



# Community Biodiversity Monitoring Project in the Tehuacan-Cuicatlan Biosphere Reserve

**Community members learn to value and conserve the rich biodiversity that surrounds them.**



Photo by Bio. Beatriz Beristain Noriega  
Environmental Education Specialist of  
the RBTC

Through the dedication of three local authority groups, the conservation committee and specialists from the Tehuacan-Cuicatlan Biosphere Reserve and three scientific specialists, community members who participated in conservation events learn more about local biodiversity, climate change, solid waste management, utilization of native plants, and community biological monitoring practices in: bats, neotropical felines, raptors, plants/pathogens, and water quality monitoring.



Conservation committee during a camera trap monitoring event.

*“This project has left an impact on us. We have learned to conserve our native flora and fauna; we depend on a functional ecosystem and should not see ourselves as separate from nature. Something else that I have learned from you during this project, is that you didn’t give importance to economic levels, gender, political stance, and religion... a practice we lack here.”*

Don Cesario Correa  
Consejo de Vigilancia - Ejido  
Santiago Coatepec, Caltepec Puebla.

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From September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018 to May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019 the community of Santiago Coatepec, Caltepec, Puebla participated in a community biodiversity monitoring project. With the help of SPA funding, nineteen community biological monitoring events, eleven environmental educational events, one community wide Eco-fair, one “Exchange of Experiences” event, and three sustainability projects took place under the planning and participation of the community conservation committee, the pre-school/kindergarten, elementary school, middle school and high school teachers, the local authority groups (“Bienes Comunes”, “Ejidal” and auxiliary president), Tehuacan-Cuicatlan reserve personnel, and myself.

The conservation committee, formed during the SPA grant period, is a group primarily composed of young community members passionate for the environment and its conservation. Their projects have included biodiversity monitoring, environmental education and sustainability projects, in the Tehuacan-Cuicatlan Biosphere Reserva (RBTC) under the Comisión Nacional de Areas Naturales Protegidas (CONANP).

Over the eight-month period, 276 different individuals participated in the various aspects of the biodiversity monitoring project. 104 community members participated in the nineteen biodiversity monitoring events (bat, raptors, neotropical felines, plants/pathogens, water quality), 79 community members participated in the eleven environmental education events, 22 community members participated in the “Exchange of Experiences” event, 100 community members participated in the “Eco-Fair,” 188 community members participated in the three sustainability projects (central park reforestation, artisanal goods utilizing native plants, solid waste management).

By the end of the project, community members had learned about the importance of native plants, mammals, raptors and water quality and how to improve our relationship with the natural world. Community members learned monitoring techniques and how to use technical equipment and databases. Through the solid waste management project, reforestation project and utilization of native plants, they demonstrated their increased knowledge and appreciation for their natural world. The participants were incredibly pleased with the multitude of project outcomes. Even after the SPA project ended, they have continued to do community biodiversity monitoring and work on the solid waste management program! Seeds have been sown in this small community to grow a culture of conservation, with the hope that these roots of conservation practices will spread into the surrounding communities, for only with intentional small scale, local actions will we achieve a large-scale conservation effect.