

NEWS FROM AFRICAN PROTECTED AREAS

NAPA 210

CONSERVING NATURE IN AFRICA



THIS MONTH IN THE NAPA

EDITORIAL

P.2 - 4 **TOURISM AND CONSERVATION**

Three experiences from Latin America that show that communities and tourism can become allies in conservation...

MOOC, TUTORIALS AND ESSENTIALS

P.5 & 6 **OUR ONLINE COURSES**

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YOUTH CONSERVATION

P.5 TO 11 **ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

End of Phase 2 of the "Action for Nature Conservation" project and a review of the pilot project!

EDITO

When tourism becomes an ally of conservation: three territories, three communities, one shared evolution

Julie Guirado

Ethnologist - Community tourism consultant



When I arrived in Chile more than twenty years ago as a young French ethnologist, fascinated by Indigenous cultures, I thought I would devote my life to understanding the relationships between peoples and their territories. I never imagined that tourism would become such an important part of my professional journey, nor that it would allow me to observe one of the most exciting developments in contemporary conservation.

Over the years, I have lived and worked in three profoundly different regions: the Atacama Desert, Easter Island (Rapa Nui), and Araucanía. Three landscapes, three peoples, three histories. Yet, beyond their differences, I have seen a common trend emerge: that of communities that have gradually asserted their role in managing their territories and have transformed tourism into a powerful tool for conservation.

When I arrived in Chile, conservation and tourism were still largely viewed as two separate worlds. On the one hand, protected area managers were tasked with preserving landscapes and biodiversity; on the other, tourism continued to grow, driven by the increasing appeal of the vast open spaces of the Atacama Desert, Patagonia, and Rapa Nui. Local communities lived in these areas and knew them intimately, but they still had little say in decisions regarding their management or tourism development.

Twenty years later, the landscape is very different. This change cannot be explained solely by legislative reforms or new public policies. Above all, it reflects a different approach to conservation: protecting nature is no longer just about preserving spaces, but also about recognizing the people who inhabit them, know them, and ensure their legacy is passed on.

San Pedro de Atacama: when collaboration becomes a tool for conservation

The Atacama Desert was the place where I was able to observe and participate in this transformation.

In the early 2000s, San Pedro de Atacama experienced spectacular growth in tourism. Travel agencies were popping up everywhere, visitors were flocking to the area, and certain natural and archaeological sites were beginning to suffer the consequences of unmanaged visitor traffic. Poor practices were compromising particularly sensitive sites, while the Lickanantay communities watched their territory change and deteriorate rapidly. This led to the emergence of the first conflicts in the region: who decides what.

The problem went far beyond mere economic concerns. The communities were not merely demanding a fairer distribution of tourism profits; above all, they sought to preserve a way of life intimately tied to their environment. In one of the world's driest deserts, where every water source has always been essential to agriculture and livestock farming, protecting nature also means protecting their future.

It was in this context that I participated, for several years, in consultation forums bringing together Indigenous communities, the municipality, public services, business representatives, protected area managers, guides, and travel agencies. The discussions were sometimes difficult; interests diverged, as did priorities. Yet, through this process, I discovered a way to build conservation: no longer through imposed decisions, but through dialogue and the sharing of different perspectives.

One of the most significant outcomes of this collaboration was the gradual professionalization of the tourism sector: the initial requirements for guide certification, mandatory registration with SERNATUR, specialized training, and the creation of guide associations all contributed to improving practices on the ground. This movement, which began locally, has gradually inspired other regions of Chile.

However, not everything has been resolved yet. While significant progress has been made in recent years, including the establishment of visitor capacity limits for certain protected sites, the implementation of online reservation systems, a more equitable distribution of jobs within local communities, and the development of training programs for tourism-related careers starting in school, many challenges remain. Tensions persist, particularly about large corporations and commercial operators whose economic interests continue to exert significant pressure on local areas and stakeholders.

San Pedro de Atacama has taught me that conservation stems from the ability of communities, institutions, and tourism stakeholders to engage in dialogue, receive training, share their knowledge, and work together to establish common rules. It is this collective governance that gradually enables communities to strengthen their role in managing and preserving their territory.

The effects of this shift are now visible far beyond the realm of public policy. They are evident in the life stories of a new generation of entrepreneurs from the Lickanantay communities, who choose to make the most of their region's resources rather than replace them. Two young people from the community now run the restaurant Ephedra, recognized as one of Chile's finest dining destinations. Their cuisine showcases the desert's native produce and the work of local producers, demonstrating that it is possible to put a region on the map while remaining deeply true to its identity.

