



Iracambi Annual Report 2009



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2009 marked another date as unforgettable as 11 September 2001, but since it wasn't on a reality show or YouTube it escaped many people's notice. On 9 April 2009, the Wilkins Ice Shelf disintegrated, victim of climate change, releasing into the ocean a 14,000 sq km iceberg – about the size of Jamaica. What worries us is how few people seem to make the connection between the fall of Lehman Brothers, (economic collapse) and the disintegration of the Wilkins Shelf, (environmental

collapse.) The year ended with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change conference in Copenhagen which certainly gave plenty of airtime to the idea that our present life style is unsustainable, but did not stop the world's economists from insisting that we must return to 2007 growth levels to pull economies out of recession. Exactly how rewinding the film is going to help is something we haven't been able to figure out.....

Staff

Meanwhile at Iracambi several staff functions were reorganized during the year. *Gustavo* works on the Environmental Protection Areas, and has been elected the coordinator of the Serra do Brigadeiro Tourist Circuit. *Virgilio* works on tourism development for the county of Rosário da Limeira, and also on a community-based ecotourism project funded by the Federal Ministry of Tourism. *Jemma* took over environmental education and later volunteer coordination from *Kristin*, who left to start her Masters degree. Fundraiser *Lindsey* also returned to Brandeis, and sadly for us, gallant nursery manager *Toni* moved on to have more time for his art. On his watch the output from the nursery doubled to more than 5000 seedlings including 60 native tree species.

Volunteers and Interns

Heroic volunteer/intern efforts include:

- study of relationships/Iracambi/community and
- forest monitoring, (Brazilian interns;)
- effects of mining on family farms, (Desiree;)
- mining brochure, (Valerie, illustrated by Jeanette;)
- trails restoration, (Bryan and Captain Jack;)
- Film clips, (Jerome);
- Website reorganization, (Carlos);
- Stream studies and trail work, (17 person team, University of North Carolina.)

In the last quarter of the year, there was a marked fall-off in the numbers of new volunteers arriving. Whether this is down to the economic crisis, swine flu, the North Korean missile threat or even the collapse of the Wilkins Shelf, we don't as yet know, but we are working hard to find out.

Research

Muffi Forbes continued our bird inventory and without stepping off the refectory porch (she couldn't – it rained so much) managed to find a species new-to-Iracambi, the long tailed tyrant. She also saw another rarity, the ochre faced tody flycatcher.

Under the guidance of foresters Ted Karfakis and Kristy Rasmus, we have set out three Permanent Sample Plots in areas of regenerating old forest from which we are gathering data on forest composition and growth as a long term monitoring project

The study by Monah Hillah, from Ouro Preto Federal University, of water flows in the micro watershed of Graminha was completed. The objective was to gather data to help us establish criteria for water conservation measures that could be eligible for a payment for environmental services scheme.

Marcelo Amaral presented a paper at the II Latin American Agro-Forestry Congress on Agro-ecological Zoning in the buffer zone of the Serra do Brigadeiro Park, using the methodology of participative rural appraisal. The paper is very timely as agro-ecological zoning is an important tool in environmental management planning that is required by national policy. Minas Gerais is one of the first states to make use of the concept and it is being extended to other States.

Other research projects during the year: Chas and Celestria returned to continue the work that they had done last year on using aquatic fauna as biological indicators. Clairisse Nash did a study on *adrago* (*Croton urucurana*), Hannah studied the eucalyptus issue (is it an acceptable substitute as a cash crop, for coffee, if global warming, declining prices and increasing labor costs make coffee unviable?) and Desirée looked at the impact of mining on the small scale family farm. Bob van der Griende carried out a four month study on mortality rates in the agroforestry plot (around 10%), and Mike studied compliance standards for smallholder carbon sequestration.

Programs

I-GIS – Iracambi Geographic Information System

The Iracambi GIS had major input from two graduate students from Clark University (Kate and Yingzi) which enabled us to organize our data better and put more images up on the Google Earth and on the Geoenabling site.

Information Technology

The Iracambi IT, under the long-distance guidance of Mário Abreu, made great strides this year under the direction of Renaud Rousseau. Renaud completed the upgrade of the server and installed RAID capacity, set up a VOIP system, maintained the equipment and kept us on the air and in the clouds – no mean feat for a small system in the depths of the rainforest.

Inter American Foundation Project
Environmental Protection Areas (APAs)



One of our main objectives is to improve community conservation planning and we have completed much of the preliminary work of participatory rural diagnoses in the APAs in the counties of Limeira, Muriaé and Miradouro. At the county seminar on APAs Limeira county elected a management council and made proposals to update the environmental by laws. The newly minted management council then carried out a survey of farmers who wish to participate in a project to protect water resources by

planting around springs. Twenty farmers signed up and are now receiving seedlings from our nursery.

Payment for Environmental Services

Work has continued on developing a proposal for the Plan Vivo scheme, a way of registering and certifying smallholders who can receive carbon credits for reforestation. We are also working with county government to set up a pilot scheme related to farm forestry activities - inter planting native trees with commercial crops, or restoring areas of permanent preservation such as hilltops, stream gallery forest, and they have asked us to help them improve their environmental ranking and claim a larger share of green tax dollars.

Enterprise Development

As part of the strategy to stimulate productive family farm agriculture, we are working with the Serra do Brigadeiro Territory on a case study of the coffee production process.

EcoTourism

Iracambi has been elected to the county tourism committee, which is working with the Serra do Brigadeiro on a tourism development plan. Virgilio put together a series of tourist excursions including a highly successful three day forest hike, camping on the High Trail. The community based ecotourism development project also held its first meeting, with a large and enthusiastic attendance.

