

### MOUNTAINS OF CENTRAL ASIA BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

The largest lake in Kyrgyzstan, Lake Issyk Kul, the floodplain to its east, and the surrounding mountains are home to a stunning collection of biological diversity, including snow leopards, demoiselle cranes, and species of plants and fish endemic to the region.

With support from a CEPF small grant, a local group known by its acronym, LEADER, is creating an informal “micro-reserve” of 1,2661 square meters (1.2 hectares) planted with indigenous species of wild apricots, apples and berries that serve to attract native fauna. In the village of Saruu, on the banks of the Dzhuku River, LEADER is using the reserve as an awareness-raising mechanism for local people about the importance of watershed management and local conservation.



### EAST MELANESIAN ISLANDS BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

The Solomon Islands has relatively few well-established civil society organizations. Solomon Islands Community Conservation Partnership (SICCP) was founded in 2009 to serve as a bridge between donors and community-based organizations (CBOs) often tied to particular places or ethnic groups. SICCP’s mission is to offer technical assistance to civil society organizations as well as provide them with funding, advocate on their behalf and create networks among them. While providing support to such organizations, SICCP, itself, needs assistance. A US\$58,000 grant from CEPF will enable SICCP to strengthen its organizational policies and operational and financial procedures so that it can better serve its constituent CBOs.

### CERRADO BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT



The Cerrado Seeds Network (Rede de Sementes do Cerrado) works to strengthen the collection of seeds from native species in the hotspot. The social nature of the work is one of the organization's main pillars since the commercialization of native seeds generates income for local communities, in addition to encouraging the conservation of these areas.

So far, 450 people have been trained in the collection of native seeds and ecological restoration, 11 communities have benefited, 250 hectares are in the process of being restored, more than 30 contracts have been signed for the commercialization of native seeds, and more than 10 tons of seeds have been commercialized with help from CEPF funding.

### MEDITERRANEAN BASIN BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

CEPF—through its regional implementation team at BirdLife International—has awarded small grants to five civil society organizations in Palestine to conserve threatened and site-restricted endemic plants and their habitats.

One of these grantees, Palestine Wildlife Society, is working to protect *Iris haynei*, which is found only in Faqqua Village. In 2015, the flower was declared the national plant of the State of Palestine by the Palestinian Environment Quality Authority.

In co-operation with students from different Palestinian universities, Palestine Wildlife Society has made a major breakthrough in germinating *Iris haynei* from seeds using a methodology taught by another CEPF grantee and iris expert from Lebanon's University of Saint Joseph. The processed seeds were planted in three places: the laboratory, the natural distribution areas of *Iris haynei*, and a garden of 0.45 hectares donated by the Faqqua village council to be used as a botanical garden for scientific research and as an educational center.



Youth from local communities around the village are enthusiastically contributing toward the efforts to save the iris, too. And a photo and painting contest for the children of Faqqua was announced through the Palestinian Ministry of Education to help generate a sense of ownership and awareness of “their” special purple flower.

### GUINEAN FORESTS OF WEST AFRICA BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

Providing recent evidence of species presence is often the greatest barrier to confirming Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) for freshwater species. Environmental DNA (eDNA) surveys provide great potential to overcome this challenge by detecting tiny amounts of genetic material from water samples. CEPF grantee IUCN has been collaborating with CEPF grantee NatureMetrics to identify and refine KBAs for freshwater species in Côte d'Ivoire's Lower Bandama River, working with the University of Abidjan in the validation process. A NatureMetrics eDNA survey for Fauna & Flora International in Liberia revealed an incidental observation of a Critically Endangered killifish species that had not been observed in decades, highlighting new potential for an Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) designation for this species.

### MADAGASCAR AND THE INDIAN OCEAN ISLANDS BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

As the Green Climate Fund investment in the hotspot is about to begin, the current CEPF investment is coming to a close, with the last small-grant call for proposals launched in January. Only previous small-grant recipients whose projects were impacted by the restrictions and setbacks caused by COVID-19 were eligible.

## Hotspot Highlights

Twelve applications were received in April; half of these were invited to submit full proposals. As a result, five proposals totaling US\$200,000 are expected to be awarded in early May. One of the grantees, AVT2D, will support 12 villages around the Key Biodiversity Areas Ambodivahibe and Montagne des Français to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 by assisting in the rehabilitation of inter-village trails and improving ecotourism infrastructure.



Another grantee, Plateforme Femme Développement Durable et Sécurité Alimentaire, will promote the establishment of four cooperatives in the silk-growing sector and the restoration of 20 hectares of mangroves.

Kew Royal Botanic Gardens will remove exotic and invasive pine trees that have spread in the New Protected Area of Itremo, promote improved cooking stoves, encourage agroforestry best practices, and engage with 200 households to improve their livelihoods through silk collection and trade.

The Peregrine Fund will do hands-on training for beekeeping and promote other practices for improving livelihoods, as well as support forest fire patrols and fire fighters.

Finally, Madagasikara Voakajy will rehabilitate a community health center and five wells in five different villages as a way to thank the community for participating in volunteer patrols of protected areas and other conservation actions.

## TROPICAL ANDES BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

With the closure of CEPF's second investment in the hotspot, the Tropical Andes team compiled results from the 100 supported projects supported, including:

- 65 civil society groups (of which 85% were locally based) implemented projects valued at US\$9.5 million.
- Grantees achieved improved conservation in 2.9 million hectares in 29 Key Biodiversity Areas, their buffer zones or conservation corridors.
- 54,000 people in 272 communities directly benefited from projects that promoted conservation enterprises in eco-tourism, coffee and cacao; improved access to ecosystem services and traditional knowledge; and provided emergency support in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Grants resulted in new protection in 23 sites covering 678,460 hectares.



## Hotspot Highlights

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- 286 species directly benefited from CEPF grants, including at least 70 Critically Endangered or Endangered species.
- 74 species new to science were discovered, with 23 confirmed.
- 39 Andean civil society organizations experienced strengthened organizational and gender capacity.
- 100 alliances across the hotspot were either created or strengthened.
- Projects supported nine different Indigenous ethnic groups.

### INDO-BURMA BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

The CEPF Secretariat and the Indo-Burma Regional Implementation Team at IUCN organized a virtual “master class” for 16 large-grant applicants in March. The purpose of the class was to introduce applicants to each other and share information about proposed projects; explain CEPF policies on financial management, stakeholder engagement and gender; and provide hands-on support with the development of full proposals. Despite the technical challenges and time differences, the training was a success, and feedback from participants was positive. Hands-on engagement with applicants at the full proposal stage helps to ensure high-quality proposals that are well aligned with the priorities in the ecosystem profile, significantly reducing the workload during the review and contracting process.

Photos (top to bottom): Measuring out a micro-reserve. © Mihail Yakovlev; Planting seeds of native tree species in Brazil’s Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park. © Dudu Coladetti/Acervo RSC; *Iris haynei* in Faqqua. © PWLS; Wild silk weaving in Madagascar. © Andrée Mathilde ETHEVE; Reptile species *Stenocercus philmayi* sp. nov. discovered in Peru during a CEPF-funded project by Corbidi. © Ivan Wong