

Who We Are

PHA Pterocarpus Forest, Inc. — also known as *The Friends of the Pterocarpus Forest* — is a volunteer-led nonprofit organization committed to conserving, interpreting, and promoting the Pterocarpus Forest, a rare and endangered freshwater swamp forest located in Palmas del Mar, Humacao, Puerto Rico.

The 55-acre Forest is dominated by the towering *Pterocarpus officinalis* tree and supports an extraordinary variety of life. Ongoing research has documented over **370 species of flora, fauna, and fungi**, a dramatic increase from the 96 species identified in a 2010 baseline study. These findings are publicly available through our living catalog on iNaturalist, which features over 2,500 documented observations and helps position the Forest as a dynamic outdoor environmental classroom.

For over a decade, the Friends have raised funds and organized efforts to ensure that the Forest remains accessible — in perpetuity — for passive recreation, environmental education, and research. We maintain interpretive signage in Spanish and English, a QR-code-based self-guided tour, and a bilingual website and social media presence to engage and educate the public.

Our work began in 2010, when we partnered with the Palmas del Mar Homeowners Association, the Puerto Rico Conservation Trust (*Para la Naturaleza*), the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and many individual donors to rescue a moribund forest ravaged by decades of neglect. In just five years, we helped restore it into one of the Caribbean's most vibrant swamp ecosystems — a unique ecotourism destination and vital community resource.

Today, with the continued support of donors and volunteers, we remain committed to conserving this irreplaceable ecosystem, amplifying its scientific and educational value, and ensuring its protection for future generations.