2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Amazon Conservation Through Education
Weaving A Future In The Amazon
In this second pandemic year, we are immensely grateful for the purpose, resilience, and love that drive the educators, scientists, partners, and friends in Morpho’s network. Together we are stronger than any of us alone. Coming together, even when only via Zoom, strengthens our individual resilience and builds forces for good in these troublesome times. Together we are providing essential support for our Peruvian partners and compelling opportunities for U.S. teachers and students to learn about the Amazon.

With heartfelt gratitude to our generous donors, we present this summary of the third year in the life of our young nonprofit.

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Director of Educational Engagement

Lindsey Swierk, PhD  
Director of Scientific Research
Mission:
To support the key role of education in realizing the global goal of Amazon conservation and sustainability.

Vision:
A world in which the Amazon – its forests, rivers, biodiversity, and people – is treasured and protected as a vital global resource for generations to come.

We partner with scientists, educators, and people who live in the heart of the Peruvian Amazon to provide profound educational experiences for teachers and students. Our work encompasses three strategies:

**PROVIDING** U.S. teachers with opportunities for transformative professional development,

**CREATING** and sharing effective teaching resources within a collaborative network of educators, and

**SUPPORTING** conservation education in the Peruvian Amazon.

*Photo Credit: The Morpho Institute*
Another Unusual Year

For the second consecutive year, the COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible to hold our Educator Academy in the Amazon. Again we directed attention toward helping our Peruvian collaborators survive unprecedented financial challenges, including loss of income needed to keep rainforest lodges intact and ready for business once tourism resumes. We also raised funds to help the Indigenous Maijuna continue their fight against a proposed highway that would bisect the vast intact rainforest on which their livelihoods depend.

On the home front, we continued nurturing online connections that make the Morpho Institute a treasured network among our alumni, faculty, and friends.
Actions in 2021 included:

**RAISING THE ROOF** by providing funds for a critically needed new roof at our primary study site, the ACTS Field Station in the Peruvian Amazon. Our Maijuna Irapay Thatch Project supports sustainable cultivation of Irapay palm and the traditional craft of weaving thatch, passed along from generation to generation by Maijuna indigenous people in remote rainforest communities.

**SUPPORTING RAINFOREST CONSERVATION** by providing funds to help the Maijuna resist construction of a highway through the heart of the biodiversity reserve that was designed to protect their ancestral homeland.

The Morpho Institute is far more than just an educational travel organization. They provide authentic opportunities for deep immersion in the Amazon that are at the intersection of education, conservation, ecology, and human rights. Even in the pandemic, they kept this important work on the front burner with a series of incredible monthly webinars. Top-notch engagement and determination to do good even in the adversity of this year!

*Seth Buddy, Asheville, North Carolina*
Actions in 2021 included:

**PROMOTING CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT** by hosting a virtual workshop in which 26 teachers, following an exhausting pandemic school year, volunteered to participate a three day conference and work independently or collaboratively to create resources for use in their teaching and to share with others. One highlight was a keynote with Native American educators RunningHorse Livingston and Pte San Win and Global GreenSTEM educator Laura Arndt to stimulate our thinking on ways to decolonize lessons by integrating indigenous ways of knowing.

**PARTNERING WITH DATACLASSROOM** and Dr. Brian Griffiths to create ready-to-teach lessons in which students use camera trap data to examine mammal diversity in the Maijuna-Kichwa Regional Conservation Area in the Peruvian Amazon.

*Snapshot of Biodiversity*, by Dr. Brian Griffiths, The Morpho Institute, and Aaron Reedy.
Actions in 2021 included:

**PROVIDING** a free monthly webinar series, led by scientists and educators, with 9 sessions in 2021 attracting a total of 282 participants, on topics ranging from Amazon plant adaptations to the UN Sustainability Goals to the many benefits of planting trees.

**PARTNERING WITH THE NATIONAL SCIENCE TEACHING ASSOCIATION (NSTA)** on two webinars for teachers in and beyond our network:

The Amazon: Why We Should Care and What We Should Fear, by Dr. David Pearson. August 19, 2021.

Investigating the Value of Trees, at Home and in the Amazon Rainforest, by Laura Branch, Rebecca Rehder Wingerden, Michelle Watkins, Janet Ort, Kelsey Deal, and Dr. Nancy Trautmann. October 26, 2021.

*Traveling to the Amazon was indeed the experience of a lifetime which allowed me to engage in ideation, inquiry, reflection, and growth with a group of passionate educators from around the US. I left the Amazon revived, with an expanded global perspective, high-quality classroom resources, and lifelong friendships.*

Chanda Jefferson, Einstein Fellow and 2019 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

*Estimating tree diameter in the Amazon. Photo credit: Rebecca Schroeder*
Actions in 2021 included:

**PUBLISHING** an article in The Science Teacher, written by five Educator Academy in the Amazon alumni and a faculty member: *From Local to Global: Calculating and appreciating the value of trees and forests.*


*If I had to pick one word to describe my experience, it would be connectivity. The immersion experience connected me to the amazing rainforest, and to myself within the element of nature. This connection is etched in both my mind and my heart, and I now see the world through a different lens. This professional development has left me excited and equipped to share what I have experienced, with both my students and my colleagues, in a profound way.*

*Dr. Rosanna Ruiz, Educator Academy class of 2019*
Actions in 2021 included:

**COLLABORATING** with *Rainforest Partnership* and *OnePlanet* to host a virtual screening and discussion of the *Guardians of the Forest Documentary* on World Rainforest Day. This event attracted more than 130 attendees from around the world.

