

Finca Cántaros

Environmental Association

Annual Report 2023





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Environmental Association

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Environmental education is at the core of everything we do at Finca Cántaros Environmental Association (FCEA). Our two pillars are forest restoration and birds, which we use as the “vehicles” for creating environmental education experiences for diverse audiences in the community.

2023 was a full year for FCEA, and all of our outreach and initiatives were made possible by the support of donors like yourselves. We reached over 1200 members of the community through in-person environmental education activities plus thousands more through our online presence. Here we highlight some of our key accomplishments and invite you to follow our updates in realtime on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, and through our WhatsApp status updates.

Your commitment to environmental education is key and we appreciate every step forward we take with you. Thank you for being part of our team, and we hope you will continue supporting us in 2024!



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Morning Walks

Our “Morning Walks” environmental education program offers all members of the community the opportunity to explore the diversity of fauna and flora found at Finca Cántaros. During these free and open walks, which take place every two weeks, participants can connect with nature as well as learn how they can participate in citizen science projects, such as eBird of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology as well as iNaturalist of the California Academy of Sciences. These projects allow everyone, and not just scientists, to contribute valuable data about local species to scientific investigations.



Night Walks

Our “Night Walks” environmental education program is another opportunity for everyone in the community to get to explore the flora and fauna of Finca Cántaros, but the focus is on nocturnal diversity. Nocturnal wildlife often goes unnoticed or unappreciated, or even feared or hated in the case of animals such as bats and snakes. These free biweekly walks aim to raise awareness about the importance of such species in order to help change negative attitudes and behaviours.



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Women Committed to the Earth

Women Committed to the Earth is an environmental education program aimed at women of all ages in the community. The goal of the program is to engage female participants in running environmental projects, and in doing so create spaces for professional development and building leadership skills that can in turn boost individual and a collective sense of empowerment.

The types of projects carried out by Women Committed to the Earth include environmental art projects that help educate visitors to Finca Cántaros about the species present on the property and forest restoration projects such as launching a women-run tree nursery that involves producing organic composts to cultivate native species of trees. Further, we focus on building capacity around observation, understanding and identification of the diversity of species around us, which includes practice using applications that allow everyone to contribute data to global citizen science projects dedicated to biodiversity, such as eBird and iNaturalist. Finally, every two weeks we have an expert from the community lead roundtable discussions about sexual and reproductive rights as well as sexual and reproductive health.



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BirdSleuth International

FCEA administers the BirdSleuth International program, an environmental education curriculum developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology that aims to involve students in learning about birds, habitat, citizen science, as well as conservation projects that protect and/or create habitat for birds. This 10-lesson curriculum is implemented in local elementary and high schools between April and September. The funding for this program comes from our local allies, the San Vito Bird Club.



Welcome Back Migratory Bird Festival

The Welcome Back Migratory Bird Festival is an annual event that brings together members of the community, public and private institutions, local monitoring brigades, universities, schools and nongovernmental organizations. The objective of this event is to celebrate the importance and beauty of migratory birds and inspire people to engage in positive hands-on action to help conserve their habitats. It involves workshops and activities focused on citizen science, forest restoration, participation in the global birding event of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, October Big Day as well as the national event the I Migratory Warbler Count, and a national migratory bird drawing contest for elementary schools across the country.



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Bosque de los Niños de Coto Brus 1.0 y 2.0

The first forest restoration, or “tree-growing” project, that FCEA launched before even becoming an official Association was the Children’s Forest of Coto Brus, in 2019. This project engaged BirdSleuth International students (described above) in planting trees in degraded pasture on FCEA property, in order to create bird habitat. Since then, we have invited the students back on multiple occasions to continue caring for their trees (through organic compost applications) and their forest (through forest enrichment activities such as planting more species of trees that need shade cover). These ongoing tree stewardship and community engagement efforts reflect our tree-growing philosophy.

This year, we created Children’s Forest 2.0 by inviting the current cohort of BirdSleuth students to plant an extension of the existing forest. They created experimental plots with native species of trees that we acquired thanks to our partnership with the organization Osa Conservation, and the tree nursery they manage on Finca Cántaros property. Further, Children’s Forest 2.0 engaged students from the United Arab Emirates that attend Maple Bear Global Schools. These students not only sponsored the planting of the trees, but we exchanged videos and information about why tree-growing is important to supporting biodiversity and mitigating the impacts of climate change, and why it is equally important to plant the native species of trees in appropriate areas.



