



# Conservation Coaches Network

Strengthening conservation strategies and practice through coaching

## Welcome to *CCNet Stories* March 2026!

The stories in this newsletter show how CCNet coaches and the Conservation Standards are supporting conservation efforts across the globe. Enjoy!

## Reflections



*Barbara Allison. Photo courtesy of Michael Reuter, TNC.*

### Remembering Barbara Allison

Story from [Cristina Lasch](#) (CCNet Global)

Have you heard the expression that we “stand on the shoulders of giants”? While stories tend to recognize the “lead actors” as the big change-makers, this story is about another type of giant, the one behind the scenes. Barbara Allison, who sadly passed on in February 2026, was a dear colleague and friend who worked with The Nature Conservancy for three decades and who generously contributed to CCNet’s development since we were just a

fledgling network.

Barbara was instrumental in organizing six CCNet Rallies in the U.S.A, Mexico, and Spain and helped train others so we could continue her great example. She brought professionalism, creativity, and flair to our vibrant gatherings, infusing them with a sense of community, thoughtful touches, and contagious joy.

In everything she did, Barbara always gave her best, and often far beyond what was asked. She elevated and celebrated others while shying away from praise herself. Behind the scenes, she worked tirelessly to make complex work possible. Meticulous with details, fiercely loyal, and endlessly generous, she had a remarkable ability to bring order, humor, and humanity to everything she touched.

Please join us by expressing gratitude for Barbara, a quiet giant who as Bob Burns said “humbly held the earth together for all of us” and whose impact will continue to ripple through the conservation community for years to come.



*Those of us who worked with Barbara remember her love of flamingos. Among many contributions, she supported conservation projects in her home state, Florida, to protect them and often wore flamingo jewelry. Photo (above): Flamingos at the Celestun Biosphere Reserve, Mexico. Photo by Cristina Lasch.*

## Coaches Around the World



*The Key Habitats Program team takes from planning to restore some mangroves. Photo by DCNA.*

## **A Plan Built to Last: Reflections on a Year with the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance**

**Story by [Josh Noseworthy](#) (Global Conservation Solutions)**

Over the past year, my team and I had the privilege of walking alongside the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA) and its island partners as they built something truly ambitious for nature: a regional conservation and restoration program spanning Aruba, Curaçao, Bonaire, Saba, St. Eustatius, and St. Maarten.

The Dutch Caribbean is home to extraordinary biodiversity, much of which I've had the fortunate opportunity to witness firsthand: Coral reefs, seagrass meadows, mangroves, tropical dry forests, and tropical wet forests. These ecosystems sustain fisheries, tourism, and coastal protection across the islands. But they are also under mounting pressure from climate change, coastal development, wastewater discharge, invasive species, and free-roaming grazers. The need for coordinated, long-term action was clear. The real question was how to design a plan robust enough to match the scale of the challenge.

What stands out most to me is not simply the final document, but the integrity of the process used to build it.

From the beginning, DCNA demonstrated a deep commitment to following the Conservation Standards step by step. We did not jump ahead to solutions. We assessed ecosystem health before setting goals. We ranked pressures before exploring solutions. We developed theories of change before writing objectives. Each decision was grounded in evidence generated in the previous step. That discipline ensured transparency. It also ensured that when difficult trade-offs arose, they were navigated based on shared understanding rather than assumption.

The conversations were rigorous. When habitat assessments showed coral reefs at roughly 8% live hard coral cover remaining across the region, the trade-offs required for meaningful recovery became tangible. When terrestrial analyses revealed that less than 5% of tropical dry forest and scrub was free from invasive grazers, we reframed discussions about restoration and the short-term priorities for implementation. These were not abstract numbers. They shaped the strategy.

Partway through the process, we had the opportunity to meet in person on Bonaire. Stepping out of the office and standing in a mangrove forest under active restoration added a different layer of perspective. Contributing to the hands-on work underway grounded the

strategy in lived reality. It reminded all of us that this plan is not theoretical. It is designed to scale and strengthen the great work already happening across the islands.

The resulting program is ambitious, extending all the way out to the year 2100, with clearly articulated goals, measurable indicators, and defined pathways for action. But what gives me confidence is not the ambition. It is the ownership. The plan belongs to DCNA and its partners. It was built by those who will implement it. Our role at Global Conservation Solutions was simply to help safeguard the structural integrity of the adaptive management framework so that decisions were defensible, transparent, and built to last.

