

**TRILLION
TREES**



Impact Report 2016–2020





Since 2016, Trillion Trees partners have been supporting the protection of more than 18.3 billion trees, and the restoration of over 1.8 billion. We are inspired by the shared passion of those who've helped us get there, and galvanised by the remaining challenge ahead.

Letter from the Executive Director



As Trillion Trees pauses to consider our forest impact, the world stands at a pivotal moment. Looking back, we see life utterly changed by the pandemic, and a year that challenged our global conservation aspirations and ways of working together. At the same time, in the coming year, every nation on earth will come together to agree ways to save the planet's biodiversity, restore our ecosystems and to make binding commitments in the final push to stabilise our climate through the Paris Agreement.

In every one of these discussions, Trillion Trees partners come to the table in the belief that forests must be central to our commitments: forests can help us address the interconnected crises facing the planet. Forests provide water, food, medicine and livelihoods to millions of people; they stabilise local weather, and the global climate. But despite the enormous value of forests, the urgency of the emergency is clear. In the last 50 years, 420 million hectares of forest have vanished, lost through conversion to other land uses.

While those are sobering figures, today, in 2021, there is reason to hope: the world is waking up to the extent of our dependency as human beings on these complex, life-sustaining ecosystems. Around the globe and in country after country, we see real momentum building for the protection and restoration of forests, and for nature-based solutions more widely.

Each time I have the privilege of speaking to team members delivering our forest work, I am inspired by their passion and commitment to the landscapes they steward. They know how important this moment in time is, they know what needs to be done. They are the frontline of our global efforts.

Our belief in the power of joining global and local perspectives, and of collaborative, collective action is why BirdLife International, WCS and WWF have worked together over the last five years to create a world where forest cover is increasing, not decreasing. Trillion Trees, our 'joint venture for forests', was forged to harness the forest expertise and capacity of three of the world's leading conservation organisations.

Grounded in science, committed to quality interventions in high impact areas, we stand for three core forest imperatives: to protect standing forests, to end the causes of deforestation and to advance forest restoration around the world. Our joint venture is founded on the shared perspective that all three areas are mission-critical to deliver our vision of increased forest cover.

We are proud that this collaboration has supported the protection of more than 18.3 billion trees, and the restoration of over 1.8 billion more. As significant as we hope that contribution is, it is but a single step forward towards a vision of protecting our standing forests and reforesting the earth. We know that success will come only if the effort is global.

For our part, Trillion Trees will remain ambitious for the planet, wherever we work. We are dedicated to delivering forest impact, faster, and at scale, and to being held accountable for our ambitions. Working together, we will continue to harness the power of our collective expertise, energy and determination to protect and restore one of Earth's most valuable assets: our forests. For people, for nature, and the planet.

John Lotspeich

Executive Director, Trillion Trees

Our greatest chance to save our planet

Forests provide water, food, medicine and livelihoods to millions of people around the globe. They stabilise local weather, and the global climate. They are life-giving and life-sustaining.

Forests are critical to the fight against climate change: the carbon absorption capacity of forests is immense, with intact forests removing a quarter – 10 billion tonnes – of total global carbon emissions every year. And forest ecosystems are home to over half of the world's biodiversity, and 80% of all biodiversity on land.

More than one billion people live in and around the world's forests, with 350 million of them relying on forests for food, shelter, and livelihoods. Forests serve as the front line of defence against climate change as humanity battles to reduce its emissions. In global economic terms, forests are integral to half of the annual global GDP connected to nature, totalling a staggering US\$44 trillion.

But despite these facts, and the obvious importance to our life on this planet, we have lost nearly half of the 6 trillion trees that existed on Earth before the onset of industrial agriculture, and are still losing over 10 billion trees per year: including the loss of a football-pitch-sized area of primary forest every six seconds. These losses destroy the habitats of countless plants and animals and in climate terms, 15% of global carbon emissions comes just from deforestation.

So protecting and restoring forests is mission critical to responding to the triple threat of mass extinctions, the climate crisis, and global economic insecurity.

Strongholds for nature

Forests are home to 80% of terrestrial biodiversity



Jaguar. © Jayro Bardales

Stabilising the climate

Forests can contribute a third of emissions reductions possible by 2030

IPCC



© RSPB

Economic opportunity

Forests provide more than 86 million directly 'green' jobs and livelihoods for 90% of those in extreme poverty

UN FAO The State of the World's Forests 2020



© Andrew Kirkby/WCS

Here's what we're doing about it...

