

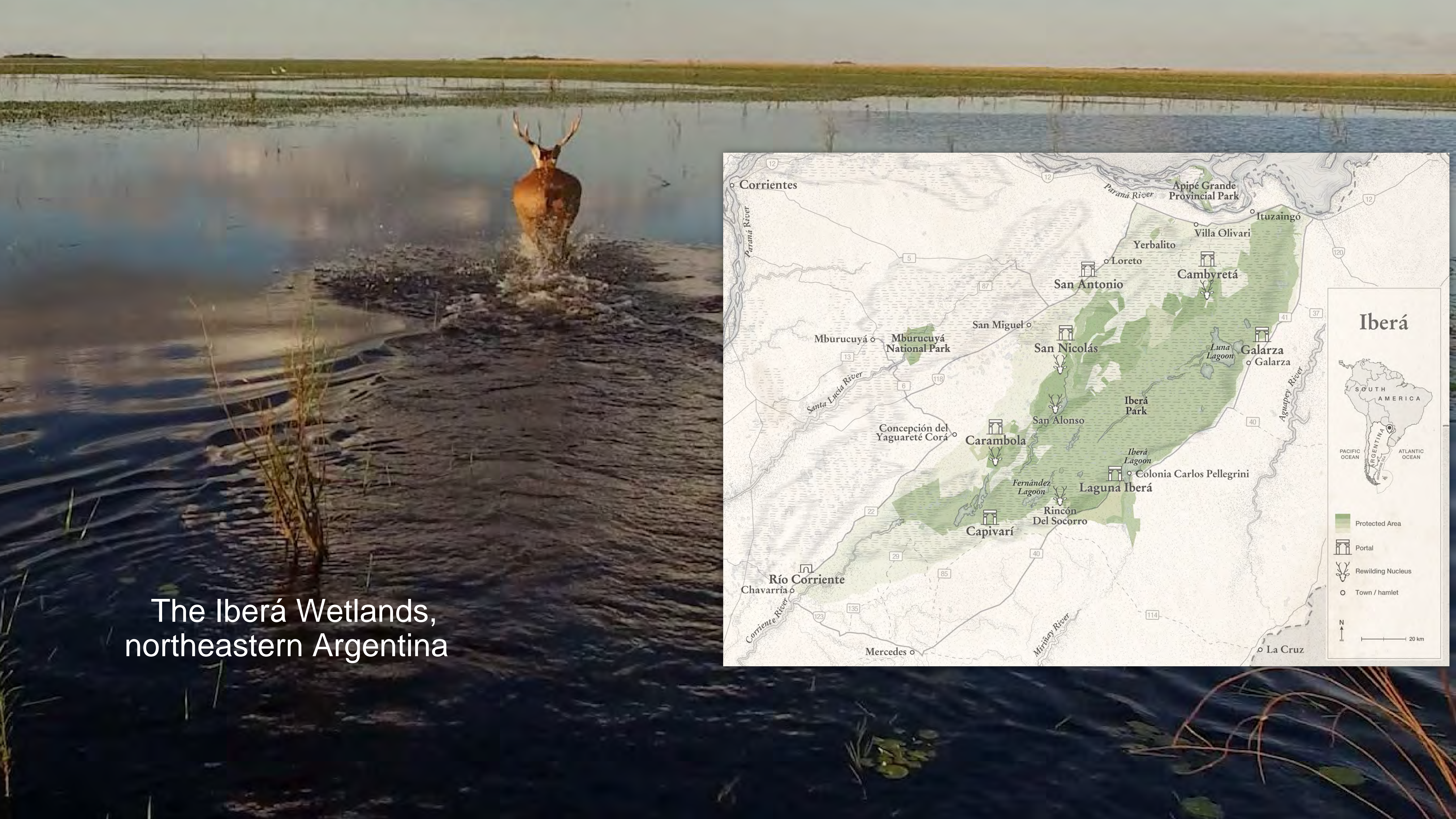
An aerial photograph of Iberá Park, showing a vast expanse of green grasslands and wetlands interspersed with numerous blue water channels and ponds. The landscape is flat and extends to the horizon under a clear sky.