When conservation planning is done well, it does more than produce a document. It creates shared clarity and a durable foundation for coordinated action. After a year working with DCNA, I am not only proud of the final product, but deeply optimistic about what comes next for nature in the Dutch Caribbean.

You can learn more about the Key Habitats Program and download the full plan [here](#).



*Participants at the Conservation Standards training in Mongolia. Photo by CCNet Mongolia.*

## **Conservation Standards Training in Mongolia**

### **Story from [Bolor Radnaabazar](#) (CCNet Mongolia)**

In November 2025, CCNet Mongolia organized a five-day Conservation Standards training at Khustain Nuruu National Park. Representatives from the Administration of Orkhon Valley National Park, Gorkhi-Terelj National Park, Khangai Mountain Range National Park, and the Mongolian Nature's Legacy Foundation, the "Eternal Mongolia" program, and the GiZ Mongolia/SPACE project participated in the training. They learned conservation standards for developing a strategic monitoring plan for nature conservation and its implementation based on real examples from their respective parks. Read about how the training is being

applied in Gorkhi-Terelj National Park [here](#) and about a participant's experiences [here](#).

We are grateful to our dedicated participants who worked hard from dawn to dusk to master new methodologies, and to our teachers, B.Munkhchuluun, A.Uyanga, P.Gerlee, and B.Bilguun, who took the trouble of traveling back and forth between Ulaanbaatar and Khustai each day to teach us (it usually takes a half day in high traffic!). Special thanks also to John Morrison, CCNet Global coordinator, who joined us and generously shared his knowledge.

We would also like to express our deep gratitude to the Mongolian Nature Legacy Foundation, Wildlife Conservation Society in Mongolia, and WWF Mongolia for their support in sponsoring the training, and to the Administration of Hustai National Park for providing a comfortable and welcoming environment for five days of training.

The training concluded joyfully on the anniversary of Mongolia's National Independence Day, leaving participants and teachers inspired to contribute to our country's future. May the good work of conservation continue to flourish.



*A training participant works on a hands-on conservation planning activity (left). Training participants celebrate their certificates of achievement (right). Photos courtesy of CCNet Mongolia.*



*The rock called “Melkhii Khad” is considered a symbol of Gorkhi-Terelj National Park. It is very popular in Mongolia because of its shape as a turtle.*

## **Conservation Standards Training Helps Develop New Management Plan for Mongolia’s Most Popular National Park**

### ***Story from Ms. Siilegmaa Choijilsuren (Senior Officer, Gorkhi-Terelj National Park)***

Gorkhi-Terelj National Park is the most popular and crowded Protected Area in Mongolia. It has unique natural beauty and is the closest to the capital city, Ulaanbaatar. In November 2025, officers and rangers of Gorkhi Terelj attended a training on effective planning for Protected Area management based on the Conservation Standards. The training was timely because our management plan had expired and a new one needed to be developed. Within the framework of the training, we learned and practiced methodologies related to developing an operational plan and a monitoring plan for identifying conservation values and assessing threats.

Since the training, employees who participated have brought the new methodology to the rest of our team, and we have started the development of a new management plan for 2026-2036. We are now in the middle of the process of creating a new plan based on the Conservation Standards. The draft plans we prepared during the training, and the recommendations of the trainers, have greatly helped our work.

We would like to thank the team who supported us in our professional work, and we wish everyone else who participated in the training success in their work as well.



*Ms. Siilegmaa Choijilsuren (standing on the right side) poses with other participants from the Gorkhi-Terelj National Park and the co-leader of CCNet Mongolia after the certificate handover ceremony of a recent Conservation Standards training in Mongolia.*



Ms. Munkhjin Tserennadmid during the Conservation Standards training in Mongolia.

## My Conservation Standards Training Experience: Applying Classroom Concepts and Building Community

### *Story from Ms. Munkhjin Tserennadmid (Mongolian Nature's Legacy Foundation)*

In November 2025, I had the opportunity to participate in a five-day Conservation Standards training workshop at Hustai National Park in Mongolia. The experience was both inspiring and practical.

During the workshop, I worked closely with protected area administrations and park rangers from the Khangai region. With guidance from our mentors, our team developed a Theory of Change and a draft conservation management and implementation plan for the region. As someone who studied environmental policy, it was especially meaningful to apply concepts I had learned in the classroom to real conservation planning on the ground. Learning directly from park rangers and practitioners who manage these landscapes every day was incredibly valuable.