A unique joint venture for forests

Trillion Trees was forged in 2016 to deliver a world where deforestation has ended. Through the combined strength of our organisations, we can speed up and scale up global efforts to protect and restore forests.

Trillion Trees partners have over 100 years' experience in global conservation. Around the world, our teams work to safeguard wildlife and secure ecosystems, in collaboration with local stakeholders and decision makers. Our efforts are grounded in the knowledge that to be successful, people must benefit from forests even while biodiversity is protected and carbon sequestered from the atmosphere.

We cannot achieve our vision alone. Protecting and restoring a trillion trees will require a truly global effort across all sectors of society. We hope to serve as the standard bearer for quality and data-led interventions, ensuring the forests we protect and restore will remain into the future, and long enough to bring multiple social, economic and environmental benefits.



Community tree planting in Pugu Forest, Tanzania. © WWF

Protect and restore for greatest impact



Protect standing forests



End the causes of deforestation



Advance forest restoration

Our impact

In the first four years of our partnership we've unlocked financing for forests, multiplying our initial investment twenty-fold for large-scale protection and restoration initiatives. We've leveraged our resources and funding to help protect and restore over 20 billion trees.

Trillion Trees partner forest conservation efforts reach



All estimates calculated as follows, using best available data for our landscapes in 2020. Hectares: based on TT partner forest landscapes; Carbon: Spawn et al. 2020; People: WorldPop; Species: Key Biodiversity Area trigger species. Data will be updated on a regular basis as new information is acquired.

Since 2016, Trillion Trees has supported



+18.3bn trees protected



+1.8bn trees restored

Focusing our work where it is most urgent

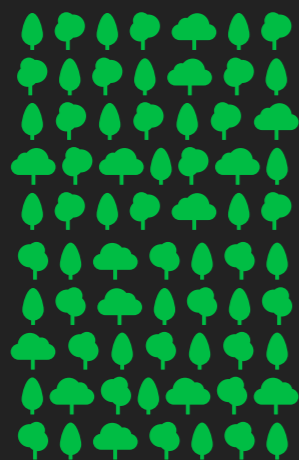
Across the world, the Trillion Trees partners work to support forest landscapes in over 60 countries. The joint venture focuses on areas where forests are most threatened and where remaining intact forests require protection. This is where there are the greatest risks resulting from deforestation and degradation, but also the greatest gains to be made.

Over the next five years, Trillion Trees aims to achieve:



