



FUNDACION



GALO
PLAZA
LASSO



The Galo Plaza Lasso Foundation was established in 1995 as a continuation of the long-lasting legacy of Ecuadorian ex - president Galo Plaza. It is a non-governmental, non-profit agency that sponsors projects conceived to improve overall living standards of the community of Zuleta and outlying areas within the province of Imbabura. It is currently administered by staff members of Hacienda Zuleta. Its prime mission is to sponsor, develop and carry out endeavours that benefit the quality of life of the inhabitants of the region through education, conservation and socio-economic development programs.

The foundation has gained recognition thanks to its promotional work for the region's weaving industry, one of the most important craftworks in the country, along with the Condor Huasi Project, which seeks to rescue, reproduce and reintroduce the endangered Andean Condor, the country's most emblematic bird species.

Today, the foundation has three major objectives:

1. Protect and care for the environment.
2. Improve education amongst the inhabitants of the community.
3. Improve the social standards of the Zuleta community.

Developmental Axes

ENVIRONMENT

Condor Huasi Project

The Condor Huasi Project was created to re-introduce condors in captivity back to their natural habitat. The initiative has been carried out by Zoologist Friedman Koster and Condor expert Biologist Heide Koster, with the sponsorship of the Galo Plaza Lasso Foundation.

In addition to focusing on the Andean Condor's conserva-



tion status, the main objective of the Condor Huasi Project is environmental education, with which we hope to increase awareness amongst children and the general population of the importance of preserving wildlife and natural resources within the paramo (or moorland) region of the country. We hope to reach our goals through the following measures:

1. To keep a group of Andean Condors, that have suffered mistreatment due to captivity and interaction with humans, in the best of possible health conditions.
2. To secure at least a pair of Andean Condors for future reproductive purposes, in order to establish new colonies in specific localities within Ecuador.
3. To help reinforce conservation efforts within the region through educational activities with Hacienda Zuleta's neighboring communities. Condor Huasi focuses its attention on visitors in order to promote and provide information on the current state of wildlife protection within the Andes and other regions of Ecuador.
4. Establish a group of semi-captive condors whose members can make contact with wild condors. This will allow us to gather important information on the status of condors in the wild and establish a specific locality to feed them near the Condor Huasi Project. As a result, Condor Huasi can keep this colony far from the threat of hunters.

Infrastructure

An aviary of 30 meters long by 30 meters wide by 8 meters high is divided into three sections. Each section is protected against rain and sun with a small pool that provides fresh water for the condors. The Galo Plaza Lasso Foundation is responsible for the bird's dietary monitoring.

The current situation of the Andean Condor in Ecuador has reached critical levels. There are approximately 45 condors remaining in the wild, which qualifies the species as critically endangered.

The main food source for condors has also plummeted in recent years due to the reduction in the death rate of cattle (condors feed on carrion), which is yet another threat to their survival. This is why the CONDOR HUASI project provides food for wild condors in the hopes of aiding the reproductive processes and basic survival needs of the species. Recently, ecological groups focused on saving the Andean Condor have come together to create a common policy that will help protect this spectacular creature.

Since 2009, the Foundation reached a labor agreement with the Quito Zoological Foundation (Fundación Zooló-



gia de Quito) and the Zuleta Commune, through which a new aviary has been built in the paramo of Zuleta with the mission of becoming a breeding center for condors from every corner of the country. The Zoological Foundation and its staff have carried out important work in educating communities on the conservation of the species and its habitat.

In addition, the Foundation is an active member of the Condor Group of Ecuador (Grupo Cóndor del Ecuador).

The Zuleta Spectacle Bear Sanctuary

In recent years, the slopes of La Rinconada de San Pedro, Santa Rosa and San Leonidas have seen an increase in the presence of Spectacled Bears. These bears are the only members of their family in South America, found throughout the Andes Mountains from Venezuela to Argentina in habitats ranging from coastal desert and highland forest to paramo.