The training itself was well structured and gave us a clear understanding of the detailed steps involved in developing effective conservation management plans. What stood out most was the collaborative learning environment. Participants openly shared their experiences, challenges, and ideas, which made the discussions very practical and engaging. I also appreciated the supportive atmosphere created by the coaches. Beyond the technical learning, the workshop also created strong friendships and a sense of community among participants.

Today, I continue to use the knowledge and skills I gained from the training. In my role as Grants and Sustainable Tourism Officer at the Mongolian Nature's Legacy Foundation, I now support protected areas as a coach, helping them update their management plans using the Conservation Standards framework. I'm grateful to CCNet for this meaningful learning experience and the network of colleagues and friends it helped build.



*Participants at the Conservation Coach Training in the UK (left). Photo courtesy of CCNet Europe. Coaches-in-training on a field trip to the Avalon Marshes (right). Photo by Beatriu Tenas Torres.*

## **CCNet Europe's First UK Coach Training**

**Story by [Vinaya Swaminathan](#) (FOS)**

In January, CCNet Europe hosted its first-ever conservation coach training in the United Kingdom with trainers Catherine Payne, John Morrison, and Vinaya Swaminathan. Set against the peaceful backdrop of the Ammerdown Retreat Centre near Bath, the week was a melting pot of global expertise and shared purpose. While the location was quintessentially English, the perspectives were truly international, with 23 high-caliber coaches-in-training from across Europe as well as from Latin America and Africa each bringing unique challenges from their home landscapes.

“Practicing what we preach,” the trainers built upon the successes and lessons learned from new approaches trialed at the last CCNet Europe coach training in Croatia. The result was a safe learning environment where peers challenged and supported one another. The training provided insights that will contribute to the ongoing evolution of how our community trains emerging Conservation Coaches.

Based on the evaluation feedback, participants took away from their experience:

- Greater confidence and skill in coaching teams in the use of the Conservation Standards
- A deeper sense of community, culture, and connection among this cohort of coaches and CCNet more generally
- Intensive learning, hands-on practice, and constructive feedback, with every minute of the agenda enriching the coaching journey
- Renewed commitment to conservation

For many, inspiration came not only from the training, but also from the sky. During a field trip to the Avalon Marshes, led by former CCNet Europe board member Peter Cranswick, the group watched in awe as hundreds of thousands of starlings completed their evening

murmuration. Watching those breathtaking, fluid shapes shift against the dusk was a powerful reminder of why we do this work: to protect the complex, amazing systems that sustain us.

We left the UK coaches training with a new cohort of skilled coaches, but also with a strengthened European network, several more friends, and the memory of those starlings reminding us that when we move together with purpose, we can create something truly spectacular.



*Participants at recent Conservation Standards trainings for WWF India.*

## **Reviving Conservation Standards Trainings and Coaching in South Asia**

### **Story from [John Morrison](#) (WWF and CCNet Global)**

While on sabbatical this past fall, I spent several weeks in South Asia training staff from WWF Bhutan, the Bhutan government's Nature Conservation Division, and WWF India. This effort generated significant interest in a coach training in the region in the medium-term future. A South Asia regional network was briefly part of CCNet some years ago, but it faded away due to leadership issues – we are hoping that we can reinvigorate it. If you have an interest in participating, or know people who are interested (and qualified) to participate in a coach training in South Asia, [let me know](#).



*Coach John Morrison poses with participants, including government officials, at recent trainings in Bhutan.*



*Participants and trainers at the coach training in Georgia, USA.*

## **CCNet North America Host New Coach Training**

### **Story from [John Morrison](#) (WWF and CCNet Global)**

In the countryside north of Atlanta, Georgia, in early November 2025, three coaches from CCNet North America led a new coach training for sixteen participants from the University of Maine, WWF GEF team, The Peregrine Fund, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, Auburn University, the International Crane Foundation, the Setting Sun Institute, and a number of private consultancies. In addition to in-depth, hands-on sessions, the training included a pleasant afternoon field trip led by Georgia staff at the Mt. Arabia National Heritage Area.

The instructors for this training were Quinn Shurtliff (NaturePlan and CCNet North America), Jim Goetz (Vermont Center for Ecostudies and CCNet North America and CCNet Latin America), and John Morrison (WWF and CCNet Global).

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## Share Your Stories

CCNet Stories comes out approximately once per quarter. You can submit stories for upcoming newsletters at any time and we'll feature them in the next issue.

To share job openings, upcoming trainings, and other announcements, please use the CCNet [listserv](#).

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**Contact CCNet Global:**

[John Morrison](#) (CCNet Global Coordinator)

[Cristina Lasch](#) (CCNet Technical Coordinator)

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