

2008

Iracambi Annual Report



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*2008 will be remembered as the Year of the Crisis
but, taking our lead from another semi-Kenyan,
we look forward to 2009 as the year of "Yes, we can".*

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Staff and volunteers

The Year of the Crisis meant we had to consolidate staff positions, so we end 2008 with Gustavo, Virgílio and Júnior now helping us as free lancers, whilst Marcelo continues to lead the Community Training project.

We had 54 volunteers in all in 2008: three of them there at the same time were called Moore and to add confusion two of them were called Kelly. We loved all of them – and we'd love to have (to avoid the obvious pun) others of the same.

The long term volunteers in 2008 were:

Alexandre Almeida who helped us with the development of Iracambi Soothing Soaps and left us to run his own natural products business, Amigos da Natureza;

Lindsey Brickle, who is doing her Masters degree in Sustainable International Development at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University joined us as Development Coordinator to help rationalize our fundraising work;

Kristin Wilcox, who has taken over the volunteer management from Gustavo;

Jemma Curry, who by the time this gets to the printer will be Jemma Dornelas, has been assisting the environmental education program



Community Training Project for the Serra do Brigadeiro

Training

The first part of the year was a time of intensive planning and training of our own staff and working with our partners on the strategy. The project was presented to the Serra do Brigadeiro Development Territory and others including the Federal University of Viçosa. In May, Iracambi organized the First Seminar of the Serra do Brigadeiro Territory on Payment for Environmental Services, held in Rosário da Limeira. This was the first time this topic has been publicly discussed in the region so,

naturally, it raised a lot of attention. Main participants were Limeira county officials, Territory staff, and representatives of the Federal University of Viçosa, the Federation of Rural Workers of Minas Gerais, and the Rural Workers Union.

In August, Iracambi joined with EMATER (the state agricultural extension agency) in organizing the first Seminar of the Serra do Brigadeiro Territory on Ecological Coffee Production, held in Rosário da Limeira. As part of our work to seek for alternative ways of generating income from forest land, we are exploring techniques for producing coffee that is both sustainable and not aggressive to the environment (without using toxic chemicals and exhausting the soils.) As an adjunct to the seminar, there was a coffee tasting for ecologically produced coffee. 60 samples were tasted by an independent taster, and the first prize was awarded to Joaquim de Melo who is one of Iracambi's partners in the program as well as being one of Amigos de Iracambi Brazil advisors. He was contacted immediately by a buyer from another region who wanted to buy his entire production for a price three times the market price for regular non-ecological coffee. To our great surprise, second prize was awarded to Iracambi - we had sent our small sample in only at

the last moment because we hadn't been able to prepare it properly and didn't think it was good enough.

Environmental Protection Areas

Continuing the work on the development of Environmental Protection Areas (APAs) in the *município* of Rosário da Limeira, Iracambi staff facilitated a number of participatory rural diagnoses of the communities in the APAs. We have been trying to do this for many years without success, but increased opportunities for people to express their opinions have resulted in a much more favorable climate for participatory diagnosis. Community members found the experience useful and are keen to continue as we are. This will considerably simplify the process of training APA management committees and creating management plans.

Agro-forestry program

We have planted 4000 native forest seedlings on an experimental plot which will be monitored on a continuous basis.

Building awareness about mining issues

Because of the engagement of the principal actors in local government elections, there were few opportunities to visit communities between the end of the coffee harvest (when nobody has time to attend meetings) and the onset of heavy rains in November. Nevertheless, in conjunction with our partners CEIFAR (a Muriaé based NGO closely associated with the union movement), we visited a number of communities in Muriaé and Miradouro. As the work on the infrastructure of the mining company's plant near Mirai reached completion, the company began laying people off, with the predictable result that those who had been in favor of the mining because of job opportunities have now changed their minds! The Crisis also brought a major fall in world commodity prices – the aluminum price fell to half its mid year value – and that will mostly likely cause the mining company to restrict its activities.

Audit

The external auditors came at the end of October on their annual audit visit. Their report is sent to the Inter-American Foundation who will release it to us in due course.