-50%

deforestation in partner landscapes



+70m

hectares improved management



+35m

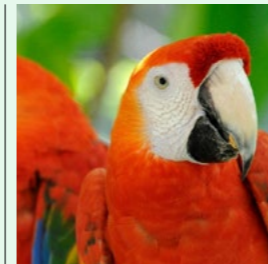
hectares improved protection



+20m

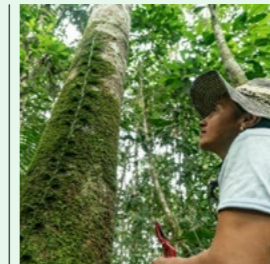
hectares quality restoration

2020 Highlights



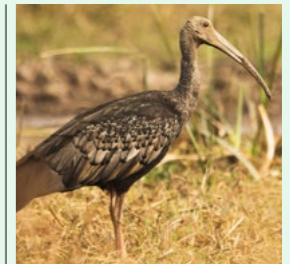
CENTRAL AMERICA

Five Great Forests of Mesoamerica



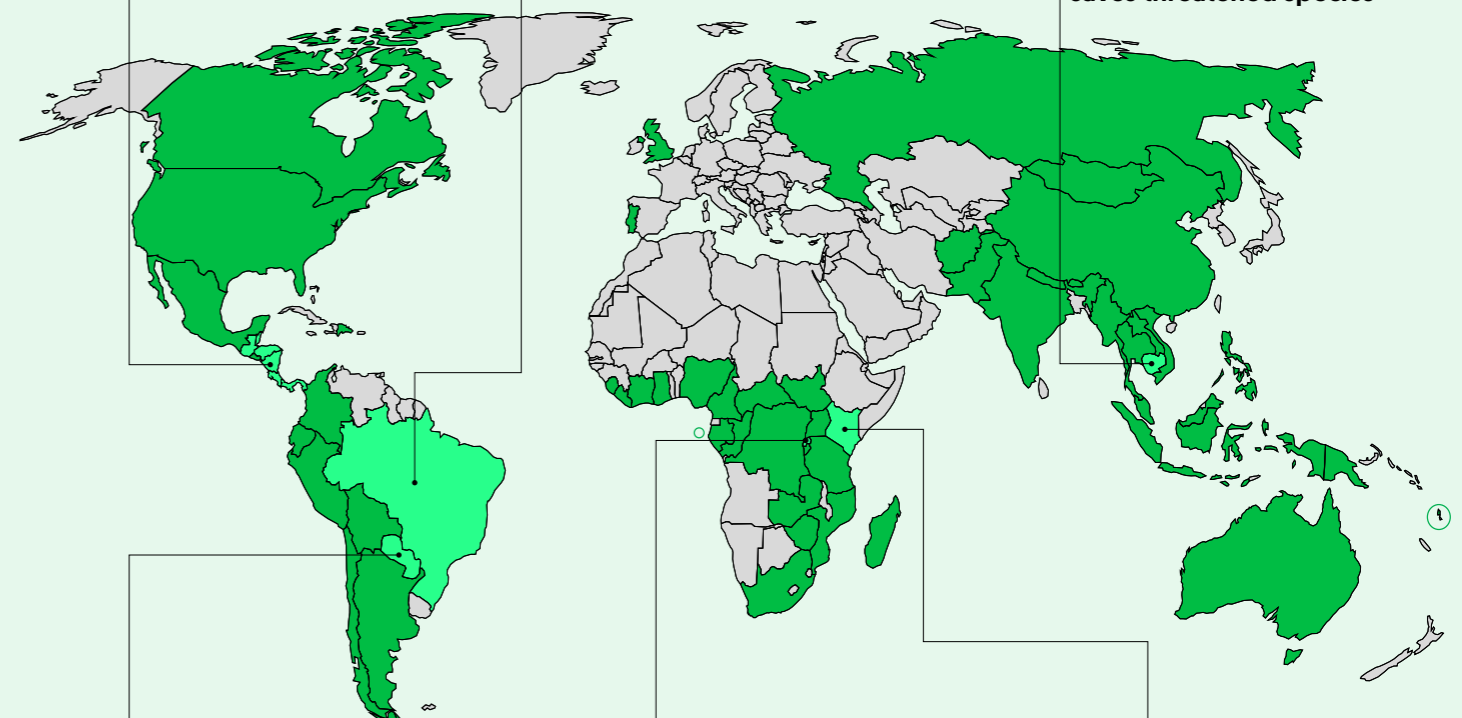
THE AMAZON

Unlocking finance for the Amazon



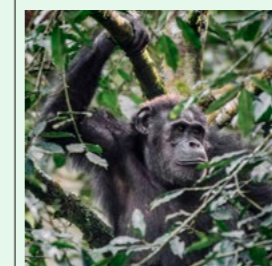
CAMBODIA

Community-led management and sustainable farming saves threatened species



PARAGUAY

Saving the Atlantic Forest: South America's overlooked forest



RWANDA

Restoring chimpanzee habitat... the trees are coming back



KENYA

Restoring Kenyan forests: local solutions by local people

Five Great Forests of Mesoamerica: Indigenous rights, protection and restoration

Alongside Indigenous peoples, local communities, eight governments and other organisations, Trillion Trees partner WCS is leading the way to protect the Five Great Forests of Mesoamerica – the last remaining intact forests in the region. These forests cover an area three times the size of Switzerland, hold 50% of the region’s forest carbon, support 5 million people, and are home to more than 7.5% of the planet’s total biodiversity.

In 2020, forest patrols prevented deforestation of nearly 1,300 hectares of the Saslaya National Park in Nicaragua’s Moskitia Forest, removing 55 illegal invaders and reducing pressure on forests. In addition, more than 400 hectares of degraded forest were restored with sustainable cacao production. Across the Five Great Forests, core wildlife habitat has been recuperated, and illegal deforestation has been prevented by the seizure of chainsaws and machetes. Perhaps most importantly, around 80,000 hectares of Indigenous territories are being protected for the communities that live there and providing refuge for endangered wildlife.

In the Maya Forest, after four years of concerted effort by WCS and the “Juntos por San Miguel” Alliance, they achieved a transformational outcome: the reversal of the eviction order against the community of San Miguel. San Miguel currently retains 4,400 hectares of forest cover, including some of the tallest, most spectacular upland forests of the Maya Biosphere. Officially recognising the rights of San Miguel has profound implications. This will open a path to reconstitute the social fabric of San Miguel, ensure an integrated approach to conservation and management, increase social justice and equity, permit formal habitat restoration projects, and allow San Miguel residents to improve their housing conditions for the first time in 11 years. It also serves as the precursor to a second wave of community-led engagement in the Reserve – a new and long overdue phase in the evolution of Guatemala’s largest wildland. Looking forward, we expect a Cooperative Agreement between the community and Guatemala’s National Council of Protected Areas in the next year.

