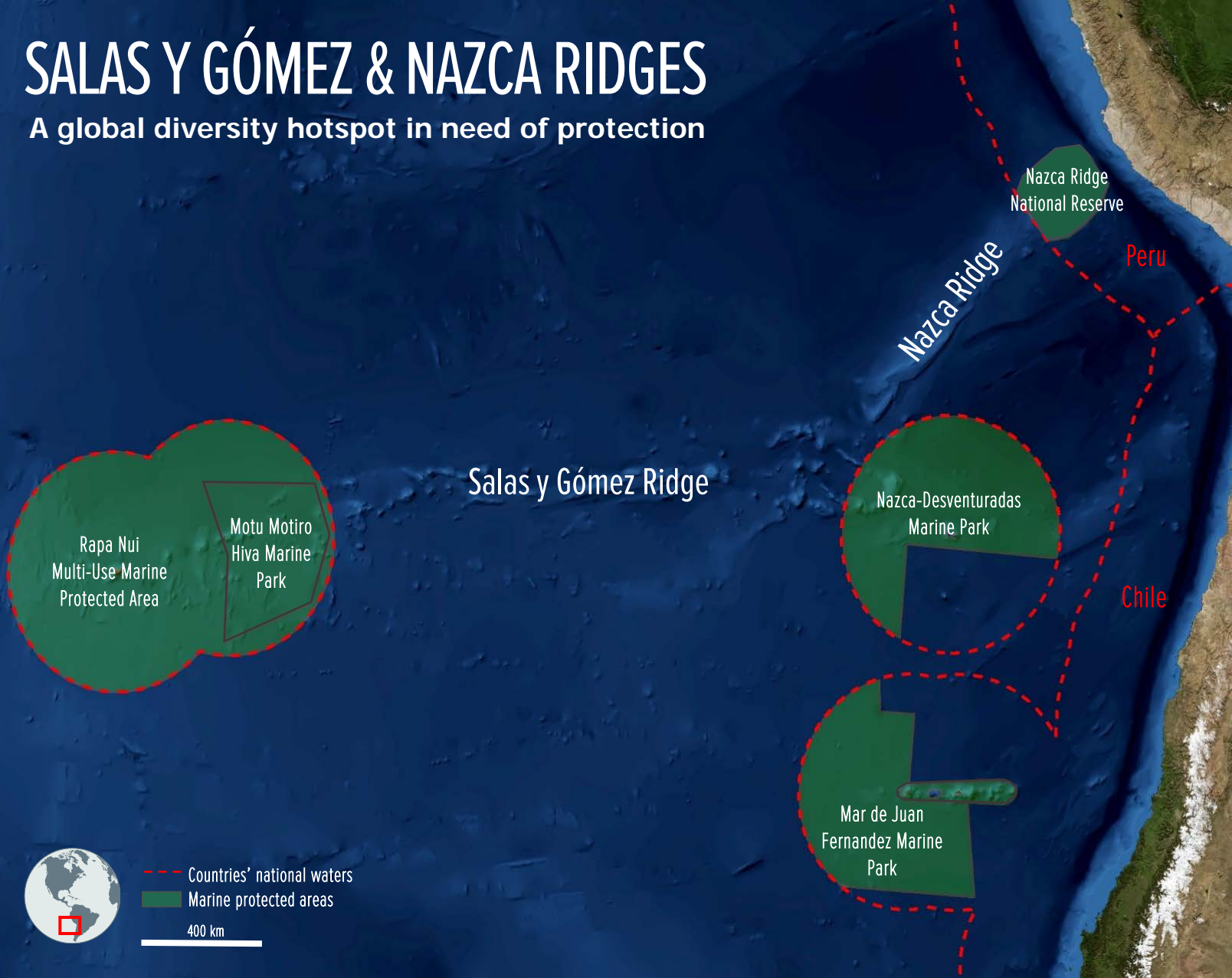


# SALAS Y GÓMEZ & NAZCA RIDGES

A global diversity hotspot in need of protection



The Salas y Gómez and Nazca ridges are one of the most unique diversity hotspots on Earth. Located off the west coast of South America, they include over 110 seamounts that stretch across 2,900 kilometers.



Over 73% of these ridges lie in areas beyond national jurisdiction, where they are unprotected and under threat from overfishing, plastic pollution, climate change, and potential deep-sea mining.



The region harbors one of the most unique collections of ecosystems and species on Earth. For many groups of organisms, nearly half of the species are endemic to the region and found nowhere else on our planet.