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“Nature of Science” Workshop

FCEA collaborated with Texas A&M University (TAMU) and the Global Alliance for Animals and People (GAAP of Chile) on a pilot science and environmental education program that was implemented over the week-long Easter break. The program sought to teach local students about bird migration, how the Motus Wildlife Tracking System works, conservation, and the “nature of science,” which is a component of scientific literacy that allows students to understand science concepts, how science works, how to interpret and incorporate science into daily life, and more.

This pilot program took place thanks to a connection with Dr. Kira Delmore, an Assistant Professor at TAMU, through detections of Swainson’s Thrushes by the Finca Cántaros Motus Station. Many of these thrushes were outfitted with radiotags by Dr. Delmore and the students in her lab. Upon noticing these detections, Finca Cántaros Director Lilly Briggs reached out to Dr. Delmore, demonstrating how the Motus network not only helps us track birds and other species, but connect with likeminded collaborators, too



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BioBlitz Finca Cántaros

Community members of all ages came together during our first BioBlitz at Finca Cántaros to observe and document all the species possible using the application iNaturalist (of the California Academy of Sciences) during a defined period of 5am to 9pm. Beyond just collecting data for this global citizen science project, this event created a valuable opportunity for people to connect and enjoy nature together. Further, the majority of participants have continued to use iNaturalist and the Finca Cántaros team has offered them ongoing support.



III Christmas Bird Count of Coto Brus

III CONTEO NAVIDEÑO DE AVES
COTO BRUS 2023

INFO AL WHATSAPP
8682-2402

14 DE DICIEMBRE DEL 2023

Organiza:

- San Vito BIRD CLUB
- Organización para Estudios Tropicales
- Audubon CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT
- Asociación Ambiental Finca Cántaros
- TURIBRUS R.L.

For the third year in a row, FCEA has joined forces with local organizations and institutions including Turibrus, the Organization for Tropical Studies and the San Vito Bird Club to organize the third annual Christmas Bird Count in Coto Brus. This year the event will take place on December 14th, bringing together birders from all over the country. We have organized 11 strategic birding routes that cover different areas and habitats within the county.

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Magic Forest

FCEA collaborates with researchers from Crowther Lab of ETH Zurich (a Swiss university) on two research projects that have been established in an area of our land named “Magic Forest.” One experiment examines the differences between active restoration and natural regeneration, while the other examines the functional traits of tree species used in restoration projects. For more details, check out this video on our website: <https://fincacantaros.org/bosque-magico-magic-forest/>.



“360,” the recent extension to the Magic Forest

In 2023 FCEA acquired additional degraded pasture connected to the Magic Forest, and we held multiple community “tree-growing” days in order to engage kids and adults alike in planting this area with native tree species acquired through our partnership with Osa Conservation. This area, known as “360” because of its spectacular view, is also being used in a research project dedicated to understanding the comparative impacts of different strategies for restoring degraded soils (from applications of coffee pulp to microorganisms of the mountain).



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Three-wattled Bellbird Research

FCEA plays a key role in research focused on automated acoustic detection to monitor the Three-wattled Bellbird (*Procnias tricarunculatus*) in the AmistOsa Biological Corridor. This project is led by the International Institute for Conservation and Wildlife Management (ICOMVIS) y the National University (UNA) and Labitrop UNA, in collaboration with the AmistOsa Biological Corridor Committee. FCEA staff participate directly in the research, coordinating the logistics of installing and maintaining the acoustic monitoring equipment on the properties of numerous regional landowners.



Organic Agriculture Course

FCEA collaborated with organic farmer Randy López of Finca Orgánica Tinamastes to hold a 12-week course focused on organic agriculture and its relationship to forest restoration and the establishment of tree nurseries. The classes, which took place every Wednesday from 8am-1pm between August and November, created a space for participants to learn how to make a variety of organic composts, including microorganisms of the mountain; the management of different composting systems such as vermicomposting; techniques for creating botanical extracts, and more. The majority of the participants are already implementing their new knowledge and skills in their own homes.