► [Watch the video](#)



Five Great Forests of Mesoamerica. © WCS



Cattle ranching and forest destruction.© WCS



Scarlet macaw, national bird of Honduras. © Eleanor Briggs



2020 Highlights

Saving the Atlantic Forest: South America's overlooked forest

Since the arrival of European explorers in the 16th century, deforestation has destroyed 86% of the ancient Atlantic Forest, making it the most threatened tropical forest on earth. What does remain is highly fragmented and degraded.

And yet, two of the world's largest cities are located here – Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo: 60% of Brazil's population relies on the Atlantic Forest for water and 70-80% of its gross domestic product is produced here. So, in Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, BirdLife partners have joined forces to protect, restore and reconnect these critical landscapes.

A crucial strategy is to create opportunities for local people to earn a higher income from crops that incentivise restoration and tree cover, instead of 'quick-earning' sun-grown crops which cause vast illegal deforestation.

In Paraguay, local partner Guyra Paraguay has been working with rural and Indigenous people to produce shade-grown yerba mate tea. So far, a total of 49 producers have planted 48 hectares of yerba mate, and, an additional 15 hectares of forest are under active restoration. As well as working directly with the producers, Guyra works with law enforcement, policy makers and financial institutions to seek ways to redirect financial flows and incentives towards organic production systems, as well as shift the national markets towards sustainable consumption. Rethinking these social and economic systems is the key to the long-term success of restoration action.

In other fragments of the Atlantic Forest, since 2019, 8,000 hectares of forest in Argentina have moved into formal protection. In Brazil, local partner SAVE Brasil designed a corridor to connect nearly 450,000 hectares of forest fragments and protect endangered species living between the Serra do Urubu forest and Murici Ecological Station. The landscape integrates wildlife habitat and higher-earning crops in agroforestry systems that will reduce pressure on forest resources.

Partners Guyra Paraguay and Aves Argentina have also forged ahead to design a forest corridor that connects the countries, positively impacting people and wildlife in more than 1.3 million hectares.



Member of the Mbya Guarani community of Arroyo Moroti planting yerba mate.
© Guyra Paraguay



Edge of Serra do Urubu forest in Brazil. © Bennett Hennessey

Unlocking finance for the Amazon

In early 2020, much of the Amazon was on fire. This crisis was quickly overshadowed by the global Covid-19 pandemic when the world’s focus shifted. However, our forests and our health are linked. People all over the world depend on the Amazon, which helps stabilise the global carbon and water cycles, as well as provide food and medicines.

Trillion Trees partner WWF has been working to protect and restore this priceless forest for decades, across numerous countries. Across the region, WWF has helped develop national and subnational conservation policies, which in turn has helped provide opportunities to local forest communities.

Working with the Amazon regional environmental authority, Corpoamazonia, they’ve helped unlock financing held by Colombia’s Agrarian Bank to support conservation and restoration activities, with nearly 400 beneficiaries already applying to the partnership.

In Colombia, legal, administrative and financial capacity-building has strengthened community ecotourism, turning cattle pastures into promising forest ecotourism operations. And in Peru, training programmes for government officials in the Amazonian regions of Madre de Dios and Ucayali on the preparation of investment proposals, have helped to mobilise previously untapped restoration funds totalling more than US\$11 million.



Buffer zone of Chiribiquete NP in Colombian Amazon. © WWF

Restoring chimpanzee habitat... the trees are coming back

Over the years, Trillion Trees partners have found that the best solutions are often the simplest. This has certainly been the case in Nyungwe Forest National Park in Rwanda, where WCS has been restoring degraded forest to increase chimpanzee habitat, and improve water catchment protection services for local communities.

In the 1990s, 10,000 hectares of forest was destroyed by fires set by poachers and wild honey collectors, and fuelled by unusually dry weather conditions. Colonies of bracken ferns emerged, suffocating the native seeds buried in the soil and increasing the forest’s vulnerability to future fires.

But help was at hand. In partnership with The Body Shop, Trillion Trees partner WCS and local communities began fern removal just as the pandemic began. Despite the challenges, over the course of the year, 70 hectares were cleared– equivalent to over 1,000 tennis courts. In just a few months, the team restored entire hillsides, and the first green shoots of new forest life have now appeared. Through natural regeneration, native biodiversity will thrive and one day, the chimpanzees will have more space to live.