Governance

Amigos de Iracambi (Brasil)



Amigos de Iracambi continues to serve on the boards of the Serra do Brigadeiro State Park and the State Forestry Institute, as well as in the State Environmental Policy Council, the Executive Group of the Serra do Brigadeiro Rural Development Territory, the county sustainable development council, and the Forum of Environmental NGOs of Minas Gerais. Amigos celebrated its 10th anniversary on 20 September with

the annual general meeting of the Association followed by a barbecue and music for over a hundred friends, neighbors and colleagues.

Amigos de Iracambi (US)

Amigos US held a March meeting in Washington DC of the board and advisory panel, chaired by Shane Robinson and attended by Binka, as well as by Robin and Dale (thank you, Skype!) In November the energetic team of Iracambi supporters in Washington DC organized a Hot Brazilian Night fundraiser with Brazilian food and live band, which raised about \$3000. Thank you, all who took part, and especially Clayton who hosted the highly popular committee meetings to prepare for the event – each one crowned by a new example of his talent as a curry artist.

Amigos de Iracambi (UK)

Our special condolences went to Sarah Fletcher, Chairman elect of Amigos UK, who lost her father. The formation of the new board has been delayed while a new chair is sought.

Iracambi was There

World Social Forum

Amigos de Iracambi's President, Republic of Brazil's President Lula, and 50,000 others, paraded in pouring rain in Belém for the World Social Forum to demonstrate their concerns. Everyone had a good time, but it wasn't clear afterwards if all the problems of the world had been solved.

Binka's US tour (February) took her through the tail end of the Great Kentucky Ice Storm to Ohio, North Carolina, New York, Boston, London, Paris, Washington DC and Denver. She spoke at the universities in Dayton Ohio, Lexington, Kentucky, Asheville, North Carolina, Duke University, University of North Carolina, Brandeis, Emmanuel and American University in Washington, DC. She also had meetings with the Inter American Foundation and Partners of the Americas, both in Washington and Colorado.

NGO Forum

The Forum of Environmental NGOs of Minas Gerais met for a two day get-together to discuss the relationship between NGOs, the Government and industry – principally the mining industry.

Rede Mata Atlântica

During Atlantic Forest Week in June, the network of Mata Atlântica NGOs had its annual general meeting in São Paulo, attended by Marcelo. A new directorate was elected and a letter presented to the Minister of the Environment about changes in environmental law proposed by the government.

Biological Indicators Seminar

Iracambi also attended a seminar on bio-indicators hosted by the State agricultural research agency EPAMIG. This is in relation to the general move towards state policy on Payment for Environmental Services and, specifically, with the idea of forming local groups to monitor environmental changes.

Water Producers (Produtores de Água)

Robin attended a seminar in Brasilia held by the National Water Agency on Water Producers. The seminar focused on payment for environmental services related to conservation of water resources. Presentations were made featuring initiatives in different parts of the country, plus the pioneering experiences of Costa Rica and the City of New York. A draft law to define national policy on payment for water-related environmental services is being prepared, and the state government in Minas is also working in the same direction.

Organization of Biological Field Stations (OBFS)

The Iracambi Research Center is the only Brazilian member of OBFS, and this year attended the annual meeting at La Selva in Costa Rica. Other international Centers represented there were from Madagascar, Botswana, Costa Rica and Puerto Rico. It was great opportunity for Iracambi to learn from others about different ways of doing things and to reinforce links: we hope for more international exchanges as a result of this meeting.

Partners of the Americas

Ambassador Binka was in the US on a lecture tour in October/November where she visited the School for International Training in Vermont, Trinity College and St Josephs College in Hartford and Smith College in Northampton. She also participated in the Partners of the Americas International Conference on Volunteering and Higher Education in Washington DC where she chaired the closing panel discussion on Volunteer Programs and Positive Impact.

Seminar on Environmental Protection and Forestry Law

In December, Iracambi attended a seminar in Viçosa to present recent changes in the State forestry laws and discuss their impact on environmental protection. The previous laws defined areas of permanent protection very narrowly, excluding from agricultural use much of the cultivable land in our mountainous region: the new law offers improved opportunities for sustainable land management.

Technical Exchange and Important Visitors

Iracambi's long term partnership with *Partners of the Americas* brought us the visit of Betty Brown from Colorado to work with Virgílio on publicizing our community based ecotourism initiative, aimed at creating new sources of rural income for farmers who preserve their land and culture. Betty was accompanied by husband Roger who is an exceptional photographer, and the circle was



completed by the visit of the POA state president Luzia, who ventured down from Belo Horizonte to see if Iracambi is all it's cracked up to be.

Iracambi's partnership with *TIE* (The International Exchange) also brought us a four week visit from Tiffany Sherrington, who tore herself away from London to help us develop the Iracambi brand and communications strategy – particularly well timed in view of our approaching tenth anniversary. She did an

extraordinary job and we can truly say that neither she nor we will ever be the same again.

Heather Williams from Pomona College made a return visit, on her way back from a Latin America Studies conference in Rio. We discussed future collaboration on a water monitoring project that is dear to our hearts.

Amy Kirschenbaum from the Inter American Foundation in Washington DC paid us a flying visit and made a number of helpful suggestions. *Eduardo Baptista*, coordinator of the Brazil project monitoring group of the Foundation spent a couple of days with us, verifying the project indicators.

(Photo Credits: Beverley Pearce, Amy Parton, Roger Brown and artistic volunteers – thank you!)