Apart from carrion, their diet is mainly vegetarian. They eat bromeliads, fruits, bulbs and bark, all of which are easily found in the region.

The study of Spectacled Bears in montane areas such as these, where observation of the species is rather common, is quite beneficial, while monitoring the species in more extensive paramo has been much more difficult. Zuleta provides good monitoring opportunities.

We have begun a population record through the implementation of camera traps.

EDUCATION

Zuleta Library

The Zuleta Library is also a space that promotes alternative education and workshops for community children, including yearly courses and summer school activities in areas such as English, Quechua, Mathematics, Art, Handicrafts, Reading, Dance, Theatre, Puppets, and more.

In addition, the entity supports daily help with school work and offers computer accessibility and internet service.

Scholarships

The scholarship program has been functioning for three consecutive years now. Thanks to the altruistic nature of guests and friends, a local children's commune group counts on financial support for their education. We have been able to aid the household economies of approximately 40 students of the community's Elementary and Secondary schools.



CULTURE AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Archeology

At Hacienda Zuleta lies one of the best-preserved Caranqui archaeological sites in Ecuador. Thanks to the help of Archaeologist Stephen Athens, important studies have been carried out in order to unveil the ancient customs of the cultures that inhabited the area in a distant past.

The goal of the project is to be able to create a museum within the commune and be able to provide the inhabitants of the area information on their origins and the culture of their ancestors.

Zuleta embroidery: traditional artistry in a modern world

In the Zuleta community, handmade embroidery has been an important and ageless artistic and ornamental means of expression.

Pre-Columbian cultures of the Andes boast a tradition of weaving and sewing, which are said to surpass those of Europe of the same time period.

Embroidery from Zuleta was originally used to decorate women's clothing. The unique style is an intrinsic part of the culture of Zuleta and has persisted to this day, at a time when much of folkloric art is being lost. This is thanks to ex – president Galo Plaza Lasso and his wife Doña Rosario, owners of Hacienda Zuleta since 1940. Doña Rosario felt inspired by one of her trips to Italy and Spain, when she saw women sewing on of small villages. When she returned to Hacienda Zuleta, she decided to open a workshop for Zuletan women that would take advantage of their embroidering talents, producing articles for sale that would provide additional income to families within the region. This marked the beginning of the Zuleta Embroidery Workshop and the revitalization of handmade Zuletan embroidery.

The children of the Galo Plaza Lasso school began receiving embroidery classes. At the same time, a group of women began working together in the hacienda's gift shop. The results have been very inspiring. The women created exquisite embroidered tablecloths, blouses, mats and towels. Profit amongst the families was significantly improved. Zuletans affirmed the true essence of the community by keeping this unique handicraft tradition alive.

Today, there is an important group of women who make a living with the production of embroidered goods, and some have even opened their own shops.



The foundation only provides space for them to sell their goods. All of the products are made entirely by hand, with the objective to keep this fascinating cultural heritage alive.

The products are also available by request. You can visit the Foundation store in Quito (Calles Veintimilla y Avenida 6 de Diciembre in La Mariscal neighborhood).

Don't leave without exquisite Zuletan embroidery!

Community-based Tourism

As one of the most developed business sectors in the world, it is no surprise that the people of Zuleta would become interested in tourism as a means of income. Conscious of the fact that Zuletans live in a community that is known to preserve their culture and traditions, they feel the desire to show themselves to the world.

A community restaurant has already been established, boasting a unique architecture, to receive tourists that visit the area. In addition, several familias have opened their homes to visitors.

The Foundation has initiated a project aimed at creating community brigades to improve the general look and public space of their neighborhoods, streets and houses within the community.

The campaign has been christened "Zuleta, clean and pretty", a program that is also expected to support environmental workshops and grant ornamental plant gardens, control waste generation, offer recycling projects and create a small-scale credit program aimed at improving and refurbishing community homes.

In addition to this campaign, the foundation will sponsor tourism training for community members in need.