*Serving on the faculty of the Educator Academy in the Amazon keeps me optimistic in these tumultuous times. What better way to build a sustainable future than by reinforcing teachers’ sense of self, ability to teach through inquiry, and interest in helping students grow as globally responsible citizens?*

*Dr. Nancy Trautmann, Morpho Institute Board*

*Morpho’s goal of connecting local and global communities, K-16 educators, and researchers means that their efforts are immediately impactful. Their emphasis on synthesis and real-world outcomes allows fundamental science to translate beautifully to classrooms and communities.*

*Dr. Lindsey Swierk, University of Binghamton, SUNY*

*The Morpho Institute has greatly exceeded my expectations for a professional development opportunity. I am so grateful to be a part of this network and appreciate the ongoing development and connections that I am able to make because of this organization.*

*Kelsey Deal, Educator Academy class of 2019*
2021 Finances

2021 Revenue
$30,041.00

2021 Expenses
$13,458.00

NOTE ON OUR 2nd PANDEMIC BUDGET YEAR:
Founded in 2018, the Morpho Institute planned for our annual budget to rely primarily on fee-for-service field experiences for K-12 educators in the Peruvian Amazon. Although this income stream did not exist in 2021, we are grateful that by combining extremely low operating expenses with generous donations we have been able to continue providing badly needed assistance to our Amazonian partners, begin building stability for our fledgling nonprofit, and grow the services provided to U.S. educators throughout this second year of the pandemic.
A LOOK AHEAD:
We will host our annual Educator Academy in the Amazon in July 2022 unless once again precluded by pandemic travel bans. We also plan to pilot a new field experience, the Amazon Research Initiative for Educators (ARIE) – Biodiversity in a changing world: An investigation through time and space. Under the leadership of Dr. Katie Feilen (MI Director of Conservation Engagement) and Dr. Lindsey Swierk (MI Director of Scientific Research), this pilot program will provide a follow-up research-oriented experience for MI alumni.

We eagerly anticipate resuming these field programs that directly support rainforest conservation initiatives of our Explorama naturalist guides and Indigenous Maijuna partners while providing outstanding learning opportunities for educator participants. We will seek to expand our scholarship fund to enable a more diverse group of educators to engage in these transformative experiences.
Donors:

We are deeply grateful to donors at every level, all of whom are supporting conservation of the Amazon rainforest through education initiatives in the U.S. and Peru. The following individuals donated $100 or more in 2021.

**$500 AND ABOVE**
Christa & Scott Dillabaugh  
Thomas & Kathy Dow  
Frances Gatz & Roger Telschow  
Michael Hill  
Kelly Keena & Shannon Whitehead  
Ruth Morton  
Victoria Powers & David Horn  
Carolyn Seibert  
Nancy & Charlie Trautmann  
Dick & Bonnie Wilson

**$100 - $499**
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Amy Armstrong  
Libby Bode  
Elizabeth Borgogni  
Seth Buddy  
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Leslie & Brian Conroy  
Tom & Julie Cook  
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Lindsey Swierk  
Herb “Geoman” Thompson  
Kelsey Vollmer  
Michelle Watkins  
Corrie Williams  
Nancy & Gary Wobler

*Red-backed poison frog (Ranitomeya reticulata)*  
*Photo Credit: Steven Foldi*
Tributes:

IN MEMORY OF
Alberto Velo

IN HONOR OF
Christa Dillabaugh
Katie Feilen
Alice Shunk
Nancy Trautmann

SPECIAL THANKS

to our Advisory Council, who helped launch the Morpho Institute in 2019 and guide our online initiatives during the 2021 pandemic year.

Laura Branch
Kirsten Franklin
Phil Kahler
Megan McDaniel
Chanda Jefferson
Janet Ort
Rebecca Wingerden
Jordan Wolf
Christi Paulson
Deborah Prestridge
Anne Marie Radke
Jo-Anne Sawyer
Michelle Watkins
Colleen McDaniel

*Awe in the Amazon. Photo Credit: Amanda Getty Benedict*
WITH GRATITUDE
To these key partners who play vital roles in rainforest conservation and education in the Loreto Region of the Peruvian Amazon:
   Amazon Explorama Lodges
   OnePlanet
   The Maijuna community of Sucusari

HELP GROW THESE VITAL INITIATIVES!
The Morpho Institute is a 501(c)(3) organization, and contributions are tax deductible.

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Front Cover Photos:

View from the Amazon Conservatory for Tropical Studies Canopy Walkway.
Photo Credit: Scott Sprengle

Paradise Tanager (Tangara chilensis).
Photo Credit: Phil Kahler

Amazon Tree Frog.
Photo Credit: Ryan Garrett

Educator Academy in the Amazon. Photo Credit: The Morpho Institute