



We've been protecting the wrong areas of this South American forest

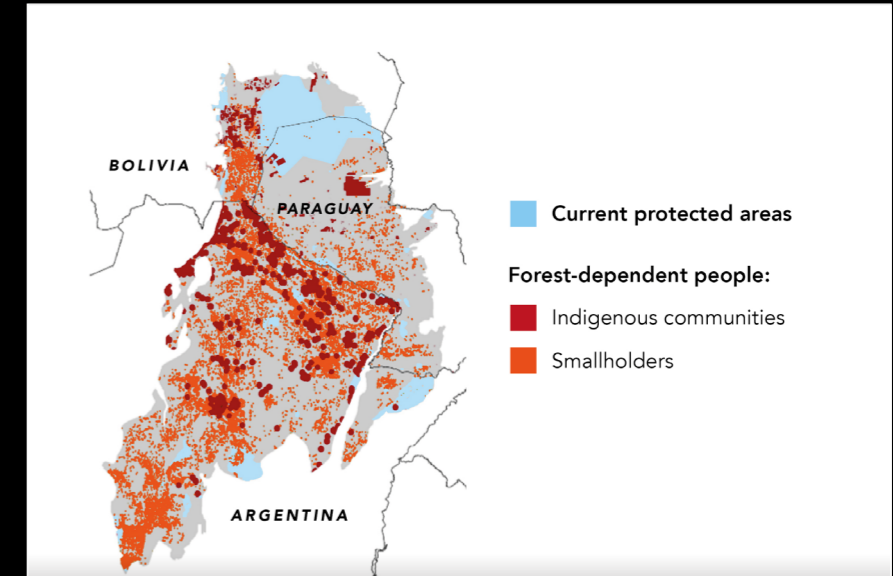
The areas of the Gran Chaco most important for threatened species and for people's livelihoods are barely protected, recent study shows.

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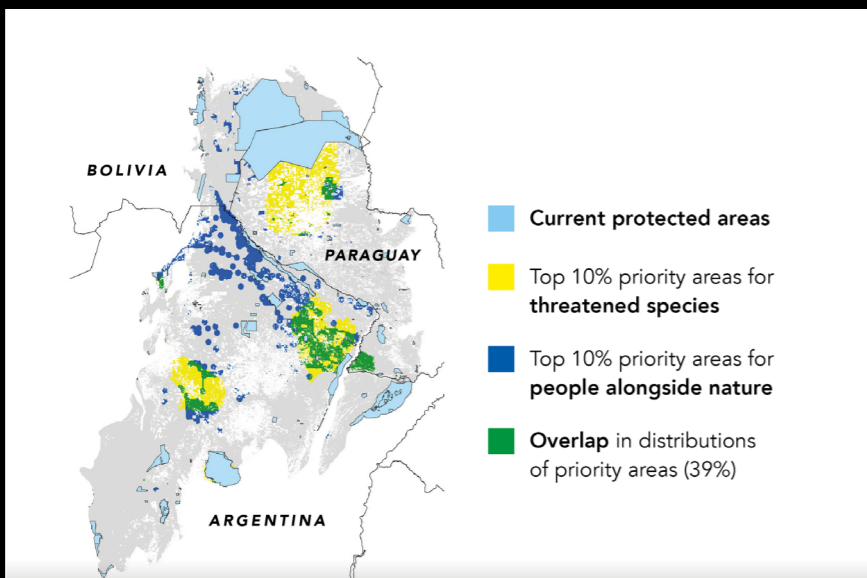
Tropical dry forests make up about 20% of both the world's land area and human population. The Gran Chaco is the largest in South America, and has lived in harmony with local communities up to 7,000 years old. They depend on the forest for food, materials and medicine.

2



But only 9% of the Gran Chaco is protected from deforestation and the over-exploitation of wildlife. Equally, severe restrictions have forced out the forest-dependent people. So the current protected area neither conserves forest nor provides for its people.

3



Professor Javier Nori and his team at the National University of Cordoba, Argentina, identified the top 10% priority areas for the conservation of the Gran Chaco. They found a 39% overlap between priority areas for threatened species, and for people alongside nature.

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| | Share of distribution protected (%) | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| | Current protected areas network | Top 10% priority areas for threatened species | Top 10% priority areas for people alongside nature |
| Threatened species | 16 | 42 | 40 |
| Forest-dependent people (average) | 5 | 21 | 52 |
| Indigenous people | 6 | 23 | 78 |
| Smallholders | 4 | 18 | 25 |

1 The current network does not protect threatened species nor forest-dependent people.

2 Each of the proposed strategies would protect threatened species equally well.


3 But the people alongside nature strategy protects people considerably better.

Crucially, protecting forest-dependent people can occur at no cost to the protection of threatened species. The authors say the local communities are "key actors in achieving fair conservation outcomes" to "safeguard biodiversity... while fostering sustainable use".

5

Thread created by Bobby Carter.

Read the research paper:
Tamburini, D., Torres, R., Kummerle, T., Levers, C. and Nori, J. (2023). Priority areas for promoting co-benefits between conservation and the traditional use of mammals and birds in the Chaco. *Biological Conservation*, 277, p.109827.



Maps adapted from Fig. 3 and Fig. A1; table created using data from the Results, section 3.2 (Tamburini et al., 2023).

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