



## IRACAMBI ANNUAL REPORT



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## Iracambi Annual Report 2010

### 2010 - the Year of Biodiversity

Our contribution to the Year of Biodiversity came mainly through our work in spreading the word. Apart from our own visitors – volunteers and interns, we hosted group visits, gave school presentations, and worked with local communities to develop their own environmental awareness. Our project to create private reserves (read about it further on) spread the word more and will increase the area of Atlantic Rainforest under protection. We may not have succeeded in saving the world yet, but we are doing our part.

Not that 2010 was an easy year for Iracambi. The economic crisis in the northern hemisphere severely reduced both the flow of volunteers and also the funding of many organizations that have traditionally supported bio-diversity conservation in Brazil. At the same time, a considerable decline in the value of the US dollar has made Brazil an expensive destination for North American visitors as well as reducing the amount of Brazilian reais we get in any exchange transactions.

### Staff and volunteers

It was a year of many *au revoirs* as life moved staff in different directions. Jemma's family ties wouldn't let go of her so she had to return to UK, taking Virgílio with her. The good news is that Virgílio is now back in Brazil and Jemma will be returning shortly. They plan to settle near Virgílio's family. Eliab held the fort for a few months before moving to Belisário to set up his own tourism business. Ruud spent six months with us and is currently in the Netherlands until eligible for his next visa. Marcelo continues to work on the Community Training, assisted by groups of students and young professionals from Viçosa University, and Gustavo has married and settled in Limeira from where he continues to work with us on tourism and conservation projects.



## **Community Training Project for the Serra do Brigadeiro**

### *Environmental Protection Areas (APAs)*

One of the main objectives of our Community Training Project (funded by the Inter American Foundation) is working with county government to establish environmental areas (APAs). These grant a certain level of environmental protection to the people that live on them, and are required by law to set up management committees and management plans. Families who live within the APAs are thus granted consultation rights over land use projects (such as mining) that affect them, as well as having a say over the wise use of government environmental funding to the counties. These are all fairly revolutionary concepts for an isolated rural area and the communities need time to understand and adjust to the idea.

In Rosário da Limeira the work is well advanced with management committees established and functioning. One of these committees has even requested that the APA be expanded which is a sure sign that our work is on target. Nevertheless it is not plain sailing. Early in the year this committee decided to reforest around springs and river banks, and Iracambi offered them 4000 native species seedlings. But the project foundered due to the prohibitive cost of fencing, and problems with organizing transport by the county truck which always seemed to have other priorities. As a result we at Iracambi found ourselves with 4000 seedlings on our hands to be cared for during the dry season. Such are the practical problems on the ground!

### *Community mapping.*

Iracambi GIS volunteers started the work of superimposing the community sketch maps onto the map of the Rural Territory of the Serra do Brigadeiro (the nine county area in which we work.) We held a workshop in the Itajuru Environmental Protection Area to kick off the community mapping, and then moved into the neighboring county of Miradouro to lay the ground for setting up APAs there. Much to our surprise the five communities that we had expected morphed into twenty four..... The work continues, although some political realignments in local government as a result of the October elections have slowed the momentum to some degree.

### *Training in agro-forestry*

In January Marcelo gave a highly successful course on agroforestry to a group of students from the Federal Training Institute (formerly CEFET) in Rio Pomba, assisted by Luiza Vieira and Lucas Sylos from the University of Viçosa.

## **Enterprise Development**

### *Study on the value chain in coffee production*

This case study, coordinated by Iracambi on behalf of the Serra do Brigadeiro Territory, was presented and discussed in workshops in Divino, Miradouro and Rosário da Limeira. The case study is aimed at improving the marketing of locally grown coffee, and is an important income-generating component in our Community Training Project. The study is essentially complete and the next stage is to present it at a full meeting of the Territory.

