



The Baker River snakes through Chilean Patagonia from the glacial lakes of the Andes to fjords on the Pacific coast.

Foot: 2009, The Patagonian Foundation and ILCP

## Latin American BioGems: Saving Special Wild Places and Wildlife

NRDC's BioGems Initiative protects endangered wild regions and species throughout the Americas. In Latin America, NRDC has worked to preserve unspoiled ecosystems and threatened wildlife from Mexico's Baja Peninsula to Chile's Patagonia, working in partnership with communities and organizations to eliminate threats and to find environmentally sustainable alternatives.

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BIOGEMS

[www.savebiogems.org](http://www.savebiogems.org)



[www.nrdc.org/policy](http://www.nrdc.org/policy)

### Baja California, Mexico

To the east of the Baja Peninsula, the Gulf of California, which Jacques Cousteau called "the aquarium of the world," provides shelter for hundreds of species of fish, sea turtles and marine mammals. NRDC is working with Mexican partners to protect Baja's fragile marine life from a variety of threats.



Humpback whale

Ralph Lee Hopkins

- **Laguna San Ignacio:** After one of the largest environmental campaigns in history NRDC and our partners succeeded in protecting Laguna San Ignacio—the last pristine nursery for the California gray whale—from Mitsubishi's plans to build a massive salt works. NRDC continues to work with the local communities to gain conservation easements and other types of protections to prevent the resurrection of the salt works or other industrial projects that would threaten this critical habitat.

- **Cabo Pulmo:** Cabo Pulmo National Marine Park is home to the healthiest and most important coral reef of the Baja Peninsula, home to humpback whales, dolphins, whale sharks, Pacific manta rays and five species of sea turtles, as well as more than 200 species of fish. Now a Spanish real estate company is proposing a massive 9,500 acre resort complex next to the park. Since October 2010, NRDC has been working with a local coalition to stop this industrial tourism development and to promote sustainable tourism alternatives.

- **Upper Gulf of California:** The Upper Gulf is home to the last population of the *vaquita marina*—the world's smallest and most endangered marine mammal. Years of overfishing, uncontrolled trawling, and the use of gillnets in the region reduced the vaquita population to approximately 150 to 200. NRDC is working on several fronts to prevent the extinction of the vaquita. Through a successful campaign to raise awareness in the seafood marketplace—especially with Ocean Garden Products, one of the main purchasers—and by working constructively

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with the Mexican government, NRDC is working with our partners to ensure the effective implementation of policies regulating gillnet fishers and shrimp trawlers and the development of sustainable long-term solutions.

### Costa Rica

Home to approximately 4 percent of known plant and animal species on the planet, Costa Rica is a powerhouse of biodiversity. NRDC first worked in Costa Rica in 2001 by helping a local coalition defeat an offshore oil drilling project proposed by Harken Energy, which would have caused irreparable damage to the Talamanca coast. After this successful campaign, NRDC began working with partners to identify ways Costa Rica could move away from oil and meet its goal of carbon neutrality through work on energy efficiency and development of clean transportation solutions. Within Costa Rica, NRDC and our partners are working in the Osa Peninsula—home to half of the country’s estimated 500,000 plant and animal species—to develop environmentally sustainable solutions that help local communities take an active part in conservation.



Sea turtle

istockphoto.com

### Patagonia, Chile

International and Chilean companies have set their sights on Chilean Patagonia’s pristine wilderness, looking to exploit its wild rivers and intact temperate forests—all home to a remarkable variety native wildlife, including pumas, condors, Andean flamingos, guanacos, and the huemul, an endangered Andean deer. For the last few years, NRDC has been working with a broad coalition of Chilean partners to fight a proposal for a massive hydroelectric complex called HidroAysén, which would endanger Patagonia and open it up for industrial development. NRDC is using advocacy and research to show that Chile does not need risky and damaging industrial



Huemul deer

Daniel Beltra, iLCP and The Patagonian Foundation



hydropower projects in Patagonia. By promoting new energy policies that foster robust growth of alternatives such as renewables and energy efficiency, NRDC is creating a vision of Chile’s energy future that will preserve Patagonia—truly one of the last untouched places on the planet.

### Amazon Rainforest Frontier, Peru

The Amazon region of southeastern Peru is home to some of the last remaining large concentrations of old-growth mahogany. Illegal logging in the region, driven by U.S. demand, has taken a devastating toll on the rainforest and indigenous peoples living in voluntary seclusion. Since 2001, NRDC has worked with partners to stop illegal logging through legal action against mahogany importers, achievement of stronger controls of the mahogany trade under international law, and strong new measures in the U.S.-Peru trade agreement. As a result of these actions, from 2006 to 2007 exports of mahogany dropped tenfold. In May 2008, the United States made it illegal to import, export, move, sell, or buy an expanded list of plants and plant products, including old-growth mahogany. NRDC is monitoring Peru’s new Forestry Law to ensure indigenous peoples’ participation and appropriate measures to stop illegal logging.



Spider monkey

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