The ridges provide critical habitats and migration corridors for whales, sea turtles, and numerous other ecologically important species, including 82 threatened or endangered species.



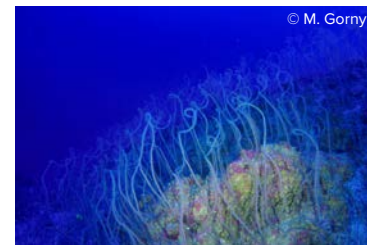
The Salas y Gómez and Nazca ridges represent the easternmost corner of the Polynesian Triangle, a region with an exceptionally rich and long history of seafaring cultures.



Due to its high productivity, the region provides important feeding grounds for a wide variety of seabirds.



Recent explorations in this region have documented one of the deepest light-dependent coral reefs on Earth, as well as numerous species that are new to science.



Commercial activity is still low in this region. We must act now to protect its unique resources before they are lost forever.

# THE SALAS Y GÓMEZ AND NAZCA RIDGES:

## A Global Diversity Hotspot in Need of Protection

### A unique region of natural and cultural significance on the high seas

The Salas y Gómez and Nazca ridges are two underwater mountain chains that stretch across 2,900 kilometers (1,800 miles) in the southeastern Pacific Ocean.

Isolated from the coasts of Chile and Peru by the Humboldt Current and a deep trench, this region contains over 110 seamounts with unique ecosystems and some of the highest levels of endemic marine biodiversity on Earth. For many groups of organisms, nearly half the species found in this region live nowhere else on our planet.

Threatened whales and sea turtles migrate across these ridges to feed and breed. Seabirds forage among them. And due to the water's exceptional clarity, they are home to some of the deepest light-dependent coral reefs on Earth.

In all, 82 threatened or endangered species inhabit these waters, as well as many other ecologically important species, including many that have only recently been discovered.

Not only is this region a biodiversity hotspot, it is also culturally significant as Polynesian and other seafarers have recognized its importance for centuries. The ridges are anchored on the west by the island of Rapa Nui, also known as Easter Island, one of the most renowned archaeological sites on Earth.

### A unique opportunity for conservation

Due to their exceptional natural and cultural significance, the Salas y Gómez and Nazca ridges are one of the most important areas to protect on the high seas.

While Chile and Peru recently established marine protected areas in this region, these efforts do not protect most of the Salas y Gómez and Nazca ridges.

The majority of these ridges lie outside of national jurisdictions and are under threat from overfishing, plastic pollution, climate change, and potential deep-sea mining.

Recent conservation efforts by Chile and Peru could be undermined if surrounding ecosystems beyond national jurisdiction are not protected. This is particularly important, because the high seas in this region are known to serve as essential migration corridors for numerous species.



## Now is the time to act

Nearly two thirds of the global ocean lies beyond the jurisdiction of any nation. This vast and largely unexplored expanse provides critical habitat for millions of species, yet only about 1 percent of these remote waters are protected.

Multiple organizations regulate fishing, shipping, and mining on the high seas, but there is no coordinated effort focusing on conservation. This piecemeal approach makes management less effective.

At the United Nations, negotiations are underway for a treaty to allow countries to establish marine protected areas on the high seas to support biodiversity, conservation, and climate resilience.

High seas marine protected areas will be essential in achieving the global goal of protecting at least 30 percent of the world's ocean — which is necessary to limit the widespread impacts of climate change and prevent species extinctions.

The Salas y Gómez and Nazca ridges have been identified as a prime candidate for conservation by numerous international organizations including the Conference of the Parties to the Convention of Biological Diversity, the Global Census of Marine Life on Seamounts, the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative, BirdLife International, Mission Blue, and the Pew Charitable Trusts. Multiple scientific studies concluded that these ridges are among the most ecologically and culturally important areas on the high seas.

To date, commercial fishing in this region has been limited, and deep-sea mineral exploration has not occurred, providing a window of opportunity to protect this area without significantly impacting those industries.

Protecting these areas would provide a global example for conservation — one that unites countries with shared interests and ecosystems.

## How to protect this unique region

To safeguard the unique natural and cultural resources of the Salas y Gómez and Nazca ridges, we propose:

- Closing this region to fishing activities regulated by the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission.
- Closing this region to seabed mining activities regulated by the International Seabed Authority.
- Establishing a high seas marine protected area in this region once the United Nations Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction is finalized and comes into force.

