

Annual Report 2022

Finca Cántaros

Environmental Association



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Environmental education is at the core of everything we do.

Introduction

2022 was another successful year for Finca Cántaros Environmental Association, as well as a year of transitions. Many activities and events helped us clarify what kind of team we want to be, as well as what our priorities should be. For example, we formally decided that we will keep “environmental education is at the core of everything we do” as our mission, with forest restoration and birds as our pillars, or the “vehicles” for creating environmental education experiences with diverse audiences in the community.

We are proud to have created [this video about our Origin Story](#), as it showcases why and how we are here, where we want to go, and the fact that this is truly a family-based operation.

2022 Highlights

- An inauguration of the environmental mural created by the female participants in our Women Committed to the Earth environmental education program, representing the answers to the questions: “What does the environment mean to me?”
- Two community festivals open to all ages in honour of World Environmental Education Day in January and later Earth Day in April.
- Acquisition of 40 hectares of cattle pasture that allowed us to conduct forest restoration in collaboration with the community (the local Municipality, visiting students at the Las Cruces Biological Station, the San Vito Monitoring Brigade, the women in Women Committed to the Earth, and young men recovering from drug and alcohol addiction). The restoration being conducted within this area is part of restoration research led by ecologists from the Swiss University ETH Zurich.
- Successful pilot of a program called Women Leaders for Nature, or *Lideresas por la Naturaleza*, an in-depth, intensive version of Women Committed to the Earth aimed at engaging women in conservation leadership development through biodiversity.
- Our III Annual Welcome Back Migratory Bird Festival, which rather than being a traditional festival was a series of activities to engage the community in multiple aspects of bird conservation and education, from forest stewardship to learning about citizen science projects that help improve our understanding of populations, including eBird of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the Motus Wildlife Tracking System of Birds Canada.



Left to right: A workshop on native plants, volunteers helping with a “*mesa de trueque*” where people could exchange reused goods, and local vendors selling delicious food at our World Environmental Education Day Festival.

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Formalization of the Asociación

In November of 2022, we suspended operations for three weeks in order to take stock of our where we were at and how our future goals and objectives were being reflected in the day to day. During this period we also formalized the establishment of *Asociación Ambiental Finca Cántaros*, the legal entity in Costa Rica. Although it had been created legally in 2021, we still needed to finalize paperwork related to our bank account and ability to receive donations.

During the suspension and reflection period, we examined lessons learned throughout 2022. We decided that while community festivals had been a successful way to draw attention to our work and attract the community to the property, the overall investment of time and resources was too high to continue repeating, especially because we want our programs to create a more continuous and ongoing connection as opposed to one-off points of contact.

Further, given the formalization of forest restoration and birds as our birds, all of our 2023 activities will be centred around these themes. Such activities include ongoing weekly and biweekly programs, as well as programs facilitated at specific times of the year.

Photos Participants in "Women Committed to the Earth" inaugurating the mural project and making an organic compost called "bocashi."
Participants in a Friday Night Walk and a Tropical Screech-Owl (*Megascops choliba*) observing the participants.



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2023 Plans

Weekly/biweekly programs:

- *Women Committed to the Earth*: weekly sessions for women of all ages focused on environmental art, biodiversity and preparing to create a women's tree nursery.
- *Night Walks*: biweekly sessions for everyone in the community to learn about nocturnal wildlife and citizen science projects.
- *Morning Walks*: a new addition to our regular programming that will run biweekly and engage the community in learning about biodiversity and citizen science projects.

Programs at specific times of the year:

- Sessions in local schools to deliver bird-focused environmental education using the BirdSleuth curriculum of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Motus-focused materials.
- The expansion of the Children's Forest & other restoration/tree-growing activities will run from July through September in conjunction with bird environmental education.
- The Welcome Back Migratory Bird "Festival" and Community Bird Forum will take place throughout October.
- We will join the network of MoSI stations (*Monitoreo de Sobrevivencia Invernal-- Monitoring of Winter Survival*) and reactivate bird banding at Finca Cántaros.
- Christmas Bird Count, a collaborative effort between Finca Cántaros, Las Cruces Biological Station, San Vito Bird Club and TuriBrus, will take place in December.



Photo: Finca Cántaros Environmental Association is a family effort! From left to right, Lilly Briggs (FCEA Director), David Rodríguez (FCEA Wildlife Manager), their daughter Lucy Rose, Rodney Briggs (FCEA Financial Advisor), and Robin Pascoe (FCEA Communications Advisor) stand in front of degraded pasture where we initiated successful tree-growing projects in collaboration with the community and many of our partner organizations including ETH Zurich and Global Experiment Networks, San Vito Bird Club, the San Vito Monitoring Brigade, Osa Conservation and the Las Cruces Biological Station.

Financial

The operating budget for Finca Cántaros Environmental Association for 2022 was \$160,000 USD.

Conclusion

While 2022 had its ups and downs, we are proud that we managed to facilitate many activities aligned with our values, and lay the groundwork for developing a strategic plan for 2023 that reflects our long-term goals of engaging the community in environmental education through the lens of birds and trees.

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