Chimpanzee in Nyungwe National Park. © WCS Rwanda



Fern clearing to make way for natural regeneration. © WCS Rwanda

Restoring Kenyan forests: local solutions by local people

This year, despite the Covid-19 crisis, local BirdLife partner Nature Kenya worked with three Community Forest Associations (CFAs) to plant 44,000 indigenous tree seedlings. These efforts are enhancing natural regeneration throughout the nearly 34,000 hectares of indigenous forest areas the CFAs are responsible for. So far, there has been a 90% survival rate for the planted seedlings.

Restoring the forests of Mt Kenya not only benefits wildlife, but also the people who live in and around them. The CFAs manage the tree nurseries, and sell seedlings for planting in and outside of Mt Kenya's forests, with one member of the CFAs able to earn \$1,500 from selling seedlings and also for labour to plant them. This has allowed him to pay for school fees for his children and finish constructing a house.



Restoration on Mt Kenya. © Nature Kenya



Aerial view of the tree nurseries. © Nature Kenya



Community Forest Association member tending to the tree nursery. © Nature Kenya

Keeping forest standing in partnership with government and farmers

Lomphat Wildlife Sanctuary is one of Cambodia’s largest protected areas and home to extraordinary bird species. The Sanctuary comprises 250,000 hectares of mixed dry and evergreen forest along with seasonal water holes. The site has been degraded by industrial plantations, small scale logging and hunting of the keystone species. This degradation threatens the survival of iconic birds such Giant Ibis and White-shouldered Ibis, both Critically Endangered. Local people, too, depend upon the forests. There are 26 villages in and around the landscape, reliant on rain-fed rice, water from the forest’s rivers and its fish for their protein.

In partnership with the government, NatureLife Cambodia was tasked with strengthening the management of the Sanctuary, facilitating a process with local stakeholders to minimize the conflict and develop a joint vision for the landscape. Working with the local communities and government, and leveraging Trillion Trees investment, a new management plan defined zones for conservation and community forest management. Inside the protected area, the expansion of plantation concessions has now ceased and enforcement activities ensured the confiscation and destruction of illegal weapons, machines and snares. Outside, a wildlife-friendly rice farming scheme is under design to raise incomes while reducing farm expansion. After a decade-long battle, our actions to end forest degradation in Lomphat are starting to pay off.



Giant Ibis. © ThoI Sovannarith/BirdLife Cambodia

Building sustainable finance for the future of forests

How can we sustainably fund conservation? Many donor and publicly-sourced funding is set to a limited timeframe, without renewal. But conservation never ends. We need new market-based approaches if forest conservation is to get the long-lasting financial security it desperately needs.

Using Trillion Trees capital, Trillion Trees partner, BirdLife International, turned to a formula used for tech start-ups: we invest funds up-front to accelerate innovations and tap into the huge potential of the finance sector. We created a hub called ‘The Accelerator’, for investors, companies and partners to collaborate for high-impact returns for both people and wildlife. Through the Accelerator regional business practices have improved, laws have the potential to be changed and forest-positive products are being shipped around the world.

The model works by providing technical expertise, mentoring and training, while making seed investments in the teams behind forest conservation. In 2020, the Accelerator cohort was expanded to 10 forest landscapes: Argentina, Brazil, Cambodia, Paraguay, Indonesia, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, São Tomé and Príncipe, Sierra Leone and Vietnam. These landscapes have huge impacts: better protected forests in 2.6 million hectares of Key Biodiversity Areas and over 200,000 people participating in economic innovations, in turn protecting thousands of species.

► [Watch how forest landscapes are shaped by decisions](#)



Aerial footage of San Rafael, Paraguay. © Milly Corleone, Guillermo Menéndez & Márcio Rafael Teixeira Santos.

Trillion Trees, our partners and all of us working to protect and restore forests know that the scale of the task ahead of us is enormous, the challenges systemic, long-term and daunting.

But in our first four years of existence we have seen that progress can be made no matter how degraded the landscape, how challenging the political or policy environment, or how few resources seem initially to be available.