### *Medicinal plants*

One of the activities we have been supporting in this category has been producing medicinal plants as a source of income. Two initiatives are emerging which, in the long term, may make this long-held dream become a reality: one is a project run by the University of Viçosa to study medicinal plants in the Serra do Brigadeiro, and the other is the newly instituted state government program to use locally obtained natural medicines in the public health system. To promote both these initiatives Iracambi gave a presentation on medicinal plants as a source of income to local farmers at the second Serra do Brigadeiro Seminar on Medicinal Plants in Rosário da Limeira, co-sponsored by Iracambi, the University of Viçosa and the State Agricultural Research Institute.

### *Community based ecotourism*

Iracambi and sister organization CEPEC are working together in a project to develop



Community Based Rural Tourism, funded by the Federal Ministry of Tourism. This complements the Community Training Project's objective of supporting ecotourism development as an income-generating rural enterprise. Several training courses have been held in local communities and everyone is raring to go. As part of our contribution to the project, Iracambi facilitated initial meetings between local community members and an ornithologist from Viçosa University to gauge the level of interest in the possibility of training local birding guides.

The community in the neighboring village of Belisário is working hard to develop its tourist attractions, holding cavalcades and folk-festivals and so on, and these efforts are beginning to attract attention from outside. Interestingly, the mining company CBA is working through a Sao Paulo-based NGO to encourage community based tourism, and we are all waiting to see how the various initiatives will or will not complement one another!

### **Creating Private Forest Reserves**

Iracambi's proposal for creating a network of private forest reserves was one of six to be selected by the consortium of SOS Mata Atlântica, Conservation International and The Nature Conservancy in July 2010. Our project aims to encourage landowners to set up private reserves in the buffer zone of the State Park and to support them through a network affiliated to the state association of private reserves. The project focuses on the three counties of Rosário da Limeira, Muriaé and Miradouro, where several interested landowners have been identified and two are already beginning the formalities to create their reserves. Under state law conservation lands attract tax rebates to the counties in which they are located and we are currently working with county authorities to return some of the monies to the landowners themselves.

We celebrated the successful conclusion of the six month project during a meeting in the Serra do Brigadeiro State Park, attended by the property owners, representatives of the State Forestry Institute, SOS Mata Atlântica and the Minas Gerais Association of Private Reserve Owners, as well as guests from the Association of Reserve Owners from Rio de Janeiro.

## Research

Work began on the inventorying of the *Permanent Sample Plots* that we have created in areas of regenerating forest. An initial general survey of the first plot has been carried out, with help from local community members in identifying species.

The *monitoring of the agro-forestry* plots set out in previous years continued and Marcelo presented the studies at the annual conference of the agro-forestry association in Curitiba.

Work also went ahead on monitoring *aquatic fauna as a biological indicator of ecosystem health*.

Maggie Stevens, a Rotary Club sponsored research student at Viçosa University worked with us on the potential *role of eucalyptus in conservation farming* – a sensitive issue, because of well-known cases of environmental degradation caused by eucalyptus.

Elisângela Morais from University of Minas Gerais is studying *the history of the Puri indigenous people* and spent some time at Iracambi identifying local community members with Puri ancestry.



## GIS

Coordinator Charlie Poate left in April and the reins were taken up by three students from Clark University. They added more data to the Iracambi GIS and put some new files on line: these can be seen at [www.geoenabling.com](http://www.geoenabling.com). They also pressed on with mapping the environmental protection areas, did soils mapping based on data taken from official sources and also from local samples, updated the Iracambi trails maps and plotted the boundaries of the Iracambi forest reserve – a first step towards drawing up a management plan for the reserve.

## Serra do Brigadeiro Territory

Over the past seven years, the Serra do Brigadeiro Development Territory – of which Iracambi is a member of the Executive Council – has developed a process for appraising new projects and monitoring on-going ones. The appraisal process

normally takes place at the beginning of the year and projects are selected for the following year. This year, the appraisal process had to be accelerated because of presidential elections later in the year, with the result that the appraisals were not up to standard.

In February 2010, the federal government decided that they needed to standardize the funding mechanisms used in all the Territories. This was bad moment to undertake such a move because 2010 was an election year and anti-corruption laws restrict the making of financial commitments in the run-up to the elections.

Predictably, the bureaucratic process involved in setting up the new system could not be completed before the curfew, and the Territory budget was frozen until after the election.