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Website and social media

We invite you to explore our online presence and stay up-to-date about all of our activities and projects through all of our social media platforms:

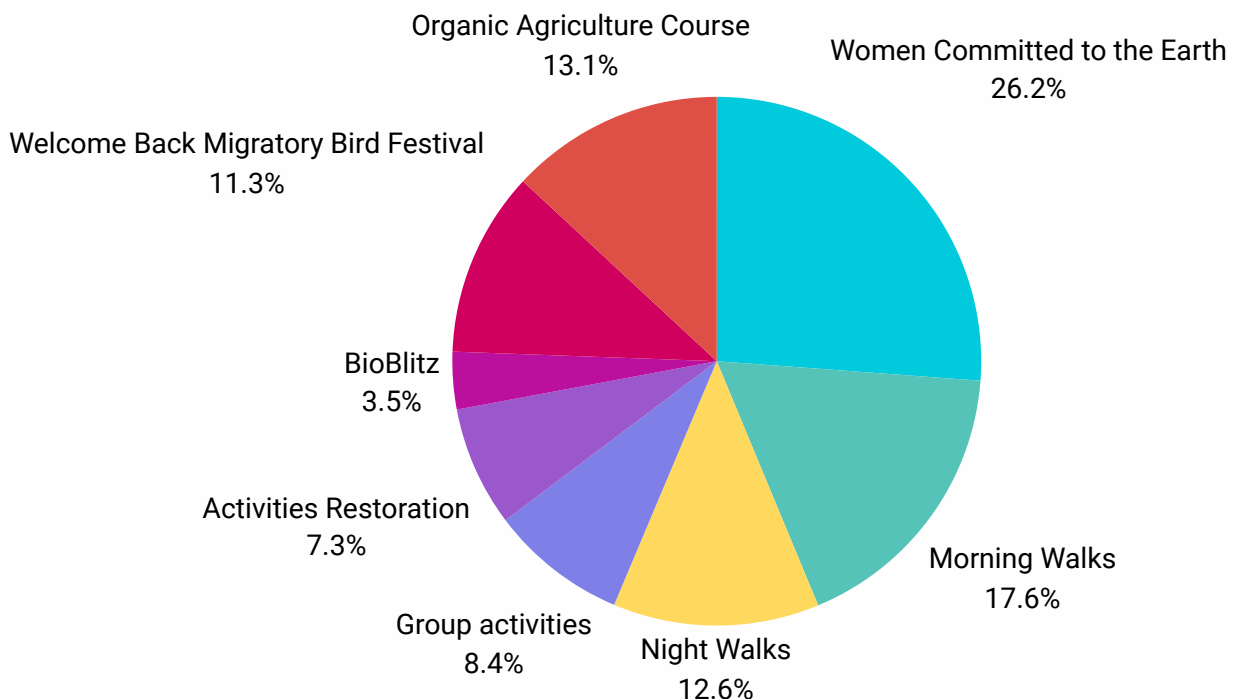
Visit our website fincacantaros.org to get in-depth information about our initiatives and programs.

Follow our Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn feeds to get daily updates about FCEA's activities, and to share our passion for environmental education.

Subscribe to our YouTube channel to access multimedia content about our work.

Participant percentages in Finca Cántaros activities

This graphic highlights the percentages of participation in various FCEA activities, which provides us with valuable information about the preferences and engagement of our audiences. We use these trends and patterns to make informed decisions about our future activities.



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Final words

Dear FCEA collaborators and supporters:

On behalf of the organization, we would like to express our sincere thanks for your ongoing support since our founding in 2020. As we enter our fourth year of existence, we are reflecting on where we want to prioritize our efforts in 2024. Several of the programs described in this annual report will continue, such as Women Committed to the Earth and BirdSleuth, while some will be put on pause as we invest our time and energy into raising funds toward further land acquisition and tree-growing efforts that not only create critical habitat to support biodiversity but also help counteract the impacts of climate change.

We now have an important partner organization in the United States with 501(c)3 status that will be supporting FCEA Costa Rica and other organizations in Costa Rica. A similar partner organization in Canada that currently supports us and directs some of our projects has now submitted its application for charitable status in Canada.

We will keep you updated as we pursue these goals in 2024, and we hope we can continue to count on your support.

Lilly Briggs, PhD
Founder & Director
Finca Cántaros Environmental Association



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