The same trend can be seen in other local initiatives. For example, the Ossandón family has transformed rica-rica, a plant native to the desert, into a spirit that has won awards in several international competitions, including a gold medal in London. Beyond the accolades, this success is based on sustainable harvesting of the plant, the promotion of local expertise, and a commitment to sharing the riches of the Atacama Desert with the world.

These initiatives demonstrate that conservation is not merely about protecting a landscape; it also creates economic opportunities rooted in local knowledge, biodiversity, and cultural identity.

Rapa Nui: when governance returns to the people

More than 3,500 kilometres off the coast of Chile, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, Easter Island offers a different perspective on conservation: Here, the challenge was not only to protect exceptional heritage and biodiversity, but also to preserve an island territory with limited resources: drinking water, wastewater treatment, waste management, and resupply from the mainland are daily challenges, exacerbated by the steady increase in tourism.

This evolution is the result of several decades of advocacy by the Rapanui people to secure greater recognition of their rights to their territory, heritage, and development.

These efforts, bolstered by international recognition of the island's exceptional value through its designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, followed by Chile's ratification of ILO Convention No. 169, have gradually led to stronger local governance. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, this momentum has accelerated even further.

Today, local communities play a central role in management: tourists are required to be accompanied by a local guide on tours, tour operators must be based in the area, park rangers are local residents, and visitors pay an entrance fee that directly contributes to funding essential services, such as waste management and water supply. In such an isolated region, these mechanisms contribute as much to the residents' quality of life as they do to the preservation of ecosystems.

Over the course of ten years, the island had undergone a profound transformation: cars had become numerous, rental agencies had multiplied, and residents could now head to Anakena Beach after their workday. The distances had obviously not changed, but the relationship to the land, to time, and to space had been profoundly transformed.

This evolution made me realize that tourism development and the modern world do not merely alter landscapes; they also transform ways of life, land use, and social balances. It is precisely for this reason that the Rapa Nui communities have sought to reclaim a central role in tourism management: not to oppose development, but to be able to manage its effects and preserve their way of life on the island.

Araucanía: when tourism conveys a different perspective on nature

Araucanía introduced me to yet another dimension of tourism.

For the Mapuche people, conservation is not primarily expressed through regulations or management plans; rather, it is embedded in their way of living in the land and in a deep relationship with all living things. Through forest hikes, interactions with local families, stories, and the discovery of local customs and traditions, visitors are invited to understand a worldview in which forests, wetlands, rivers, and mountains are not merely natural resources but part of a balance of which human beings themselves are an integral element.

Here, community-based tourism becomes much more than an economic activity; it becomes a space for intercultural dialogue and a tool for raising awareness, where visitors leave with a new perspective not only on nature but also on their own way of inhabiting the world.

Araucanía has taught me that protecting a territory often begins with changing the way we view it, and involves learning its history, which gives it meaning.

These three regions are very different. The Atacama Desert, Rapa Nui, and Araucanía do not share the same history, landscapes, or challenges. Yet they have all taught me the same lesson: the most sustainable advances in conservation often arise when communities assert their right to have a say in decisions affecting their lands.

After more than twenty years spent working alongside them, I no longer believe that conservation can succeed in the long term without the people who live in these territories every day. Landscapes are not merely natural spaces to be protected; they also embody a memory, a culture, and knowledge that play a vital role in their preservation.

Tourism is not an end in itself; it is a means of generating income, passing on knowledge, raising visitors' awareness, and strengthening the role of communities in protecting their natural and cultural heritage. Laws and institutions remain essential, but they are most effective when they are supported by the men and women who know, inhabit, and defend these territories.

Let us not forget that visitors come and go, while ecosystems, cultures, and communities endure.



Our 'Communities and Conservation' MOOC provides a clear learning framework for understanding who local communities are, how their knowledge and livelihoods influence conservation, how to encourage behaviour that supports biodiversity, how to involve them in the management of protected areas in practical terms, and how to assess their contribution.

OUR ONLINE COURSES: MOOCs, TUTORIALS AND ESSENTIALS

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MOOC Conservation

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To follow the ESSENTIAL MOOCs and Courses, you will need an Internet connection and access to a computer, tablet or smartphone.



MOOC Conservation is the platform that hosts IUCN-Papaco's online training courses, developed in partnership with the Senghor University, in Alexandria (Egypt).