Iberá Park

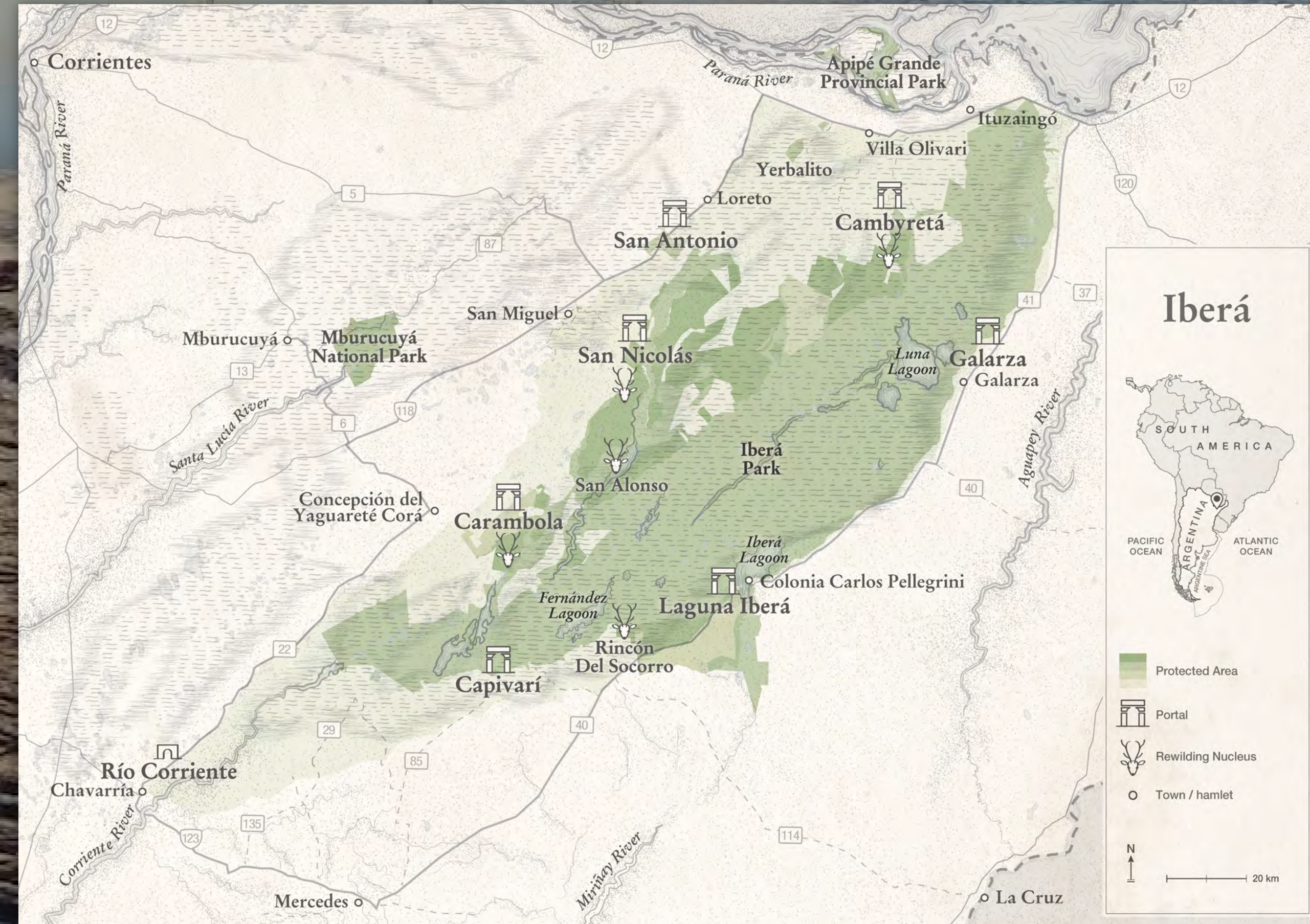
Subtropical Neotropical
grasslands and wetlands

Presented at
Landscapes of Hope: Effective Conservation
on the Ground

**Effective
Conservation**
TRAINING INITIATIVE



The Iberá Wetlands,
northeastern Argentina



Origins of
the project



(XX) Profound process of defaunation triggered by wildlife trade of skins and feathers and firearms

Many species disappeared.
Environmental loss & cultural loss.