As a result the Territory has been starved of operating funds, and although Iracambi and other partner organizations were able to fund the salary of the Executive Secretary on an emergency basis for a short time, funding ran out and the executive secretary was forced to shut up shop. After the election the new arrangements began to be implemented and interim funding for the Secretariat is in the process of approval.

### **[www.iracambi.com](http://www.iracambi.com)**

After an unusually long gestation, we finally managed to launch the new English language site and we encourage you to visit it and give us your comments. We plan to launch the Portuguese site during the course of 2011.

### **Environmental Education**



Although Iracambi no longer has an ongoing program with local schools, we did take some classes in the school in Rosário da Limeira and we continue to host school visits. Before the onset of the rains we had visits from four schools in neighboring counties, and plan to continue when weather permits.

#### *Ecological Hike*

To commemorate World Environment Day on 5<sup>th</sup> June, Iracambi co-hosted the Rosário da Limeira Ecological Hike. About 100 participants of all ages walked to Iracambi for a tour of the premises and lunch break. If anyone of them didn't enjoy it, they certainly didn't show it and already they were talking about "next time".

#### *Ecological Movement*

As part of our work to stimulate the growth of an ecological conscience in the area, Iracambi hosted a visit on 28<sup>th</sup> August from the ecological movement led by the parish of Nossa Senhora da Fátima in Rosário da Limeira.



### **Public Policy**

Iracambi continues to play its part in public policy, a role that becomes increasingly important as pressures are brought to bear in the environment in the name of accelerated economic development. Iracambi is represented at state level in the Advisory Council of the State Forestry Institute and the State Council for Environmental Policy, at regional level on the Advisory Board of the Serra do Brigadeiro State Park and the Executive Committee of the Serra do Brigadeiro Sustainable Development Territory and at county level in the County Council of Sustainable Rural Development. For several years we have been raising awareness of the environmental threats to the forest caused by mining. A recent concern arises from the demand for more hydroelectric plants and dams, with the accompanying relocation of farm families and effects on the rivers and fish populations, as well as the construction of *minerodutos* (pipelines transporting mineral slurries from the mines to the ports.)

### **Iracambi was there:**

#### *Partners of the Americas*

Director Binka Le Breton visited Colorado in February at the invitation of the Partners of the Americas. Despite the bitter February weather and heavy snowstorms that closed airports all over the USA she was able to participate in education programs on human rights and the environment in Colorado and Wyoming. She was also invited to lecture at a number of different universities including MIT and Emerson College, as well as paying her annual trip to Clark University, our long time GIS partners. She gave a number of keynote speeches and participated in an event in Washington DC commemorating the anniversary of the assassination of Sister Dorothy Stang. Six months later she returned for a ten state tour where she gave over forty presentations, from Washington DC to Maryland, South Carolina, Kentucky, Seattle, Portland, LA, San Diego, San Francisco, Denver and Chicago.

### *Institutional Development*

Iracambi was one of thirty Brazilian NGOs to be selected by SOS Mata Atlântica to participate in an institutional development program for organizations working with private reserves. The program included training sessions for one of the Iracambi technicians and two planning seminars for the directors, under the guidance of an external facilitator.

### *Association of Private Reserve Owners of Minas Gerais*

ARPEMG held a highly successful and enjoyable General Assembly in the Ibitipoca State Park in April, during the course of which Iracambi Director Binka was elected as First Secretary.

In August, Iracambi's directors paid a flying visit to our colleagues at Aregua, in the State of Rio, to meet our distinguished advisor Sir Ghilleen Prance.

### **Amigos de Iracambi (Brasil)**

Our annual general meeting was held at Iracambi on 29 August, and a new audit committee was elected.

### **Amigos de Iracambi UK**

2010 saw two of the UK directors and one of the former directors getting married and two others getting engaged, so it was not surprising no one had much time to focus on Iracambi. But now their matrimonial affairs are settled they are back to work. At a meeting in September in London, a strategy was discussed for a relaunch of Amigos UK, starting with a plot for a fundraising event in the spring of 2011.

