



WORLD
LAND
TRUST

Expansion of Reserva Ecológica de Guapiaçu

WLT's Buy an Acre project
in Brazil

Expansion of Reserva Ecológica de Guapiaçu



Country

Brazil

Partner/Organisation

Reserva Ecológica de Guapiaçu (REGUA)

Biome

Tropical and subtropical moist broadleaf forests

Ecoregion

Serra do Mar coastal forests

Habitats

Mainly mature forest and recovering secondary forest areas, along with patches of pastureland which are being restored through an active reforestation programme. Forest streams and a wetland area also have ecological importance.

Global prioritisation

South America's Atlantic Forest is a global conservation hotspot known for its high levels of endemic and endangered species. The Brazilian Atlantic Forest has been listed among the top five global biodiversity hotspots due to its considerable levels of species richness and the small fraction of forest cover that remains.

Project summary

Through their eponymous reserve, our partner REGUA work to protect some of the last remnants of Atlantic Forest left on Earth. Beginning in 2001, the REGUA team have turned what was once a farm into a haven for the wildlife of Brazil's Guapiaçu Watershed. REGUA now own over 16,700 acres (6,785 ha) of land and manage more than 18,900 acres (7,650 ha) alongside their partners.

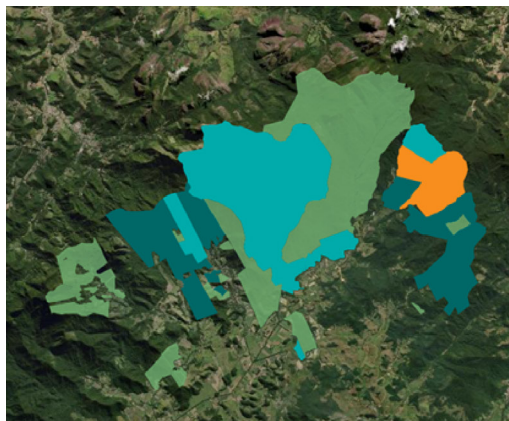
This includes 617 acres (250 ha) of former pastureland that have been restored through REGUA's reforestation work. More than 500,000 native trees, representing 160 species, have been planted here to date – all from seeds collected in the project area and grown in the on-site nursery. Our current Buy an Acre project aims to support REGUA in securing an additional 1,609 acres (651 ha) of high-quality forest. Once acquired, REGUA will obtain legal recognition for the land as a private reserve and patrol the new properties with their dedicated ranger team.

Main threats to the area

The Atlantic Forest is one of the most threatened forest regions in the world. By the early 21st century, just 7% of its original forest cover and 2% of its primary forest remained intact. In the Guapiaçu Watershed, although much of the higher-elevation Atlantic Forest occurs within Serra dos Órgãos National Park and Três Picos State Park, both parks contain large areas of private land – a situation which has led to continued forest clearance within park boundaries.

Between 1985 and 2010, the parks lost 11% of their forests, a consequence of newly constructed houses and agricultural holdings. Meanwhile, cattle farmers have felled trees on slopes to create pasture and grazing land, worsening erosion and soil run-off in the process. This has caused problems for local water quality. Hunting pressure is thankfully not as acute as it once was, but many species have still not recovered. Some exist only in a few protected areas, while others – like guans and curassow birds – are still hunted in the region.

Green-headed Tanager



Lowland Tapir



Key species¹

Southern Woolly Spider Monkey (Southern Muriqui) (*Brachyteles arachnoides*, CR), Lowland Tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*, VU), Crowned Solitary Eagle (*Buteogallus coronatus*, EN), Golden-tailed Parrotlet (*Touit surdus*, VU), Central Humming Frog (*Chiasmocleis lacrimae*, EN), Brazilian Snake-necked Turtle (*Hydromedusa maximiliani*, VU).

¹Footnote

The Red List of Threatened Species, maintained by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), includes categories of Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN), Vulnerable (VU), Near Threatened (NT) and Least Concern (LC).

Southern Woolly Spider Monkey



Biodiversity

The Atlantic Forest is one of the most important biogeographical regions in the Neotropics, providing habitat for some 20,000 plant species, more than 260 mammal species, over 300 reptile species, nearly 500 amphibian species and close to 1,000 bird species. 44% of all the plants here, as well as 30% of the birds, are endemic. Intact forest areas can boast over 400 tree species per hectare, with many of these trees supporting endemic bryophytes, mosses and invertebrates. As of 2019, REGUA was known to contain 73 amphibian species, 37 reptile species, 479 bird species (including 120 Atlantic Forest endemics) and 204 odonate (dragonfly and damselfly) species. With such stunning diversity on offer, new discoveries are made at REGUA on a regular basis. The reserve also supports a growing population of Southern Woolly Spider Monkey, a Critically Endangered primate that numbers fewer than 1,500 individuals. Lowland Tapirs, locally extinct for 100 years, were reintroduced in 2017.

UN Sustainable Development Goals advanced by this project



GOAL 6:
CLEAN WATER
AND SANITATION



GOAL 13:
CLIMATE
ACTION



GOAL 15:
LIFE ON LAND



GOAL 17:
PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS

Local communities

REGUA's tree-planting and reforestation projects, as well as the park ranger and visitor guide roles, are staffed by local people. Community wellbeing is important to REGUA, and leaders will always be consulted on decisions that will affect the local population. Schools and other groups in the area work with REGUA to foster an awareness of the conservation importance of their natural surroundings, promoting a sense of pride and ownership in the work that they do together to protect it.

Partner/Organisation

REGUA's mission is the long-term conservation of the Atlantic Forest and its biodiversity, with a focus on the protection and restoration of habitats in Brazil's Guapiaçu Watershed. Founded in 2001 with a strong scientific focus on wildlife research and conservation, REGUA has become a hub for those seeking to study the Atlantic Forest; in 2019, 14 universities were represented there, with over 800 students participating in field research. REGUA also runs an ecotourism programme that helps to fund the management of the reserve. WLT have been partnered with REGUA since 2006.