1983: The beginning of change-
The creation of the Natural
Reserve.

Wildlife began to return and the defaunation
process began to reverse

Starting point:
An empty paradise



Matías Rebak

- Create a vast protected area by acquiring private ranches and adding public land for conservation
- Open the park to everyone
- Restore its ecosystems by reintroducing keystone species

The original vision



Corrientes has been historically a **cattle ranching province**.

Large landowners concentrate political and economic power.

The idea of reintroducing a top predator seemed impossible.

Argentina is a **federal country** with strong **attachment to private land ownership**.

The idea of creating a National Park seemed impossible.

Rice farming, cattle ranching, and forestry were the dominant visions of development

Iberá was historically seen as an “unproductive” landscape.

Corrientes is often described as a “republic apart.”

Social and political context:
The genesis for a new conservation model



The key to success:
a bold vision *and*
local knowledge

Building the
local team



Iberá Project team, circa 2010. Douglas Tompkins

The need to protect the territory and take action against the threats.

+50 lawsuits have been filed against rice companies and cattle ranchers to prevent them from continuing to alter the natural course of the water.

As a result, opposition emerged.

It became essential to build trust among scientists, government authorities, local communities and academics.

The local resistance
and the path toward the
Economy of Nature
model



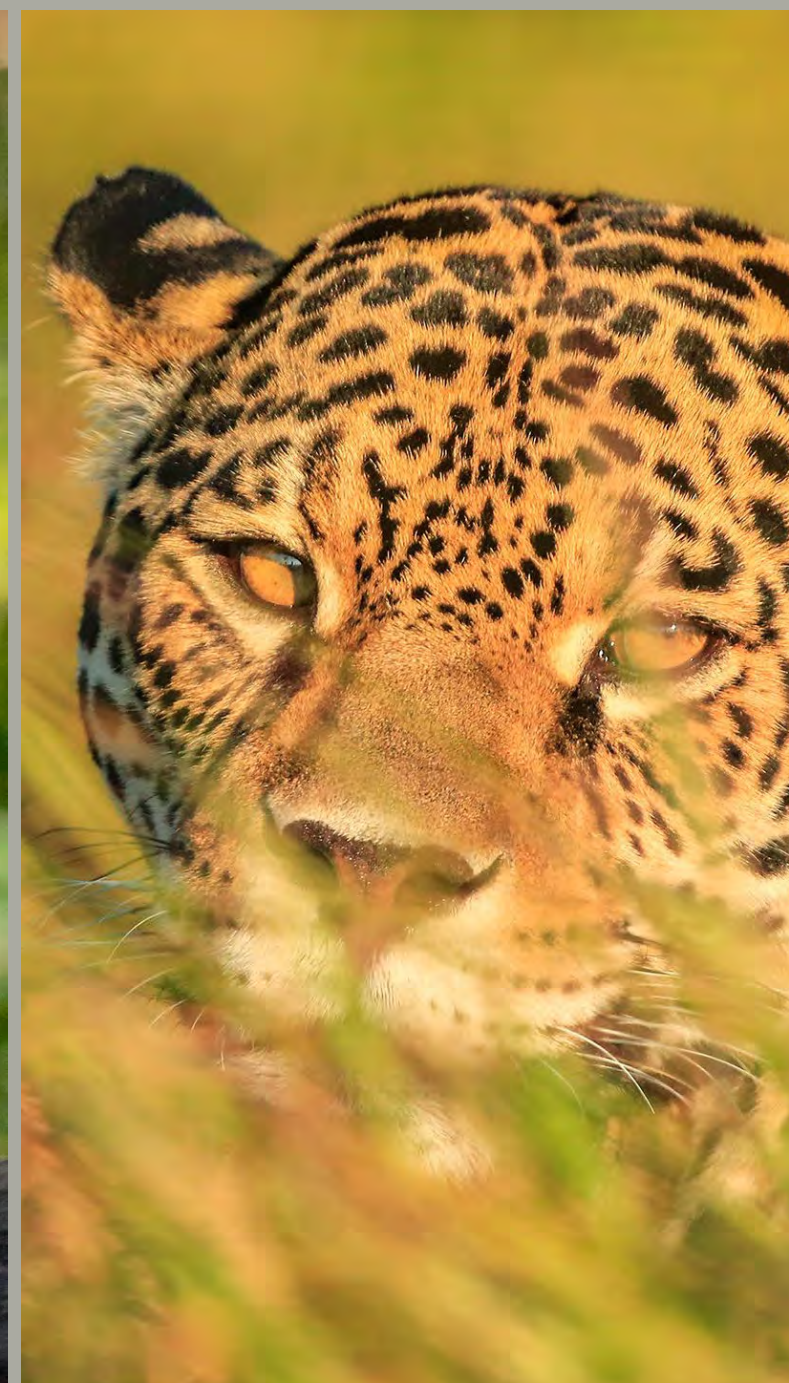
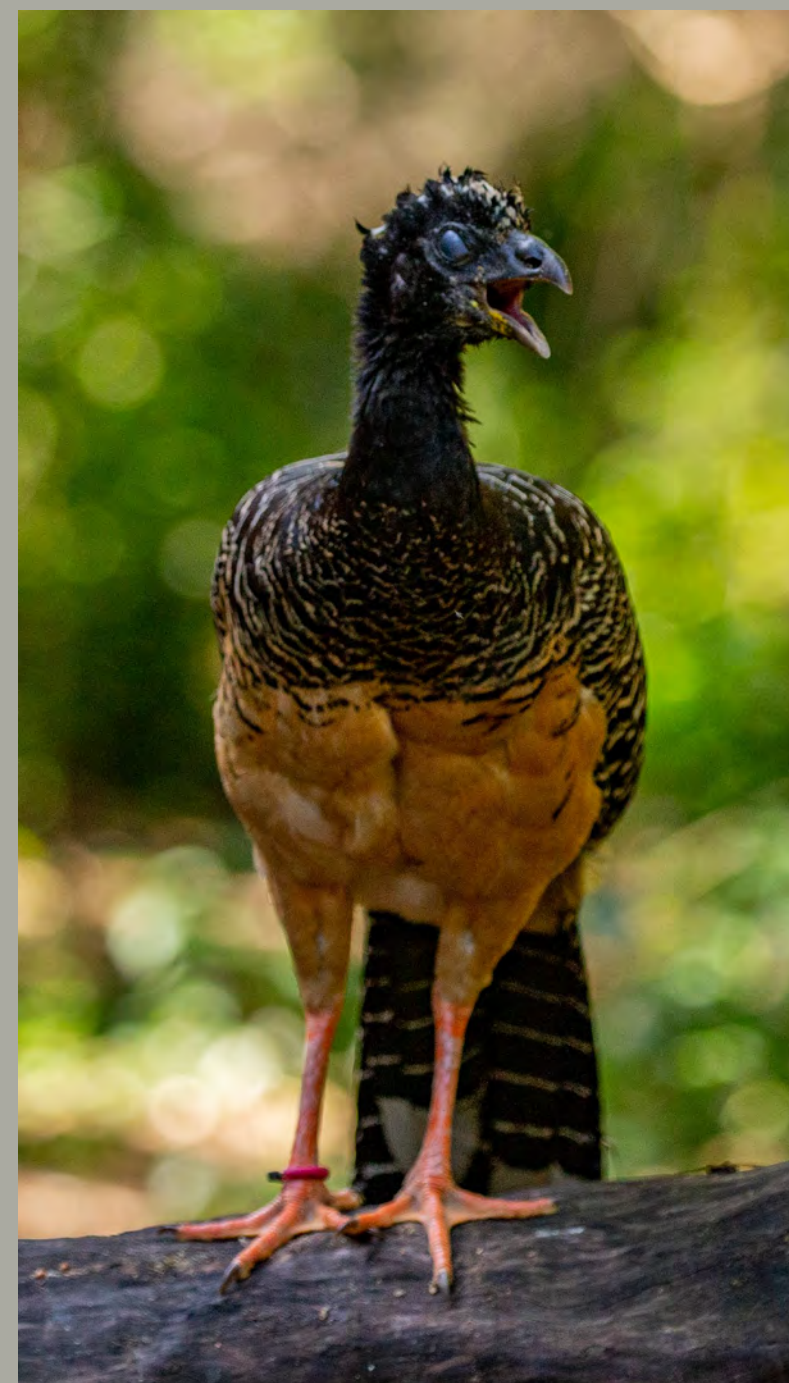
Doug Tompkins
«The more we are criticized,
the harder we need to work»

