



Reserva de la Biosfera Sierra Gorda, Querétaro

Informative Bulletin for the First Quarter of 2008

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UNESCO



Participate in the Geotourism Challenge

Vote "For a sustainable economy; tourism as a tool to empower local communities and conservation in the Sierra Gorda, Mexico", the project nominated to participate in the National Geographic Society and Ashoka Innovators for the Public Geotourism Challenge on the internet to recognize the initiative that distinguishes itself for a holistic strategy including community, geography, sustainability and biodiversity. Currently the Network of Ecolodges of the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve is competing with 329 projects in 65 countries. The selection is open to the public and depends on your participation. If you know the Sierra Gorda project or have been a tourist to the community-based eco-lodges, please visit the nomination page and click on the flag in Queretaro on the interactive map at www.changemakers.net/geotourismchallenge or on the last page of the Read Entries button and make a statement that will benefit the local efforts in the conservation of natural wealth through the development of local communities.



Sierra Gorda in the News

On March 27, **PBS Frontline World** http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/rough/2008/03/mexico_the_busi.html airs "Rough Cut Mexico: The Business of Saving Trees: How one woman has created a biosphere" for their series *Stories from a Small Planet*. In 2007, PBS-BBC The World produced the report "Sierra Gorda: An Environmentally Connected World" which can be found at <http://www.theworld.org/?q=node/14559>.

Awards for the Sierra Gorda Project

In the latest edition of the **Energy Globe 2007 Awards**, the international jury chose Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda (GESG) as the Mexico national winner, having competed against a total of 853 projects from 109 countries. In 2006, GESG won the national award in the Youth category for the Environmental Education Program in the Sierra Gorda, <http://database.energyglobe.info/ListProjects.aspx>. We are grateful to be awarded in 2007 for "The Development of Ecosystem Products in the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve: Conservation and Economic Options for Areas of Extreme Poverty". The award ceremony will take place on television in Europe, filmed live in the European Parliament in Brussels on May 26, 2008.



Early this year, the **BBVA Foundation** announced that its 2007 Prize for Performance in Biodiversity Conservation will go to the Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda for the implementation of the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve Management Program. According to the foundation, this model of close co-management partnership with the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas was recognized "for having demonstrated that biodiversity conservation generates wealth and well-being for the local population. The innovative activities performed accomplished important environmental objectives while simultaneously improving living conditions and local quality of life." Just as the award criteria emphasize, the project not only has had quantifiable impacts for ecosystem and landscape restoration such as revenues of US\$500,000 for biodiversity-related activities, it also benefits 108 local communities in the area. In addition, public investment directed towards sustainable development and conservation has risen by 767% since the year 2000. Due to the project, municipal and public authorities have improved waste-management facilities and the





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installation of water-treatment plants in the Reserve. The Sierra Gorda Earth Center is yet another result of the project, a facility offering classes and workshops to students from Mexico, Latin America and soon, from around the world. The award will be presented in June 2008.

The Fourth International "**Partners in Flight**" conference took place this year in McAllen, Texas, with the theme: "Tundra to Tropics, Connecting Birds, Habitat and People." The bird conservation awards were given to a variety of individuals and institutions who have distinguished themselves in long careers dedicated to bird protection efforts. Partners in Flight is a coalition of governmental agencies, research institutes, universities, NGOs and bird-watching associations that began working together 15 years ago with the goal of improved bird conservation, primarily in the U.S., Canada and Mexico as these countries share the habitat that migratory birds use for nesting and wintering. The Prizes for Bird Conservation are sponsored by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as well as the US Department of Defense. Martha Isabel Ruiz Corzo, Director of the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve, received the prize in the category of Land Stewardship for her work at the helm of the Sierra Gorda project and the 329 bird species that it hosts.

Events and Exhibits

Quinta Mazatlan, the headquarters of the World Birding Center in McAllen, headed by Ms. Colleen Hook, dedicated art gallery space to photography by Elena Baca and the graphic art of Jorán Martínez presenting images of the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve for a presentation during the Partners in Flight Conference. Dana Gardner, a well-known bird illustrator who donated a collection of unique paintings for education about the birds in the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve, joined us to launch the recent publication of a fold-out bird guide and has an on-going exhibit of various paintings of North American birds in the Quinta Mazatlan gallery. The representatives of Grupo Ecológico and the Biosphere Reserve were invited to make a project presentation to an interested group at the Mexican American Cultural Center in the city of Austin which provided an excellent opportunity to develop new contacts. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Sandra Skrei Mock for logistical support and helping Sierra Gorda make important contacts among conservation, tourism and birding groups.

Approximately 250 invited participants, including Martha I. "Pati" Ruiz Corzo who is an Outstanding Social Entrepreneur of the Schwab Foundation, met in Ruschlikon, on the shores of Lake Zurich in January of this year for the Seventh Global Summit for Social Entrepreneurs. All of the carbon emissions associated with air travel generated by the event participants, traveling from 34 different countries, was neutralized by carbon sequestered in established reforestations in the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve, a solution that opens doors to other enterprising events.

From the 4th to the 9th of February, the Third World Congress of Biosphere Reserves, organized by UNESCO and the Spanish Environmental Ministry took place in Madrid, Spain. Participants included administrators, civil society organizations, and research institutes working in biosphere reserve management within the UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Network with **531** biosphere reserves in **105** countries. There was strong Mexican representation from the National Commission of Protected Areas with 36 World Biosphere Reserves, including the Sierra Gorda, who emphasized the importance of the issue of vulnerability to climate change and its effects and biodiversity adaptation strategies, which no doubt will be the great challenge to conservation in the 21st century. This year a 10 year action plan resulting from the deliberations will be published.

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