



Who are we?

Vida Silvestre Uruguay (VSUy) is a non-profit organization working on nature conservation in Uruguay. For over 25 years, our organization has developed and promoted actions towards protecting species and ecosystems, researching, building public opinion on environmental issues, and managing protected areas, based on a landscape approach. Our work is based on collaboration and innovation, designing strategies to maintain biological diversity at the same time we seek for human wellbeing. VSUy comprises professionals from a range of disciplines providing a strong technical imprinting to the organization's work and turning it into a benchmark in nature conservation at national, regional and international levels.



Protected areas

For over 10 years, VSUy has promoted the development and effective management of protected areas, with as diverse actions as supporting the writing of the Law for creation of the National System of Protected Areas, developing proposals for inclusion of areas in the system and their management plans and being part of the National Advisory Commission of the System. Among our main outcomes, there are: co-organizing several editions of a conference on rural tourism and protected areas, writing the proposals for the inclusion of the northernmost Protected Area of the country, Rincón de Franquía, and Laguna Garzón, one of the most threatened coastal lagoon and home of diverse migratory species. VSUy carried out the first evaluation of the effect of pesticides on biodiversity and local activities in a protected area (Farrapos wetlands and Uruguay river islands), supported the development of the first management plan for a protected area in the country (Quebrada de los Cuervos), designing also the contents and infrastructure of its interpretation centre. We are currently developing the management plan for Esteros y Algarrobales del Río Uruguay (EARU), the first protected area run by a private company, UPM.



VSUy– Landscape and SNAP Agreement

This agreement was a contribution to a GEF project run by the Protected Areas focused on complementary conservation tools, in the landscapes where protected areas are settled. The agreement had two components. One of them was the development of a Rapid Biodiversity and Ecological Assessment Tool to evaluate conservation status and management practices in plots with diverse activities, mainly grasslands with livestock production. The other component was focused on understanding the drivers triggering conservation will among rural farmers in order to design tailored incentives based on their characteristics and needs.

Conservation in Productive Landscapes

VSUy has long promoted nature conservation as a fundamental component of human well-being, not detached from daily life and embracing a landscape perspective. In Uruguay, a productive standpoint is key to enable conservation, hence we seek to obtain information and provide tools so that production be compatible with conservation, adding specificities, contexts and knowledge from across sectors and territories.

Conservation in private lands – Wildlife Refuges Programme

Since 2011, our organization conducts a programme aiming to promote and strengthen a network of voluntary conservation initiatives in private lands, name Wildlife Refuges. It engages in various economic activities such as livestock and agricultural production, packaging of natural products, nature-based tourism and environmental education. The network currently comprises landowners from 20 Refuges in 11 departments, with whom we seek to improve conservation conditions in their plots through implementing specific conservation actions, recommending tailored improvements and encouraging networking. Further information is available in <http://refugios.vidasilvestre.org.uy/>



Biodiversity conservation in the forestry sector

From 2013 to date, we have been working in the identification, design and implementation of reserves in forestry plots of the company UPM-Forestal Oriental. We contribute to designing management plans and building conservation status indicators of reserves, as key elements in outbalancing the impact caused by the forest sector from a landscape approach. Meanwhile, we are part of the Pulp and Paper regional network of World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to build quality standards for the sector, and we contributed in the adequacy of national indicators for the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) forestry certification process.



Landscape Territorial planning – Ecological connectivity

Funded by the European Union, and working jointly with the NGO CEADU, a territorial plan was developed connecting two protected areas along the Uruguay river. Our work was based on the concept of ecological connectivity and biological corridors. We provided local governments a spatial prioritization for landscape biodiversity conservation among protected areas, and technical inputs for an Environmental Management Plan. This study was conducted jointly by two departmental governments (Paysandú and Río Negro), in coordination with the private sector operating in the area, local communities, and the national government (SNAP).

Water

Environmental Flows

Environmental flows were defined by the Brisbane Declaration in 2007 as the quantity, timing and quality of water flows required to sustain freshwater and estuarine ecosystems, as well as the human well-being relying on them. In 2011, in agreement with UN Environment, VSUy conducted the Environmental Flows project to evaluate the application of the concept of environmental flows as a tool for integrated management of water resources in the country.