See you on:

www.mooc-conservation.org

THE MOOCs THEME-BASED TRAINING

MOOC BUNDLE FOR THE ONLINE CERTIFICATE

The following MOOCs must be completed to sit the exam and obtain the Online certificate in protected area conservation:



PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT



ECOLOGICAL MONITORING



LAW ENFORCEMENT



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VALORISATION OF RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM



NEW TECHNOLOGIES



MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

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Next date: 2nd of December 2026 for English speakers

OTHER MOOCs AVAILABLE ON MOOC-CONSERVATION.ORG



GOVERNANCE OF PROTECTED AREAS



COMMUNITIES AND CONSERVATION



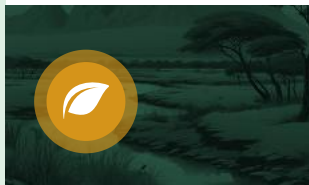
THE ONE HEALTH APPROACH

TUTORIALS TECHNICAL TRAINING



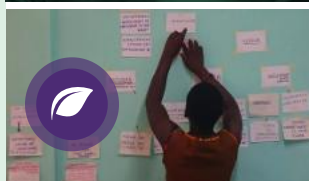
NATURE CONSERVATION EDUCATION

For teachers, educators, parents, etc., to provide them with the tools and methods they need to teach the children in their care about nature conservation...



WORDS OF CONSERVATION

An interactive glossary with 100 essential words and expressions you need to know if you want to conserve nature and understand PA management...



MANAGEMENT PLANNING OF PROTECTED AREAS

A step-by-step guide to organising the preparation, implementation and evaluation of your protected area management plan...



HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

A simple method for understanding, anticipating and responding to conflicts between humans and wildlife...



RESTORING PROTECTED AREAS

A practical guide explaining the different steps to follow to prepare, restore and assess a damaged protected area...



SUSTAINABLE FINANCE FOR PROTECTED AREAS

How to sustain your protected area and develop a powerful business plan...



MANGROVE RESTORATION

A practical guide to plan, implement and assess, step by step, your mangrove restoration project...

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TRAIN TO ACT (MORE EFFECTIVELY) IN A SUSTAINABLE WAY!



TUTORIAL: CAREERS IN CONSERVATION

How can you find a job in nature conservation? Check out our new tutorial on careers in conservation!

Are you interested in working in nature conservation but aren't sure exactly which career path to pursue? Have you completed training programs and earned certificates and degrees, and are you wondering how to make the most of them? Would you like to know what skills to acquire, where to look for opportunities, and how to gain your first professional experience?



However, there is no single career path or degree that, on its own, guarantees a job in nature conservation. A certificate can attest to the knowledge you've acquired and demonstrate your commitment to growth, but it truly comes into its own when it complements practical skills, personal qualities, and real-world experience.

The goal of this tutorial is to help you chart your path toward a career in conservation!
 Soon online...

Available on mooc-conservation.org in October 2026

MOOC ONE HEALTH

Human health, animal health and the health of ecosystems are inextricably linked!

This One Health approach course provides the conceptual and theoretical foundations for understanding the links between human health, animal health and ecosystem health. Through real-world examples and multidisciplinary perspectives, it explores

how diseases emerge, spread and affect both biodiversity and societies.

Course content (7 modules):

- Key concepts of the 'One Health' approach
- Modes of disease transmission
- The origins of diseases (environmental and animal reservoirs)
- Health and conservation: impacts on wildlife and ecosystems
- The spread of diseases (tourism, wildlife trade, land-use change, etc.)
- Interventions and health monitoring
- Implementing the 'One Health' approach in the field

This course was developed by Dan Salkeld, an ecologist and researcher specialising in epidemiology and wildlife conservation.

👉 [Sign up now for this course](#)



2026
MOOC CONSERVATION
CALENDAR

2nd of December: Online certificate exam for English speakers

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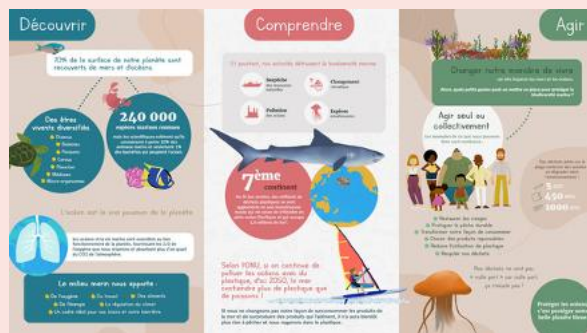
YOUTH CONSERVATION

DEDICATED RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO RAISE AWARENESS AND INSPIRE THEM TO TAKE ACTION!

