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[The Huarango Tree an ancient tree with a short future](#)

Nov,03

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In the area known as Ica which is just south of Peru there is a small grove of Huarango trees an endangered species that has been around for thousands of years. The grove of trees is located at the edge of the city of Ica along the many sand dunes that dominate the environment. This tree has been used for thousands of years by inhabitants of the desert supplying them with food and timber but in recent times these trees are becoming more scarce due to over cultivation by the local people.

The Huarango tree has existed in this area of south America since before the Hispanic civilisations. Later explorers from Spain noted down these vast areas of Huarango forests in notes that were taken during the voyages. Today Environmentalists have expressed great concern over what is left of this fragile yet important tree. There are only remnants of these ancient trees left and they are being threatened by local villagers who cut down the trees use as charcoal when cooking.

Even with the authorities enforcing the bans on cutting down the trees in this area many villagers ignore the bans and continue to cut down the Huarango trees. Villagers work at night using handsaws to avoid detection and move the wood using donkeys to be sold at various market places.

These trees have been in the firing line for centuries with a long history of deforestation of the Huarango to the point where there is only about 1 percent of the original remaining. This species of tree is important to the region as it is one of the only species of tree that has adapted well to the desert ecosystem in this area. The Huarango tree has adapted to the desert conditions by its ability to capture moisture from the sea to the west and also access subterranean water using a very long tap root.

The remaining tracts of Huarango trees and their preservation has become part of a British study that has investigated the effects of ancient civilizations that cleared large areas of the Huarango tree to create the Nazca lines and areas for cropping. The study was able to show that clearing of these large areas of trees had caused significant environmental problems in the areas such as high winds, erosion and also flooding.

Saving the Huarango tree is going to be an uphill battle with many impoverished villages taking their chances cutting down these trees so that they can earn a living.

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