Work Plan for the Red Siskin Conservation

Executive Summary
The Red Siskin Initiative (RSI) is an international partnership of public and private institutions, communities, and individuals working to help understand, protect, and restore self-sustaining populations of this species across its natural historic range. The core strategies proposed by the Initiative will allow the Red Siskin to become a symbol of Venezuela’s commitment to the preservation of its natural heritage. In turn, we hope this will inspire more conservation actions.
The five axes in the Red Siskin Initiative are:

- **Understanding the Red Siskin:** The Red Siskin used to be a very common bird; however, little is known about it from a scientific perspective. Our researchers are focusing their efforts on the fieldwork and laboratory assays to better understand the behavior and ecology of the species.

- **Rescuing, raising and reintroducing more Red Siskins:** The population of Red Siskins in the wild has been decimated, which compromises their ability to recover on their own. This is why it is necessary to raise them in captivity and reintroduce them into nature. The Smithsonian Institution and Parque Zoológico y Botánico Bararida are working together on this.

- **Connecting with people:** Human overexploitation is the main threat to the Red Siskin; however, people are also the main solution to this problem. With education programs aimed at diverse key stakeholders such as schools, rural communities, aviculturalists, and the general public, we will generate and strengthen the sense of belonging and attachment to this species as a national symbol.
• **Ensuring safer habitats:** In the future, Red Siskins will be reintroduced in shade coffee and other biodiversity-friendly farms near large areas of suitable protected habitat. These farms will be certified as *Bird-friendly®* habitat by the Smithsonian certification program. In Guyana, we are working with BirdLife International to designate Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs). These locations will serve as safe habitats for the Red Siskin and many other species.

• **Halting illegal trafficking:** Our work to understand the structure of illegal wildlife trade in Venezuela, develop effective interventions to reduce it, and help train public officials in how to more effectively fulfill their functions will lead to a better future for the Red Siskin and other species that are victims of trafficking. We work with institutions such as the National Guard, environmental prosecutors, and park rangers to enhance law enforcement and traffic prevention.

**These activities are carried out with the valued contribution of ally organizations and private funders. Since 2012, we have raised more than **450,000 USD** through grants applications, public tenders and individual donations. However, our work is far from over; our mission is to save the entire species from extinction. Below**
If you wish to know more information about how to make a contribution, how this could be an advertising medium for your organization, brand positioning, corporate liability or as a tax deductible donation, please contact us:

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The Smithsonian Institution: Is the world’s largest museum and research institution. Over the past decade, the Smithsonian has had a central mission of “Understanding and Sustaining a Biodiverse Planet”. The Red Siskin Initiative is a showcase example of their multidisciplinary approach, involving more than a dozen Smithsonian and others. For the proposed work, Smithsonian partners will work closely with Venezuelan partners scientists including geneticists, field ecologists, ornithologists, zoo curators, breeding experts on program coordination and fund administration, to leverage all funding in order to sustain project support into the future. See: www.si.edu/

Provita: Founded in 1987, Provita is a Venezuelan non-governmental organization and nonprofit whose mission is to conserve the environment in its broadest sense, with an emphasis on threatened species and environments. Provita combines the knowledge and methods of the natural and social sciences in the search for solutions to conservation problems. Currently, Provita is considered one of the strongest and most reliable environmental organizations in Venezuela. They are the only Venezuelan NGO with a proven track record of mitigating threats other endangered bird species, including the Margarita Island Parrot (Amazona barbadensis), and they have produced important publications, including the Venezuelan Red Lists of Fauna, of Flora and of Ecosystems. Provita is the institutional leader for the Red Siskin Initiative in Venezuela. See: www.provitaonline.org
**Instituto Venezolano de Investigaciones Científicas (IVIC):** Has a mission of generating, publishing, and providing advice regarding new knowledge obtained through scientific research, technological advancement, and higher education. IVIC has extensive experience in ecological research on this species thanks to previous and ongoing projects funded by the National Fund for Science and Technology (FONACIT, for its initials in Spanish). See: [www.ivic.gob.ve](http://www.ivic.gob.ve)

**South Rupununi Conservation Society (SRCS):** Is a conservation organization based in south Guyana, founded in 2003 to monitor and protect local populations of the endangered Red Siskin, following its discovery there by the Smithsonian Institution and others in 2001. The SRCS is mainly committed to local conservation in the communities where Red Siskins are found, along with other bird habitats and natural heritage important to the region. The Society conducts field research, training and educational activities, environmental education in schools and villages, and it develops sustainable practices and approaches for community participation in biodiversity conservation. See: [http://www.srcs.gy/](http://www.srcs.gy/)

**Parque Zoológico y Botánico Bararida:** It is located in the city of Barquisimeto (in western Venezuela), it is a government institutions dedicated to education, wildlife conservation and research, as well as visitors and recreation. Its facilities will be the home base for rescue and rehabilitation of Red Siskins confiscated from the illegal wildlife trade, as well as conservation breeding and reintroduction. Also, its extensive contact with the community where it is located, one of the largest hubs for illegal wildlife trade in Venezuela, place them perfectly to conduct educational campaigns targeted at trappers, sellers, aviculturalists, policy-makers, law enforcement, and the general public.

**Colección Ornitológica W. H. Phelps:** It is an ornithological collection founded by William H. Phelps in 1938. It is one of the greatest ornithological collections in Latin America. It has more than 80,000 individuals and 1,500 skeletons that represent 1,417 bird species in Venezuela. The collection is also an investigation center that provides support to scientists, especially for those who work in the taxonomy field. The research work of this institution has allowed the identification of 246 new species and subspecies for Venezuela. Its ornithology library is the largest in the country with more than 6,000 books available.