Payment for Environmental Services

Building on a project designed by volunteer Claire Parkes and one of the Kelly Moores, we began to look for funding for a pilot project that will allow participating farmers to be paid for watershed protection, biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration. The idea will be further developed as we get results from our ongoing research into watershed protection techniques. We have presented the concept in the Serra do Brigadeiro Territory Council with the aim of having the concept adopted as a Territory scheme. We want to link this with selling carbon credits so we are looking at ways of getting our re-forestation work certified for this purpose.



GIS project

At the beginning of the year, the GIS was much in demand for support to the studies on watershed management and reforestation, As part of the studies for PES, we made a land use map of Joaquim de Melo's farm, as a model of a typical farm in the area. We also did a comparison of the accuracy of file data gathered under different circumstances from the same location - which revealed significant discrepancies. This was not unexpected, but is an important factor to be taken into consideration when interpreting data.

Under the experienced hand of Cliff Jones, reinforced by a new and more powerful computer, we were able to consolidate previous work on the GIS and update some of the old data. Due to lack of continuity in the management of our GIS, there has been a lot of inconsistency in our data storage. We have now created a structure that will make it much easier for future users to access and store data.

Cliff handed over to one of the Moores (Cara) and, as a start to setting up the on-line Serra do Brigadeiro GIS, she made a new map of the Territory. You can see this on our site here: <http://www.iracambi.com/english/map.shtml>. We also put overlays on the Google Earth images of the Territory: you can see these (if you have Google Earth) at [www.iracambi.com/kmz_files/Serra do Brigadeiro Territory english.kmz](http://www.iracambi.com/kmz_files/Serra_do_Brigadeiro_Territory_english.kmz). This prompted Steven Eglinton, a former GIS coordinator, to come up with another on-line map using a different technology that doesn't depend on Google, and you can see this at www.geoenabling.com.

A generous donation from Richard and Alison Stites enabled us to buy some urgently need GIS software to go with the new computer we recently acquired for the GIS project.



Research

Ongoing research programs are:

- a study of natural resource use for household energy requirements, being done by Kelly Wilcox-Moore from Texas A & M
- a study of the socio-economic impact of bauxite mining in the area, by Lindsey Witthaus, a Fulbright Scholar from the University of Pennsylvania
- a farm forestry trial testing hypotheses on productive agro-forestry, by Luiza Vieira from Viçosa University, supervised by her professor
- the measurement of stream flows and water run off in the headwaters of the Graminha watershed by Monah Hillal from the Federal University of Ouro Preto. This is the continuation of a previous study on the impact of water shed conservation on water resources, providing important input for the payment for environmental services program.
- continuation of a butterfly inventory started in 2005. This was carried out Gareth Ventress, and the results can be seen on the Field Museum site <http://fm2.fieldmuseum.org/plantguides/guideimages.asp?ID=367&lang=eng>
- Charles and Celestria worked on monitoring water quality through observing bioindicators



Medicina da Mata

With Alexandre's guidance we helped local families to improve their techniques in making our Soothing Soaps. However, our final conclusion is that it is not practical for our rural community to make a product that will meet the requirements of the formal market. We have not been able to develop a base material (animal fat or a vegetable oil to substitute for glycerine) from local products and have had to rely on commercially available products that are bought in. This means that the added value is in reality very small. Furthermore, to maintain commercial standards, we will need chemical products (to stabilize acidity and solubility) that are not available locally, as well as more sophisticated equipment to monitor quality.

There is, however, an outlet for locally produced products to be sold locally (at Iracambi to visitors, or at local cultural events). If in the future the local producers wish to expand the scale of their production, they will need to formalize their group and invest in production quality and Iracambi will be ready to support them in this. Since we do not have resources to take this forward, we are not carrying out any activities related the project, but if we were to get funding we will take it up again.



Environmental Education

During the year, the program continued with the two local schools in Buracada and Graminha, and one or two classes at the São Pedro school. The Rosário da Limeira school chose not to participate in the program.

In spite of the efforts of our environmental education team, we have concluded that we are not making a sufficient impact in the schools, and we have decided to refocus our attention on bringing environmental education closer to the community by linking it with the activities related to the environmental protection areas. We will, however, continue the radio program, on a fortnightly basis, and we shall also continue to work with our neighborhood schools of Buracada and Graminha schools but we will not attempt to work with other schools.



