; incorporated in California.

Directors
Kristine Tompkins
Quincey Tompkins Imhoff
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THE CONSERVATION LAND TRUST—ARGENTINA
Affiliate of the private foundation dedicated to land and wildlife conservation; incorporated in Argentina.

Directors
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Ignacio Jiménez
Laura Fernández
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CONSERVACION PATAGONICA
Publicly supported charity dedicated to fund conservation in the Patagonia region of Chile and Argentina; incorporated in California.

Directors
Kristine Tompkins
Debbie Ryker
Yvon Chouinard
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Rick Ridgeway
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Conservacion Patagonica
Science Advisory Board
Dr. Thomas Lovejoy
Dr. Stuart Pimm
John W. Terborgh
Juan C. Torres-Mata

CONSERVACION PATAGONICA—CHILE
Subsidiary of nongovernmental organization focused on parklands protection in Patagonia; incorporated in Chile.

Directors
Rodrigo Carlos Noriega Fedelli
Luis Victoriano Toro Castillo
Carmen Gloria Joost Rubilar

FUNDACIÓN PUMALÍN
Nongovernmental organization dedicated to the creation, management, and administration of Pumalín Park, focused on wilderness conservation, education, research, and ecotourism; incorporated in Chile.

Directors
Carolina Alejandra Morgado Escanilla
Pepe Pablo Gutiérrez Philippi
Carlos Zambrano Fernández
Kristine Tompkins
Monseñor Juan María Agurto Muñoz
Manfred Max-Neef
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FUNDACIÓN YENDEGAIA
Nongovernmental organization dedicated to stewardship of privately held conservation land in Tierra del Fuego; incorporated in Chile.

Directors
Carolina Alejandra Morgado Escanilla
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* Seven directors sit on the Fundación Pumalín board; one is appointed by the governmental administration in office.
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Contributing Photographers
We are grateful to all of the photographers who have visited and photographed Tompkins Conservation projects through the years, and to the following individuals whose work appears in this volume. Our apologies for any missing credits.

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Whoever you are, wherever your interest lies, whatever you’ve fallen in love with, you get out of bed every morning and you do something. You act, you step into the fray, and you fight for a human society that is in balance with the natural world.

—Kristine McDivitt Tompkins