activist campaign against the alteration of water cycles for rice farming.

- 2025 · Giant river otter
- 2024 · Ocelot
- 2021 · Jaguar
- 2018 · Bare-faced curassow
- 2015 · Red-and-green macaw
- 2015 · Collared peccary
- 2009 · Pampas deer
- 2007 · Giant anteater

The beginning
of rewilding in Argentina
The need of showing results
and be recognized as a team

We took the long way



Communities didn't have access to land but political power.

To create a National Park you must go:
-From private to public
-From provincial to national jurisdiction

Communities had to be integrated in the model.

The creation of the Ibera Park became possible through the creation of new "gateways". 2018 we've managed to create the NP.

Public use infrastructure

Parks as engine of local development needed to be accesible to the public

Scenic Route-local political engagement was key.

Creating a new nature tourism destination-
Seeking for political support



The shift became possible by putting people at the center. They become protagonists of the story

The resistance that forced a rethink

Training programs, workshops and capacity building played a crucial role

Lasting conservation is only possible with the support of local communities

Local entrepreneurship and the beginning of a new paradigm



Matías Rebak

Reintroducing Jaguars for
the 1st time in the world.

No permits, no technical
knowledge

Corrientes has a deep
cultural connection to the
jaguar: it represents a symbol of
identity, strength and heritage

2019 first jaguar cubs were
born in Iberá

2021 we released the first
jaguars

The change in jurisdiction
created the right context as
there was no single responsible
for the release

**A huge milestone:
reintroducing the top predator
in South America**

Mariua, Karai, and Pora were the first jaguars released in Ibera Park. Camera trap image



The local resistance from the beginning
made us re-think and create the new model

Park creation

Protected areas
with public-access infrastructure
foster local development

Community wellbeing

Empowered local
entrepreneurs thrive
with nature

Ecological restoration

Complete and functional
ecosystems, with abundant wildlife,
revive cultural identities

Restorative Economy

High-quality, tourism-based
experiences led by locals
build a unique territorial brand

The Economy of Nature model

Restoring nature can also create
opportunities for people

An interdisciplinary committee of NGOs, senators, and government authorities coordinating a long-term shared strategy for conservation, infrastructure investment, and regional development.

2016- Master Plan

Iberá Cooks & Artisans network

Iberá Committee:
the opportunity to enhance the impact



- 20 towns impacted
- 200,000 people positively reached
- 10 access portals (4 donated)
- +60,000 visitors per year
- 1 Management Committee
- 130 cooks, 60 artisans
- Tourism income across local communities

Local pride → National symbol → Global recognition

Social and economic outputs



An Iberá Cook program member displaying a traditional dish. Matías Rebak

From 0 to...

...+50 free jaguars

...5 giant anteater populations

...+40 free red-and-green macaws

...the first wild giant otter family

...350 pampas deer

...5 collared peccary populations

...10 free bare-faced curassows

in an protected area of +750,000 hectares

Ecological outcomes



Pampas deer at Portal Laguna Iberá. Matías Rebak

FUNDACIÓN
REWILDING
ARGENTINA

Rewilding Argentina works to reverse the biodiversity crisis by reestablishing fully functional ecosystems and promoting restorative economies where people thrive with nature.





