

## Newsletter for the 2nd Quarter of the Regional Project "Biodiversity Conservation in the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve" 2008

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Receiving the BBVA Foundation Prize from Spain's Minister of the Environment, Marine and Rural Areas Earth Festival 2008



### **BBVA FOUNDATION AWARD FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION 2007**

On June 17, the award ceremony of the BBVA Foundation Prize for Actions in the Conservation of Biodiversity was held at the Palacio del Marqués de Salamanca in Madrid, awarding this year the Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda (GESG) in the above mentioned category. The prize was awarded by an international jury for successfully achieving the co-management of a protected natural area by means of a strategic alliance between the local initiative and the National Commission for the Natural Protected Areas, achieving with success, and for the first time, the application of the entire management program of the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve (SGBR). The Grupo Ecológico was represented at the ceremony by its Executive Director and co-founder, Roberto Pedraza Muñoz, who received the prize from the hands of the Minister of Environment, Marine and Rural Areas, Elena Espinosa, and the President of the BBVA Foundation, Francisco González. Other laureates were the U.S. researchers Harold Mooney and Peter Raven, considered to be the "architects of the modern science of biodiversity", in the modality of research in Ecology and Conservation Biology, while the BBVA Foundation Prize for the Diffusion of Knowledge and Raising Awareness for the Conservation of the Biodiversity, was awarded to the environmental journalist Benigno Varillas, founder of the prestigious journal Quercus. Without question this was the most important award that the GESG has received since its foundation en 1989.



### **ENERGY GLOBE AWARD 2007**

This is the second consecutive year where Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda has the honor of winning the Energy Globe Award, having received the prize on the first occasion for the Environmental Education Program, and this year for the best environmental project in Mexico, "The development of ecosystem products in the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve". On May 26<sup>th</sup>, the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium, hosted the ceremony for the 2007 Energy Globe Prize, an award given every year to environmental projects from around the world. Fifteen organizations were selected this year as finalists in five global categories: Earth, Fire, Air, Water, and Youth. Having been selected from 853 projects submitted from 109 countries, the 15 organizations selected represent innovative methodologies that promote solutions to environmental problems. This year Grupo Ecológico won the national prize in the Earth Category, where Dr. Albina Ruiz of Ciudad Saludable in Peru, a social entrepreneur of Ashoka, AVINA and the Schwab Foundation and one of the experts that give training sessions in the Sierra Gorda Earth Center, won the global prize in the same category. Oriol Sallent represented the Sierra Gorda at the ceremony being a member of the Sierra Gorda team for years and a consultant in ecotourism.



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**PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BRITISH ORGANIZATION, WORLD LAND TRUST**

Financed by the Cambridge University and with the help and the organization of the World Land Trust UK, a partner organization to GESG, Roberto Pedraza Ruiz represented the GESG in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands between March 26 and April 19. He took part in a variety of meetings aimed for consultation, strengthening alliances and seeking funders for activities of carbon reduction or the establishment of new private natural reserves by means of buying threatened properties that host species classified as a conservation priority. For the first time a Mexican environmental NGO had the opportunity to give a presentation of its activities in the Jubilee Hall of the British Parliament and thanks to WLT the presentation attracted Members of Parliament, celebrities and received excellent feedback from the audience. Roberto also attended the annual conference of the British Ornithological Union.

**SPANISH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT INVITES KNOW-HOW FROM LATIN AMERICA IN THE PAYMENT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND HYDROLOGICAL SERVICES**

On March 6, 7 and 8 the Payment for Environmental Hydrological Services Conference, organized by Pangea Consultants and financed by the Spanish International Cooperation Agency for Development (ACEID), was held in the facilities of the Casa Encendida de la Caja Madrid. The goal of the conference was that various actors of the environmental sector, the government, non-governmental organizations, academia, and the general public would learn about the successful experiences of from representatives of Latin-American countries such as Costa Rica, Ecuador, Nicaragua and México. Mechanisms for the payment for hydrological services operate in these counties in distinct ways, principally to assure the provision of hydrological services from forests and jungles. The conference was inaugurated by Mrs. Aurora Díaz Rato, General Director of the Cooperation with Latin-America of the ACEID. The Latin-American cases were presented by the national representatives including Jorge Mario Rodríguez, Executive Director of the National Fund for Financing Forestry of the Costa Rican government, Alberto Chinchilla, also from Costa Rica, Executive Director of the ACICAFOC, on the topic of water and indigenous communities in Central America and finally Marta Echavarría, Director of Ecodecisión, an enterprise based in Ecuador that elaborates schemes for the payment of hydrological environmental services. Finally, Roberto Pedraza Ruiz, Technical Assistant of the Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda, presented the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve of Mexico as one of the more advanced payment for environmental services mechanisms on a national level. With resources from the National Forestry Commission, the Gonzalo Río Arronte Foundation, the Global Environment Facility, Sierra Gorda demonstrates concrete cases of the reduction of carbon emissions and at present there are more than 25,000 hectares (61,776 acres) of mountain forests and jungles whose owners charge for maintaining forestry resources and the environmental services that they provide.

**FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY FOR PRIVATE PROTECTED AREAS**

With the financing of the World Land Trust and the Dutch Committee of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), two partner organizations of GESG, Roberto Pedraza Ruiz participated in the workshop "Financial Sustainability for Private Protected Areas". Twenty-one organizations from Latin America, India and the Philippines, as well as the organizers attended the workshop that was held between May 19 and 23 at the Private Natural Reserve of Rio Bravo, Belize. During the symposium, Roberto had the opportunity to share Sierra Gorda's experience with the payment of environmental services as a complementary tool for the protection of ecosystems. Without doubt it was an excellent place to learn and share, and it was thoroughly motivating to meet colleagues that are so dedicated to the protection of biodiversity.

