

# El Boldo – three years on

by Denise Astoreca, Corporación Bosques de Zapallar



Map of El Boldo and the Mediterranean forest corridor.

Three years have passed since Corporación Bosques de Zapallar (CBZ) was entrusted with the conservation of the 75 hectares of El Boldo hill, now known as Parque El Boldo. During this time there has been important progress in its conservation and also awareness among the community that a valuable forest is being preserved for their well being and enjoyment.

CBZ has not been alone in this task, but has benefitted from the generous help of Rainforest Concern from the start, who believes in the importance of this forest and has constantly encouraged every effort made

towards its protection. Thus CBZ had a master plan drawn up to ensure that the necessary steps would be taken to make Parque El Boldo an example of conservation for the area, as these 75 hectares are a small fraction of the hills extending to the south east of Zapallar covered by similar native forest.

In 2012, thanks to the Planet Foundation and Rainforest Concern, CBZ was able to start working on the most urgent tasks outlined in the Master Plan, and by the end of 2013, Parque El Boldo has its first signed trail to El Cristo, fences constructed where cattle used to enter the

property, and hundreds of invasive trees (*pittusporum undulatum*) eliminated. Guided tours take small groups of people up the trail and an agreement with the local authority was reached for taking school children from the local schools with their teachers into the forest. A guide book was given to each student to fill in with observations and drawings. Likewise, Universidad del Desarrollo uses Parque El Boldo for student research projects and scientific investigation. Apart from having a positive effect on both parties, these agreements have allowed CBZ to obtain certificates for tax exemptions which benefit businesses that make donations to CBZ. Hopefully this will encourage local businesses to finance some of our projects.

One of our most urgent projects for this year is the mist trapping device



Alstroemeria is a native of the Park.

Valentina Tagle

Valentina Tagle



Gabriel Rodríguez

The new trails and signs at the Reserve.

designed specifically for El Boldo by an environmental architect. Chile has been suffering from drought since 2011 and the central area is the most seriously affected. If it was not for the mist constantly coming in from the sea the forest would now be drying up, and even with the mist one can scarcely see any water in the creeks or springs deep in the forest. There were also much fewer flowers during spring and summer. Mist trapping has proved to be efficient in producing water in northern areas of the country where it is used for agricultural and domestic purposes, so it could also be a great help to Parque El Boldo in some specific areas.

### Expanding the protected area

At the same time as working in El Boldo Park, CBZ has been trying to get other landowners in the area, whose properties have Mediterranean forest, to take steps towards protecting all or part of their land. Because of the high prices of land in this region, it is not an option to buy large areas; also landowners hesitate

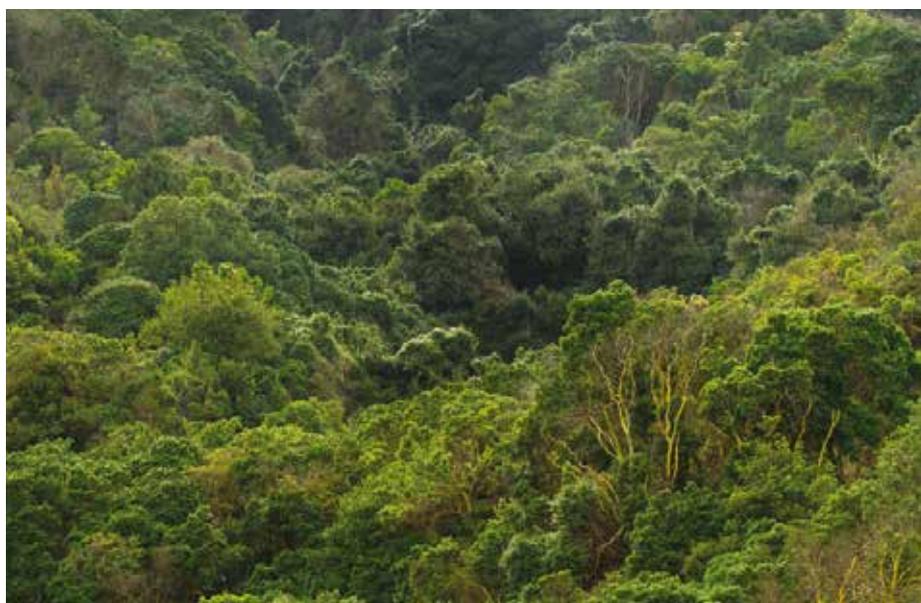
to make permanent commitments to conservation that they may later regret, so the process is slow.

However, there have been positive results. In the area of Las Cenizas, where several owners have expressed their intentions of protecting the forests, one of them has agreed to

subscribe to the same legal figure that CBZ and El Boldo arrived at, and protect permanently 250 hectares of land (known as La Judea). This legal figure is explained by Federico Ringeling, board member and executive of CBZ: “The ownership does not change hands; rather the land is under an easement by which its destiny can only be the conservation of the forest, and CBZ is responsible for this purpose”.

With the signing of La Judea agreement the protected area will increase from 75 to 320 hectares, a big step toward protecting the corridor of Mediterranean forest known as Bosques de Zapallar.

Perhaps even more important is that all this activity has attracted attention among the community and there are more people interested in visiting the Park. As a result, landowners on both boundaries of Parque El Boldo have shown an interest in reaching an agreement with CBZ, as they realise that if they protect the higher part of the hills, the land below will gain value. This will be key to the future of Zapallar’s coastal forests: in an area where land is so highly valued, it represents a win-win solution for both the forests and the landowners.



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The forests of El Boldo are sustained by the Pacific mists.