



SUCCESS STORY

Youngsters Push to Save Eagle

Youth launch a mission to save Panama's eagle



Photo: The Peregrine Fund

The Harpy Eagle, a majestic bird of prey, is Panama's National Bird.

“Let’s protect our national bird. Don’t kill the Harpy Eagle.” This is the message that youngsters in Mission Harpy Eagle communicate to peers at schools in the Panama Canal Watershed and elsewhere.

Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

A group of Junior High School students from the Brader School of Panama visited a USAID-funded installation run by the Peregrine Fund on Panama's National Bird — the Harpy Eagle. The exhibit, which examined the bird's risk of extinction as well as USAID-sponsored conservation efforts, inspired the students to create a group to educate their peers on the need to protect the eagle: Mission Harpy Eagle.

Since then, this group of two dozen students has been spreading the word among their peers about the bird's importance. The excitement in their young faces inspires confidence that a generation of environmentally conscious citizens is in the making. They use diverse methods and tools to educate and carry their message to students both at their school and elsewhere.

Their student-to-student interaction is creating links and associations with other young Panamanians in support of efforts to restore Panama's Harpy Eagle population. They visited four public schools in one year, sparking the interest of other groups. One group included students from an Indian reservation who now want to form a sister chapter to conduct presentations in their dialect.

What motivates these students? One Mission Harpy Eagle member, Maria Cristina Miro, said the mission is a very important educational activity. Another, Guillermo Crespo felt that the reception in other schools was positive. Daniel Giraldo said it felt good to participate and to educate others about protecting and saving the Harpy Eagle. Julio Arias summarized their mission to a group of fourth graders as “creating a culture of protection in order to save the animal species, and keeping in mind that when we become adults we must continue to teach others these notions.” In their words and activities, they enthusiastically reflect the vision of Mission Harpy Eagle.

Having visited all the schools nearby, Mission Harpy Eagle is now preparing for its second phase: to reach out to peers in schools in the Panama Canal Watershed. USAID-supported conservation and education activities will help bolster their mission as they move forward.