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New nature reserve created in northern Colombia

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ProAves, the Rainforest Trust and Global Wildlife Conservation (GWC) have announced the creation of the Chamicero de Perijá Nature Reserve, the first protected area in northern Colombia's Serranía de Perijá mountain range.

ProAves has acquired 11 adjacent properties that form the 1,850-acre reserve, which protects a pristine cloud forest environment that includes critical habitat for threatened wildlife.

This reserve's establishment is extremely timely, as 98 per cent of the Serranía de Perijá's rainforests have already been destroyed due to colonisation and agricultural expansion.

"Without this reserve, the chances are high that within a few years nothing would be left of the spectacular forests that once covered Colombia's Serranía de Perijá," said Dr Paul Salaman, CEO of the Rainforest Trust.

There has been a history of difficulties in conducting research in the area, and so the Serranía de Perijá remains one of the least-known natural environments in the Northern Andes.

Field research by ProAves, however, has confirmed its importance as a stronghold for many endemic and rapidly declining species. It has been established as the home of three endangered and endemic species – the Perijá thistletail, Perijá metaltail, and the Perijá brush-finch.

Several other bird species have also been discovered, including a new brush-finch, tapaculo, screech-owl, and spinetail.

"ProAves has been working in the Serranía de Perijá for almost a decade in an effort to protect its last forested areas," said Luis Felipe Barrera, Director of Conservation for ProAves. "Thanks to our alliance with Rainforest Trust and GWC, we've finally achieved a lasting victory for the region's imperiled wildlife."

"The new reserve is globally important, as it is recognised as an Alliance for Zero Extinction site. The incredible fauna and flora include many species found nowhere else in the world," said Dr Wes Sechrest, Chief Scientist and CEO of Global Wildlife Conservation.

The Chamicero de Perijá Nature Reserve also protects two watersheds that are vital for the city of Valledupar and several towns in the otherwise arid Cesar Department.

"This reserve is a win for everyone. Not only is it going to be a permanent lifeline for the region's many endemic species that have nowhere else to go, but it is also a major victory for nearby cities and towns that will benefit for years from the water it provides," said Dr Salaman.



The Perijá brush-finch is one of three endemic and endangered species the new reserve will help protect

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