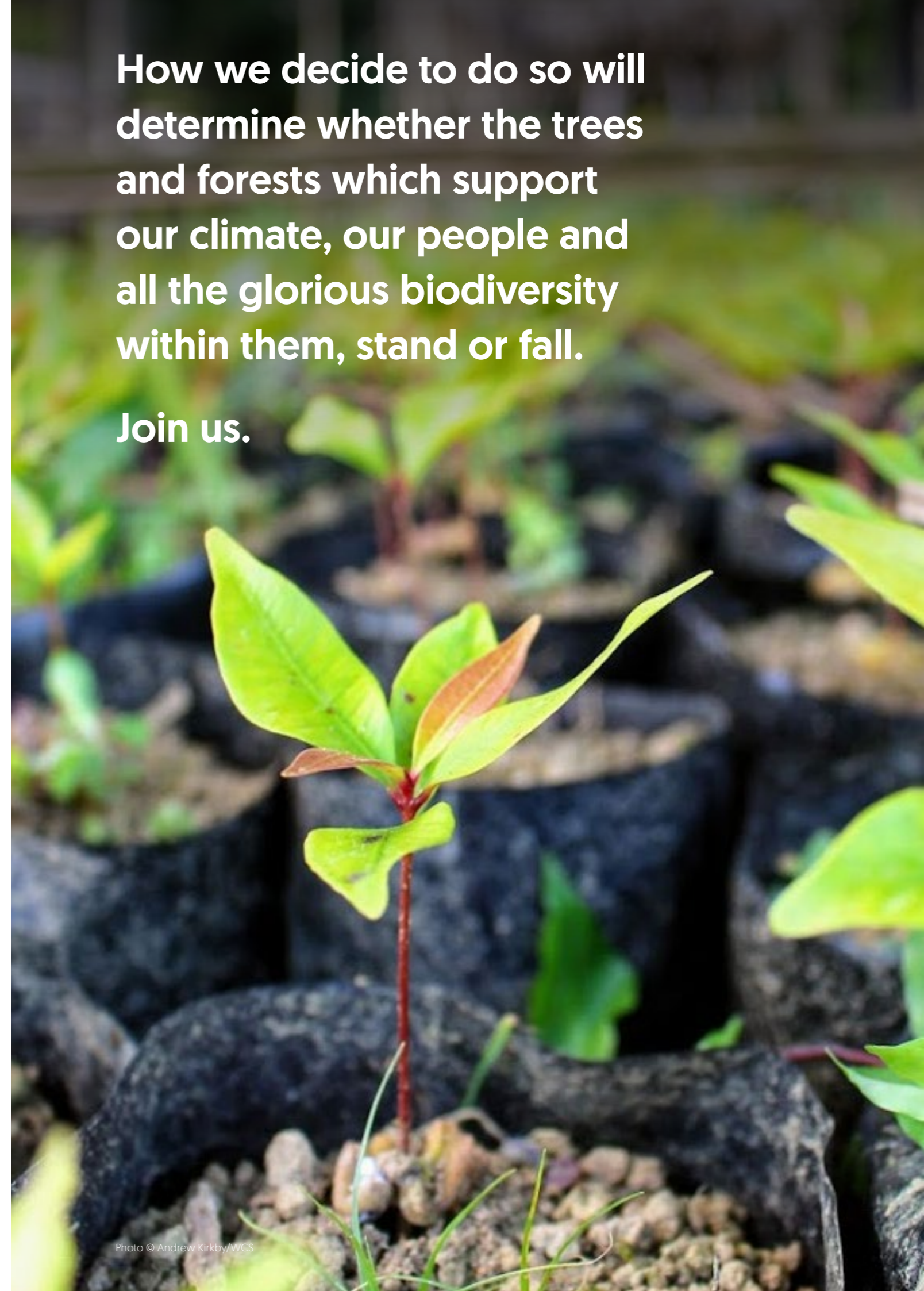
Forests offer hope, and we're emboldened by the fact that so many governments, companies, and individuals are increasingly recognising their importance. The current emphasis in our 21st century on 'nature based solutions' implicitly acknowledges the fact that if we protect nature, we protect ourselves.

We must marshal all the innovation, technology and community involvement at our disposal to stop deforestation, to protect our remaining forests and to restore where we can, with the right trees in the right places.

We can make a difference. Right now.

How we decide to do so will determine whether the trees and forests which support our climate, our people and all the glorious biodiversity within them, stand or fall.

Join us.





Trillion Trees is a joint venture between BirdLife International, WCS and WWF to urgently speed up and scale up global efforts to protect and restore forests to achieve one trillion trees by 2050.

trilliontrees.org



Trillion Trees is grateful for the foundational grant and convening of the partnership by Restore Our Planet.

restoreourplanet.org