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&BEYOND PUTS IT EXPERTISE BEHIND SOUTH AMERICAN CONSERVATION PROJECT

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Luxury experiential travel company &Beyond has put its 25 years of conservation experience in Africa and India to use in South America, with Group Conservation Manager Les Carlisle recently invited to Argentina by Tompkins Conservation, an organisation committed to the preservation of biodiversity in Chile and Argentina.

As of 2016, Tompkins Conservation has established the world's largest private nature reserve and has worked in partnership with governments in Chile and Argentina to create six new national parks, as well as several other protected areas, in total contributing to the conservation of more than 3.4 million acres (1.4 million hectares). The organisation now aims to reintroduce the jaguar to the immense wetlands of the Iberá Nature Reserve, situated in the Argentinian province of Corrientes. However, with little or no expertise or experience in translocating large predators in Argentina, Tompkins invited &Beyond to join other international experts and share its vast wealth of skills and knowledge on the subject.

Involved in professional game capture and wildlife management for most of his life, Les Carlisle has successfully translocated more than 40 000 animals. Some of his most notable projects in 20-year career with &Beyond have included the reintroduction of wildlife to &Beyond Phinda Private Game Reserve, his involvement in the historic reversal of a local extinction of gaur in India's Bandhavgarh National Park and his role as Project Manager of Rhinos Without Borders, an initiative aiming to translocate 100 rhino from South Africa to Botswana.

Following on from the recent expansion of &Beyond's tour operating activities into South America, Carlisle was invited as a guest speaker at a workshop to discuss the release process and post-release management of jaguars in the Iberá Wetlands.

"I have never translocated a jaguar, but I have worked extensively with Africa's big cat species - cheetah, lion and leopard," explains Carlisle. "Most of the concerns raised by the stakeholders in the South American project had to do with managing the potential conflict between the jaguars and the livestock belonging to local farmers and communities. My African experience was exactly what they were looking for to guide them through the process. It was an honour to be able to share &Beyond's long-standing conservation traditions and our proven translocation model with wildlife partners on other continents. Globally, we all need to work hand in hand for conservation in order to protect our precious planet for future generations."



Before attending the jaguar workshop in the Iberá Wetlands, Carlisle was invited to give two presentations in Corrientes, Argentina. The first of these was hosted at the University of Corrientes by the Dean of the Veterinary Faculty and Senator Flinta, the local representative to Parliament. Carlisle delivered a talk on the importance of veterinarians in wildlife translocation to a packed 200-seat lecture hall. An important goal for the local CLT has been to develop the veterinary capacity to manage translocations on a large scale, which is essential in creating biodiversity in future national parks. Carlisle highlighted the potential for training such professionals in the only such college in northern Argentina.

Another workshop hosted by Senator Flinta and Inez Presman, the Minister of Tourism for Corrientes, focused on the role of ecotourism in conservation, as well as the role of wildlife in making destinations more attractive.

Carlisle then travelled to Estancia San Alonso, a private camp situated on an island in the middle of the Iberá Wetlands, to attend the planning workshop for the jaguar translocation. Attended by approximately 30 people, including several world-known jaguar experts, national park officials and the Director for Wildlife in Argentina, the main aim of the sessions was to plan the jaguar release process and set the release triggers. With no wild translocations initially planned, the current project plans to release the cubs born to two pairs of captive jaguars back into the wild. Another male jaguar has also recently been sourced for the breeding programme, a sign of strengthening support at all levels.

At the workshop, Carlisle spent some time discussing the need for post-release management and conflict mitigation, both of which &Beyond has had extensive success with in Africa. He also raised the necessity to habituate the jaguar cubs to the vehicles that the vets will need to use when immobilising the animals and preparing them to be moved. This represented a significant new step for the South America conservation officials, who had been led to believe that there should be no human interaction with the animals due to be released.

Carlisle also enjoyed the opportunity to observe two of the species that the CLT has already reintroduced to the Iberá Wetland, the giant anteater and the collared peccary.

“I am truly honoured to have been invited by Tompkins Conservation on behalf of &Beyond to be part of starting this conservation revolution in South America,” concludes Carlisle. “Tompkins Conservation has the largest private conservation landholding in the world and it has been a privilege to play some small part in the work that they are doing in Chile and Argentina.”

&Beyond has created the *Wild Ibera and Iguazu Falls* tour specifically for travellers wishing to experience this incredible conservation story as it unfolds. For more details, contact your preferred travel provider or log on to www.andBeyond.com.



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ABOUT &BEYOND

&Beyond is one of the world's leading luxury experiential travel companies, designing personalised high-end tours in 15 countries in Africa, five in Asia and four in South America. The company also owns and operates 29 extraordinary safari lodges and camps, as well as set-departure expeditions, throughout Africa; which positively impact more than 9 million acres (3.6 million hectares) of wildlife land. Established in 1991, &Beyond takes exceptional care of its guests in order to make a difference; its commitment to sustainable responsible travel, conservation and community empowerment has been globally recognised with multiple awards over the years. We offer warm local hospitality and sublime natural luxury that combine with interpretive natural experiences, led by highly-skilled guides and rangers.

ABOUT TOMPKINS CONSERVATION

Tompkins Conservation (TC) represents a group of NGOs and initiatives created by philanthropists Douglas and Kristine Tompkins as a response to the biodiversity crisis. As of 2016, TC has assembled the world's largest private nature reserve (Pumalín Park) and worked in partnership with governments in Chile and Argentina to create six new national parks and several other protected areas, in aggregate conserving more than 3.4 million acres (1.4 million hectares). Current TC projects will, if successful, result in the designation of six additional national parks, expand three others and add over ten million more acres (four million hectares) to the national park systems of Chile and Argentina. At that time, TC efforts would have helped establish publicly owned protected areas covering an area roughly equivalent to the size of Belgium and Holland combined. This unprecedented record of park-oriented conservation philanthropy has been augmented by the most ambitious "rewilding" program in Latin America, as the TC team works to conserve endangered species such as huemul deer and maned wolves, and to reintroduce missing native species such as giant anteaters, pampas deer, collared peccaries, tapirs, and jaguars to its focal protected areas.

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