Alto Bermejo



El Impenetrable



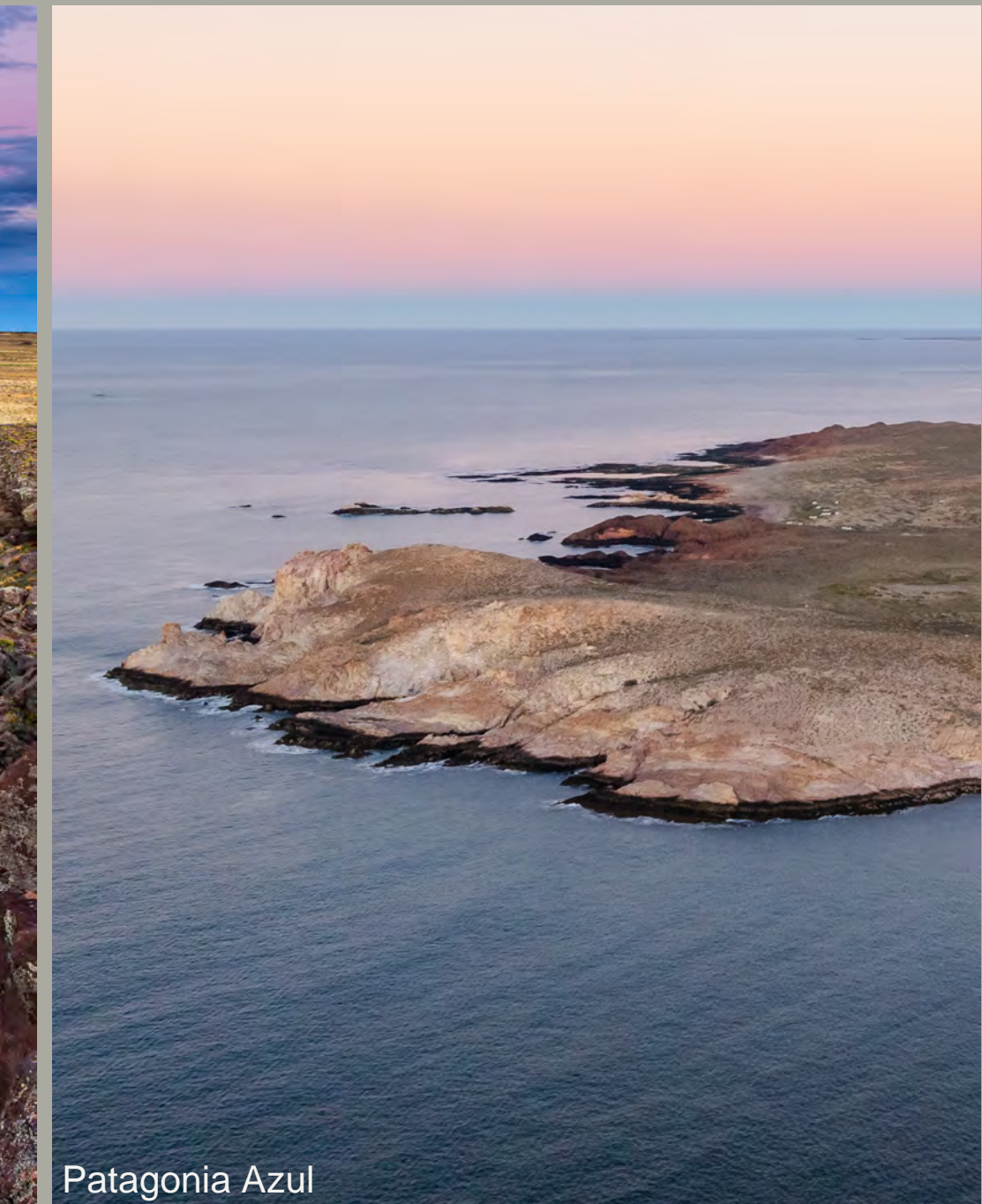
Iberá



Río Iguazú



Patagonia Oases



Patagonia Azul

Replicating
the model

Challenges

Ensure the quality management of the Great Park is sustained in the long term

Raise and standardize the quality of nature-based tourism services

Transform production practices in buffer areas

Manage coexistence between Jaguars and cattle ranchers

Control invasive exotic species (axis deer, feral pigs, pines and buffalo)

Ensure adaptation to climate crisis by addressing the increasing frequency of droughts and the resulting rise in wildfires.