On the [Youth Conservation environmental education platform](#), you will find dedicated resources tailored to children and young people, available in a variety of formats to suit different needs. Everything is 100% free and open access, and the content is offered in several languages, including national and regional languages. Please feel free to share widely to help educate, raise awareness, and inspire younger generations to take action!



Tailored video learning pathways



Clear, illustrated posters



Audio content available on [Spotify](#) and [YouTube](#)

YOUTH CONSERVATION - VOICES FROM THE FIELD

TAKING ACTION FOR NATURE CONSERVATION: A REVIEW OF A PILOT PROJECT THAT EXCEEDED ALL EXPECTATIONS!

Launched in early 2025 in partnership with the Audemars-Watkins Foundation and Play for Nature, the 'Taking Action for Nature Conservation' pilot project had a clear aim: not merely to raise awareness amongst younger generations, but to **genuinely spur them into action**. A year and a half later, following two phases carried out in five African countries, the results have far exceeded the targets set at the outset.

The project in a nutshell

This 'Agir' project is based on the 'Discover, Understand, Act' educational methodology and the 'Educating for Nature Conservation' tutorial, both of which have been available on the Youth Conservation platform since 2022. **Ten partner NGOs** — selected for their local roots and their ability to mobilise their communities in a sustainable way — have received support in five countries: Benin (BEES NGO, RJSPE-NGO), Burkina Faso (SENTINA, Burkina Djigui), Cameroon (Health and Conservation/HAC, Tropical Forest and Rural Development/TF-RD), Senegal (Recikit, Poumon Vert) and Madagascar (Lamoty Conservation, IMPACT Madagascar).

Each NGO received tailored financial support as well as close methodological guidance, with a twofold aim: to train children, young people and their supervisors, and to encourage them to take concrete action — school gardens, nurseries, environmental clubs, recycling initiatives and field trips.

Figures that speak for themselves

Across the entire pilot project (January 2025 – July 2026):

- 10 partner NGOs involved in 5 countries
- More than 45 schools participating in phase 2, building on the 45 schools from phase 1
- The project far exceeded the initial target of 10,000 children involved in Phase 2

Specifically for Phase 2 (October 2025 – June 2026):

- Around 22,500 children and young people actively engaged in environmental awareness activities — nearly double the number in Phase 1 (13,675 pupils)
- More than 590 teachers and supervisors trained and equipped
- More than 21,000 seedlings and trees produced or planted
- More than 30 environmental clubs set up, a significant number of which are already self-sufficient and have projects planned for the coming year

Ten NGOs, ten ways to bring the project to life on the ground

- **Lamoty Conservation** (Madagascar, Sambava district) has engaged more than 4,700 pupils and teachers in activities centred on nurseries, vegetable gardens and radio workshops across four schools. The highlight of this phase was the training of 500 parents in setting up vegetable gardens, several of whom have since developed their own household vegetable production — with a noticeable impact on the availability of vegetables at the local market.



- **BEES NGO** (Benin, Kétou, Porto-Novo, Sô-Ava) has reached a new milestone in the series by involving the Benin School for the Deaf and Hearing for the first time, with sign language interpretation provided for all activities. More than 2,000 trees planted across the two phases and an artistic event that brought together over 500 people in Kétou round off a programme characterised above all by this inclusive aspect, which is unique amongst the ten partners.

- **Recikit** (Senegal, Dakar and Rufisque) has raised awareness amongst 4,275 pupils and trained 50 teachers in around ten schools, setting up five eco-friendly clubs called 'Les Sentinelles de la Nature'. The NGO is already planning the next steps: a 'Sustainable School' accreditation scheme and the regional roll-out of the 'Plume Durable' writing competition.



- **Tropical Forest and Rural Development / TF-RD** (Cameroon, on the outskirts of the Dja Biosphere Reserve) has engaged more than 400 pupils in three schools bordering the reserve, with vegetable gardens, nurseries and eco-clubs comprising 77 members. The highlight was an inter-club fair attended by 210 participants, and a fine example of resilience in Adjane, where the club remained committed to its work despite a delay in the harvest.



- **Poumon Vert** (Senegal, Mbour and Kaffrine) has mobilised more than 1,600 people through two complementary programmes: the Green School Challenge, involving individual tree sponsorship by pupils from three schools in Mbour, and Kaffrine Green Week, an event originally planned for 40 participants which ultimately brought together more than 200 for training sessions and up to 1,000 at an Assiko cultural evening — leading to the creation of a new environmental club in this new area.

