

Coaches Around the World continued

Barrier Island Conserves Ring-tailed Lemurs and Other Unique Resources

From [Robert Sutter](#), Senior Conservation Ecologist, *Enduring Conservation Outcomes*:



Ring-tailed lemurs © Sara Gottlieb/TNC.

St. Catherine's Island is one of eight large barrier islands along the coast of Georgia, in the United States. While it shares a diverse mix of ecological and cultural resources with the other barrier islands, St. Catherine's stands out as the site of globally significant archaeological and Spanish colonial sites and the ring-tailed lemurs that inhabit the island. These unique resources have fostered a rich history of research, education, and conservation. As a privately owned island, these extensive efforts have all been supported by a private foundation, all for the public good.

In late 2012, the foundation hired Enduring Conservation Outcomes (ECO) to complete a Strategic Conservation Plan for the island. ECO teamed with Greg Low (Applied Conservation, LLC) and Sara Gottlieb (TNC, Georgia) and used the Open Standards to structure a plan. Encompassing the island's special place in history and unique natural resources, the plan identified a diverse and unusual suite of conservation targets:

- Ecological resources
 - Six species (e.g. loggerhead sea turtles, shorebirds, colonial nesting birds)
 - Five ecological systems (e.g. beach and dune, maritime live oak forests, maritime longleaf pine woodlands)
- Archaeological resources
 - Earliest pottery (fiber-tempered ceramics) in North America
 - Earliest burial mounds in the American Southeast
 - Site of Mission Santa Catalina de Guale, founded sometime between 1570 to 1580
 - Village of an estimated 1,000 Guale Indians that neighbored the Mission
- Historical resources
 - Colonial, antebellum, and postbellum sites and structures
 - Wildlife Survival Center – a breeding facility for rare and endangered species operated by the Wildlife Conservation Society from 1974 to 2007
 - Buildings, fences, etc
 - Free-ranging population of ring-tailed lemurs (the only one outside of Madagascar)

Developing an array of comprehensive and detailed conservation, programmatic, and management strategies for these targets presented a huge challenge; however, the team successfully outlined 104 specific actions and assessed the timeframe, responsible parties, costs, priorities, and measures of success for each. To drill down to the fine details of the strategic actions, the project team compiled information from extensive interviews of 41 researchers, regional experts, and staff. These strategic actions ranged from provisioning lemurs and removing wild hogs to providing additional refrigerators in housing for researchers and creating signage for historical and archaeological structures and sites.