Challenges and opportunities



Opportunities

The jaguar recovery opens the door to attract luxury tourism investment by expanding from community-based village lodging to high-end conservancies in buffer zones.

Replicate Iberá's successful model in other ecoregions. A community-driven model that expands public access and creates opportunities for entrepreneurs historically excluded from land access and tourism value chains, generating significant political support.

Position the Province of Corrientes as a nature conservation leader: a flagship example of large-scale environmental policy.

Challenges and opportunities



Agustina Ojeda

1) Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

Given the country's volatility, avoid concentrating risk by diversifying across national, provincial, and private jurisdictions.

Lessons
learnt



1) Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

2) Learn from the best from the very beginning



Lessons
learnt

1) Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

2) Learn from the best from the very beginning

3) Learn by doing: innovation happens from the ground

Lessons
learnt



Pampas deer reintroduction project. Gustavo Correa

1) Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

2) Learn from the best from the very beginning

3) Learn by doing: innovation happens from the ground

Lessons
learnt

Successful large-scale restoration requires both humility to learn from others and courage to innovate without blueprints

Jaguar Reintroduction Center during building phase, ca. 2012.



1) Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

2) Learn from the best from the very beginning

3) Learn by doing: innovation happens from the ground

4) Governance model

Rewilding is only partly about ecology. In practice its largely about politics, economics and governance.

Lessons
learnt



The provincial governor celebrating the first jaguars born in Iberá

1) Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

2) Learn from the best from the very beginning

3) Learn by doing: innovation happens from the ground

4) Governance model

5) Think like an entrepreneur—avoid the culture of fear

Reversing the extinction crisis requires visionary leadership, risk taking and the courage to challenge the status quo. Fear and caution are often big barriers to change

Lessons
learnt



Doug and gauchos in San Alonso Island.

1) Don't put all your eggs in one basket

2) Learn from the best from the very beginning

3) Learn by doing: innovation happens from the ground

4) Governance model

5) Think like an entrepreneur—avoid the culture of fear

6) Communities are essential

Lessons
learnt



1) Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

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3) Learn by doing: innovation happens from the ground

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5) Think like an entrepreneur—avoid the culture of fear

6) Communities are essential

7) Communication matters—
from the territory outward

Storytelling to influence strategic actors

Lessons
learnt



CORRIENTES TIERRA DE YAGUARETÉS

CORRIENTES VUELVE A SER CORRIENTES

1) Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

2) Learn from the best from the very beginning

3) Learn by doing: innovation happens from the ground

4) Governance model

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6) Communities are essential

7) Communication matters— from the territory outward

8) Connect wildlife with local culture and identity

Lessons
learnt



1) Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

2) Learn from the best from the very beginning

3) Learn by doing: innovation happens from the ground

4) Governance model

5) Think like an entrepreneur—avoid the culture of fear

6) Communities are essential

7) Communication matters—
from the territory outward

8) Connect wildlife with local culture and identity

9) Dream big—choose your team wisely

Lessons
learnt



Iberá Park
A success story built on shared
leadership.



A close-up, high-resolution photograph of a tiger's face, focusing on its eyes and the intricate patterns of its fur. The tiger's eyes are a striking orange-gold color, and its fur is a mix of golden-brown and black stripes and spots. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the fur. In the upper center, the text 'FUNDACIÓN REWILDING ARGENTINA' is overlaid in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

FUNDACIÓN
REWILDING
ARGENTINA

Iberá, a true Landscape of Hope, proves that large-scale restoration is possible and underway, and invites us to take the next step towards protecting and restoring the Southern Cone of South America.

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