- **Health and Conservation / HAC** (Cameroon, Dschang region) has the largest reach in the series: nearly 7,000 pupils, 279 teachers and more than 22,000 people reached in total across four schools. Two key highlights: a municipal nursery containing 11,000 seedlings in Dschang, the result of a partnership with the local council, and a remarkable capacity for resilience following the elections, with the NGO maintaining contact with young people via WhatsApp whilst schools were closed.



- **SENTINA** (Burkina Faso, five regions) has engaged more than 1,750 pupils through an art competition on recycling ('Déchets d'Art'), a camp for young conservation ambassadors, an urban safari and the creation of ten eco-friendly clubs. The report highlights a genuine shift in perspective: waste, once seen as rubbish, is now perceived by pupils as a resource to be put to good use.

- **IMPACT Madagascar** raised awareness amongst 675 pupils and trained 10 teachers in three schools, with results that far exceeded expectations: 442 trees were planted against an initial target of 150 – nearly three times the target.



- **Burkina Djigui** (Burkina Faso, Gampéla CEFP) has involved 1,511 pupils and 81 teachers across three schools, with an agroecological garden and vegetable nurseries that have been scaled up to a significant level of production — expertise that directly informs the priorities for the next phase.

- **RJSPE-ONG** (Benin, municipality of Toffo) has mobilised more than 1,350 pupils across five schools and produced more than 6,000 seedlings, including a nursery containing 2,500 seedlings at CEG Houègbo alone – the largest school in the network, with 2,020 pupils. A notable feature of this phase was the inclusion of a primary school (EPP Togbota-Agué) in place of a secondary school – a first for the NGO, which was thus able to trial its approach with a younger audience.



Challenges met head-on

The increased demands of Phase 2 — moving from raising awareness to concrete action — were accompanied by greater logistical complexity, particularly for multi-stage activities (competitions, inter-club fairs, regional events). Several NGOs had to contend with school timetable constraints, and one organisation had to adapt its operations to a period when schools were closed due to local elections.

What this phase has taught us

Sustainability is undoubtedly the key lesson from Phase 2: more than 30 independent environmental clubs, run by the young people themselves, have emerged from the project and continue to thrive beyond the funded activities. The approach developed with Play for Nature — tailored grants, a strict timetable and close monitoring — has proved its worth and will be continued.

The partner NGOs proved to be reliable, responsive and creative, with each one adapting Youth Conservation's resources to suit their local context. Above all, the impact extended far beyond the school gates: families, communities, local authorities and even groups previously excluded from traditional environmental education schemes were reached by this project.

So, what happens next?

Building on this progress, the project is entering a new phase of development, with a renewal application submitted to the Audemars-Watkins Foundation.

This is not the end of a pilot project — it is the beginning of a movement.



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."
Margaret Mead, american anthropologist

READING OF THE MONTH

A HORIZON SCAN OF BIOLOGICAL CONSERVATION ISSUES FOR 2026

UNE INITIATIVE DU CAMBRIDGE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

This review article provides an overview of emerging conservation issues for the current year: new threats (technological, climatic and social), opportunities linked to AI and data, as well as issues relating to the governance and funding of protected areas. This text is useful for managers, researchers and students, as it highlights 'what is happening' on the global biodiversity agenda and helps to anticipate the challenges that need to be incorporated into planning and training.

Read the full article [HERE](#) (in English only).



IN THE NEWS

MAJOR EVENTS AND INITIATIVES IN AFRICA

Next October, the international community will meet in Yerevan, Armenia, for **COP17 on biodiversity**. This meeting will be crucial for assessing progress towards the targets of the Global Biodiversity Framework, and in particular the protection of at least 30 per cent of land and seas by 2030. Discussions will focus both on the **effectiveness of protected areas and on how to better involve local communities and economic stakeholders in conservation strategies**.



Across the African continent, a large-scale initiative supported by the European Union, as part of NaturAfrica, is bringing together eleven partners around a shared objective: **to reconcile biodiversity conservation, improved governance and the development of green economies across several key landscapes in Central and West Africa**. The aim is to demonstrate that nature conservation can go hand in hand with sustainable activities, income for communities and more transparent resource management. This is exactly the kind of integrated approach we seek to promote through MOOC Conservation and our training programmes.

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