As a result, UNESCO published "What are Environmental Flows and the perspective of their application in Uruguay".

Further information in: <https://vidasilvestre.org.uy/gestion-para-la-conservacion/caudales-ambientales-como-herramienta-para-la-gestion-integrada-de-los-recursos-hidricos/>

Water conservation and Water Fund

In association with The Nature Conservancy, Latin American Water Fund Alliance, *Laboratorio Tecnológico del Uruguay* (Technological Laboratory of Uruguay) and Coca-Cola Company Uruguay, VSUy is working on a new project for the conservation of water resources in the main source of drinking water in the country, Santa Lucía River basin, to guarantee access to safe water sources. Working with farmers and ranchers to restore forest ecosystems has been one of its main actions.

Effort has also been done to identify opportunities in the basin for implementing a Water Fund, i.e. generating alliances between public, private and civil society stakeholders in order to combine efforts and resources for developing projects aiming to protect the basins from which cities obtain water.



Working agreement with SALUS Company - DANONE

VSUy has a working agreement with SALUS Company (branch of Danone in Uruguay) for the conservation of nature within its natural reserve in Lavalleja, Uruguay.

The objective of the agreement is contributing to the company's nature conservation strategy through planning and implementing conservation measures for the natural heritage within its reserve.

This agreement strengthens our Wildlife Refuges Program and awareness campaigns have been developed on the importance of caring for fauna and conserving nature reaching nearly one million people in the country.

Building capacities

Education Programme

Vida Silvestre Uruguay is an educational organization recognized by the Ministry of Education and Culture. We offer theoretical and practical courses addressing Uruguay's biodiversity, conservation and sustainability, ranging from general ecology to the use of native species for gardening and production, or to environmental interpretation. Technical training is also offered to improve professional capacities in conservation tools, such as conservation planning and geographic information systems.

For over a decade, we have been organizing Wildlife Hikes as a way of learning about nature of Uruguay through experience. Walking in relevant biodiversity spots of the country allows us first-hand interpretation of their values and conservation status.

VSUy has also developed educational projects aimed at formal and non-formal education, such as citizen monitoring associated with the national One Laptop per Child initiative, Plan Ceibal, and Ciencia Nómada, a programme funded by the National Agency of Investigation and Innovation which enabled the educational program to get around our country, putting together local knowledge and that of outstanding researchers in order to address environmental challenges.

Advocacy

We promote dialogue as a fundamental tool for biodiversity conservation, and always seek for agreement among stakeholders. Hence, we work in collaboration with local, national, regional and international organizations, with the private sector, government and international cooperation institutions, bringing together knowledge and tools for incorporating biodiversity into decision-making, as a key element of human well-being.



Climate dialogue

While the national climate policy was being developed, VSUy along with other civil society organizations held a “climate dialogue”, a space for discussion where comprehensive proposals were formulated to be discussed in future stages and finally incorporated into the national climate change policy.

ECCOSUR Project –Coordination among the Rio Conventions for sustainable development

Vida Silvestre Uruguay and the partner organizations CIEDUR, CEUTA, Aves Uruguay and Ecos, the current Ministry of Environment (former MVOTMA) and four department governments (Lavalleja, Maldonado, Rocha and Treinta y Tres) conduct the Eccosur Project financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The objective of ECCOSUR is to develop innovative instruments and mechanisms for coordination, co-management and synergy promotion at the local level between Rio Conventions: Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate change. The project promotes dialogue spaces among stakeholders, strengthening of capacities of organizations and environment-related social groups, implementation of integrated actions on site, and development of an analysis tool to integrate and complement the design and implementation of public policies related to national commitments regarding Rio Conventions.

Networking

At VSUy, we strongly believe that the greatest achievements come from coordinated work, and thus we trust on networking. We are a member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) CSO Network. We are also part of the CBD Alliance and at a regional level we coordinate with other organizations such as Alianza del Pastizal (Grasslands Alliance), WWF Alianza del Sur para Pulpa y Papel (Pulp and Paper Alliance). At the national level we are part of National Environmental Education Network and the National Association of NGOs for Development, in addition to coordinating with various national and local organizations.