Ecotourism

Intern Virgílio consolidated his work on ecotourism by visiting and befriending many of the local families, and drew up several interesting local tourism alternatives. He also organized a highly successful visit by members of the Muriaé Rotary Club and visiting US Rotarians who spent an enjoyable day visiting Iracambi and some of the local families. Virgílio has also been elected NGO representative to the Serra do Brigadeiro Tourist Circuit, while Gustavo was elected as municipal representative, thereby raising Iracambi's profile in the burgeoning scene of

community ecotourism.

In collaboration with CEPEC, a cultural development NGO in Araponga and long term colleague in the Serra do Brigadeiro Park council, Iracambi successfully applied to the Federal Ministry of Tourism for a grant for the development of community based tourism in the Serra do Brigadeiro area. Funds are expected to be released in mid 2009.



Fundraising

Naturally the Crisis has not helped Iracambi's funding. The hoped for meeting between the Inter-American Foundation, Partners of the Americas and potential Brazilian corporate sponsors fell victim to scheduling conflicts and has been postponed *sine die*. Our scintillating proposal to the Toyota Environment Fund to fund the GIS project must have suffered in translation to Japanese as it was not selected for funding.

In the meantime our GEF proposal which has been many years in the works and has suffered many alterations due to the changing priorities of GEF executing agencies and project criteria, is once again on the desk of the Brazilian Environmental Ministry: this time with support from the State Secretariat of the Environment.

We also submitted proposals for the Boticário foundation, the Alcan prize, the Finnish Fund for Local Cooperation, the Ford Conservation Prize and the UK government's Strategic Program Fund.



Iracambi was there

Iracambi was invited to participate in a seminar organized by the Minas Gerais State Legislature relating to issues concerning the impact of various major mining development projects in the State, including the bauxite mining project in this area.

Iracambi participated in a two day meeting of the Minas Gerais NGO Forum to discuss its position in the face of increasing pressure from Government and the industrial sector to ignore environmental issues in pushing for development. It resulted in a manifesto that was published, but did not resolve some other important issues such as a formal organization structure for the Forum and the Forum's relations with Government.

The Rotary Club of Muriaé, who visited us earlier in the year, invited us to make a presentation to them to commemorate National Forest Protection Day.

Iracambi attended a regional meeting in Belo Horizonte of The Network of Atlantic Forest NGOs (Rede das ONGs da Mata Atlântica) to discuss its participation in carbon trading. We also attended its Annual General Assembly of the Network in Rio de Janeiro, followed by a series of lectures and discussions, to mark Atlantic Forest Week.

In elections to the State Environmental Policy Council (COPAM) for the Zona da Mata region, Iracambi was re-elected to a seat to represent the NGOs. Iracambi continues to participate in regular meetings of the State Park Advisory Council, the NGO Forum, the mining commission, the Serra do Brigadeiro Development Territory and meetings of the county economic development committee.



Visitors

Philippa White, Director of The International Exchange (TIE) came to prepare the way for Iracambi to receive a professional volunteer to develop a communications strategy. This visit has now been scheduled for June 2009.

Seth Reice from the Biology Department and Friedericke Seeger, Director of the Study Abroad Program from the University of North Carolina came to see us to find out about bringing a group of students in 2009.

Heather Williams from Pomona College, in Claremont, California, paid us a visit after a couple of visits to Pomona by Binka. We hope that will encourage more visits from Pomona. Advisory Board member Rosana Cambraia came to help us set up a scheme for scholarships for undergraduate

science students, (iniciação científica) and we took advantage of a family visit to draft Professor Altair Assis, professor of physics at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, onto our scientific advisory council.



Amigos de Iracambi

Brazil

Amigos Brazil held its Annual General meeting in August and elected a new directorate.

UK

The current Chairman of Amigos de Iracambi UK, Samuel O'Connor, stepped down and Sarah Fletcher is taking up the banner: the final division of tasks has not yet been decided upon.

USA

Jean Duff, the Founding President of Amigos de Iracambi USA, also stepped down and Shane and Mary Robinson are taking over as the new president and vice-president. Our heartiest thanks to Jean for all her work on our behalf and all our best wishes to the new team.



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*Now, on to 2009 –
may the year of “Yes, we can” become the year of “Yes, we did”!*

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