



# Shade Coffee Plantations

## *A Sustainable Way to Protect Wildlife*



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At left, shade coffee plantation. Above, sun coffee plantation.

### What is a shade coffee plantation?

Coffee is native to Africa. It is cultivated in tropical and subtropical areas around the world. Within the U.S., coffee is cultivated in Hawaii and in Puerto Rico. In natural settings, coffee grows in the forest understory tolerating shade from forest canopy trees. Traditionally, coffee has been cultivated under a shading canopy of natural forest or planted shading trees.

### Shade coffee plantations are important in conserving biodiversity.

Shade coffee plantations have played a critical role in protecting biodiversity by providing wildlife habitat during a period where the landscape was severely deforested in Puerto Rico.

### Shade coffee plantations help to protect natural reserves.

Shade coffee plantations are excellent to create buffer zones around natural reserves. These plantations provide a smooth transition between urban and natural areas. Buffer zones are critical for the protection of the ecosystems as well as endemic, native and migratory wildlife, including many endangered species.

### Shade coffee plantations are sustainable.

Shade coffee plantations can produce many secondary crops, besides coffee. Bananas, plantains, oranges, grapefruits, mangoes and many more products can be produced at the same plantations. This diversity of products also contributes to increase the natural biodiversity of the farm. At the same time they provide an economical incentive by diversifying cash crops for a sustainable way of farming.

### Shade coffee plantations are in trouble.

The shading canopy of many coffee plantations is being cut to give way to “sun” coffee plantations. This practice destroys habitat for many native and migratory species, promotes soil erosion, reduces biodiversity and increases pollution due to the need for the heavy use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

### You can help.

Help promote shade coffee plantations by buying shade-grown coffee at your local store. By promoting this sustainable agricultural practice, you are contributing to the protection of wildlife habitat and the environment throughout the tropics, helping endangered species and conserving the ever-decreasing wintering habitat for Neotropical migratory birds.



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Native bananaquit (*Coereba flaveola*) with young.

### Shade coffee plantations are important for wildlife.

Shade coffee plantations are a simplified but stable ecosystem. By providing a very high structural diversity these agro-ecosystems provide nesting and feeding habitat for wildlife. These plantations are used by many native, endemic, and migratory species. For example the shading canopy provides nesting habitat for native birds such as the scaly-nape pigeons, foraging grounds for Neotropical migratory birds such as the Northern Parula, and shelter for many plants and wildlife species including threatened and endangered species.



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*Anolis cristatellus*, a very common species on shade coffee plantations.

### For more information please contact

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