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**NATIONAL ECO-CLUB CAMPOUT**

The Mexican National Ecoclubs Camping Fieldtrip was held at the new La Arenita Eco-lodge in the municipality of Landa de Matamoros on June 13 and 14. Ecoclubs operating in three states were represented by 285 young people and their facilitators: 17 from Querétaro, 3 from San Luis Potosí and 1 from Guanajuato. In addition to working together and exchanging ideas, they participated in activities to benefit the environment on a voluntary basis and to demonstrate their commitment by carrying out a cleaning campaign on a 12km stretch of the federal Highway 120, collecting 400 sacks of garbage after separating out recyclable materials and hanging up 26 signs with environmental messages. With the help of the facilitators the work plans for each Ecoclub was established, and all participated in nature appreciation walks and bird observation. To conclude, a talk about environmental crimes was given with the goal that the young members of the Ecoclubs would volunteer to participate in a network of environmental rangers. The inauguration event was chaired by Lic. Norberto Jiménez Otero, Mayor of Landa de Matamoros County, and by representatives of the counties of Jalpan de Serra, Pinal de Amoles, Arroyo Seco, Querétaro State, and Xilitla, San Luis Potosi State. In addition local media covered the event, recognizing the Ecoclub youth who help in the task of the conservation of our environment.

**SIERRA GORDA EARTH FESTIVALS**

The yearly tradition continues with community-based environmental education, 65 "Earth Festivals" were held during the 2007-2008 academic year in various places in the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve and its buffer zones in the states of San Luis Potosí and Hidalgo, with the goal to strengthen the environmental culture and to rescue traditions and customs of the Sierra Gorda bio-region. During the festivals, artistic-cultural programs were performed including regional and local dances, songs and choral poems with environmental messages, as well as banners, posters, parades, campaigns for the collection of recyclable materials, and the participation of community women that made a show of the regional dishes. Participation this year included a total of 102 schools, 264 teachers, 3,445 adults and 11,833 pupils, exceeding the number of participants of previous years. Staff of the Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda contributed with a play with a message about the "care of water and birds", a demonstration and promotion of solar stoves, gave away fruit trees to the schools and other species to reforest in the backyards of homes. In this bulletin GESG extends its gratitude to the teachers for their interest and enthusiasm, that at all times have helped us to organize the "Earth Festivals" and have supported us in our work of building consciousness and environmental protection.

**INTERNATIONAL FOOD AND WINE FAIR IN RIMINI, ITALY**

Invited and sponsored by the community of San Patrignano, representatives of Bosque Sustentable attended "Squisito" the International Festival of Food and Wine in Rimini, Italy from May 30 to June 2. The Festival, founded by Vincenzo Muccioli and at present directed by Andrea Muccioli, hosted a great number of participants offering samples of their food and wine products. The promoted Sierra products were sun-dried fruit immersed in honey such as pineapple with guava, mango, orange, tamarind, banana, and sesame paste, which were well accepted among the thousands of visitors of the festival. The natural foods cooperative "Pura Vida" in Conca, Arroyo Seco County, produced the final products while the honey is produced by the beekeepers of San Antonio Tancoyol, Jalpan de Serra County, thus unifying two locally operated sustainable livelihood projects supported by the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve and the GESGIAP.

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**SIERRA GORDA EARTH CENTER: SECOND WORKSHOP FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES PRODUCTS**

On the 15 and 16 of May, the Second Workshop for the Development of Ecosystem Services Products, sponsored by the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas, the LV Legislature of the State of Querétaro , Katoomba Group Tropical America, and the Sierra Gorda Earth Center was held at the Holiday Inn in the City of Querétaro. A diverse audience learned from national and international experts like Ricardo Bayon of EKO Asset Management Partners, Al Appleton, International Consultant on Sustainable Watershed Management, Tundy Agardi Independent Conservationist with expertise in Marine Protected Areas, Carina Bracer, Director of Tropical America Katoomba Group, Eusebio Ventura Ramos, Research Professor of the Autonomous University of Querétaro, Jorge Muñoz Sánchez of Agribusiness & Securities S.A, Ramón Pérez Gil of PG 7 Consultants and the Gonzalo Rio Arronte Foundation, and the experience of the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve. This workshop will surely inspire the development of new ecosystem services products. The Sierra Gorda Earth Center is committed to establishing the real values of our natural infrastructure and the environmental services it provides through the training and diffusion of tools and strategies of global value.

**SIERRA GORDA EARTH CENTER: SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT WORKSHOP**

Ashoka Mexico, a network of social entrepreneurs, and the Sierra Gorda Earth Center organized a conference to study and strengthen the valuation of social return on investment this past 21-23 of May. Conference participants worked together to develop indicators which make visible the impacts of financial capital and philanthropic funds of foundations and organizations, invested for the common good. Along with the impacts of social entrepreneurs, this investment generates great returns that can be more widely appreciated using tools and indicators that give value to the work of entrepreneurs and highlight tangible results. This would allow social entrepreneurs to reach out to new potential investors and demonstrate the advantages of finding solutions for our Planet that integrate a diversity of values allowing us to envision a better world.

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