

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
BETWEEN THE  
WESTERN HEMISPHERE MIGRATORY SPECIES INITIATIVE  
AND  
THE MANATEE CONSERVATION TRUST OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative (WHMSI) and The Manatee Conservation Trust based in Trinidad and Tobago (MCT) enter into this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the basis of similar goals and shared interests and a wish to build synergy.

WHMSI serves as a mechanism to promote collaboration for the conservation of migratory species across the entire Western Hemisphere. Whereas WHMSI is concerned with all migratory species that cross international boundaries of the entire Western Hemisphere, MCT is concerned first and foremost with conservation, education and preservation of the wildlife species and their habitats at Nariva (Ramsar site of International Importance) and its environs through the provision of resources, technical services and capacity building in collaboration with local communities. This mandate has since grown to extend beyond this geographic area and conservation activities are now national in scope. Among the notable migratory and other species which benefit under the umbrella of protection by the activities of the MCT are:

- over 170 species of birds inclusive of a significant proportion of migrants for which this site is important as habitat
- the last remaining population of the West Indian Manatee in Trinidad and Tobago
- the critically endangered leatherback turtle which come ashore in this coastline to nest
- the re-introduced population of blue and gold macaws, formerly extirpated from the wild
- marine mammals, especially dolphins and whales found in the waters off the coast.

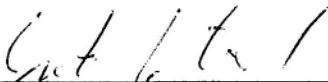
As a non-profit organization based at Nariva, Manzanilla with the majority of its membership (approximating 75%) being drawn from the local communities, as well as representatives of other environmental interest groups and government agencies, the MCT is in a unique position to undertake *in situ* conservation activities, which meet the approval and endorsement of both the state and the non-governmental agencies and which are community-driven. The Trust operates in a self-sufficient manner using the revenue earned from the estate's agricultural production of TT\$1,000,000 per year to finance the conservation activities. The lands are also vested in the MCT since to better carry out its mandate; it acquired the estate of some 500 acres situated along the periphery of the Nariva Swamp and stretching well over 12 kilometres along the Manzanilla /Cocal stretch. By taking this action, the MCT ensured that the remaining manatee population came under strict protection as these animals live in the tributaries and waters that pass through the Estate. Through this approach to be inclusive of the right partners, which has since grown to include international benefactors such as IFAW, the MCT can provide a network of partners and resources to assist WHMSI in its efforts to improve conservation of migratory species which come under the mandate of WHMSI, especially for those species found in the area under its protection, by:

- 1) promoting WHMSI in the country among the various interest groups;
- 2) acting as a focal point in Trinidad and Tobago for WHMSI activities; in partnership with the government's wildlife agency; and
- 3) drawing on MCT programs, activities, partners and members to assist WHMSI and participate in its activities.


WHMSI can support MCT through:

- 1) enhanced engagement with conservation organizations in other parts of the hemisphere;
- 2) greater opportunity to share in the knowledge and expertise existing in the region in this realm; and
- 3) greater opportunities to enhance the capacity of local communities to implement effective migratory species and habitat conservation measures, e.g., through training workshops in monitoring, protected areas management, outreach and education, etc.

WHMSI and MCT recognize the scope of each others' mission, respecting those missions in their entirety, while focusing on those portions that overlap. Therefore, WHMSI and MCT intend to seek ways to work together more effectively and to build on each others' strengths and thus enhance the effectiveness of both institutions.

  
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Gupte Lutchmedial  
President, MCT

June 05, 2008  
Date

  
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Herb Raffaele  
Interim Chair WHMSI Steering Committee

June 12, 2008  
Date