



**WORLD  
LAND  
TRUST**

**CONNECTING  
BRAZIL'S  
ATLANTIC  
FOREST**



# **CONNECTING BRAZIL'S ATLANTIC FOREST**

**Protecting the wildlife of the Guapiaçu watershed**



Lowland Tapir

## Country

Brazil

## Partner

Reserva Ecológica de Guapiaçu (REGUA)

## Biome

Tropical & Subtropical Moist Broadleaf Forests

## Ecoregion

Serra do Mar coastal forests

## Habitats

The Serra do Mar coastal forests extend along the southeastern coast of Brazil, forming part of the Atlantic Forest. 99% of the property that is available for purchase is covered by a mix of primary and secondary tropical forest. It sits at the bottom of the Guapiaçu valley with a small stream running through the landscape, which originates from an already owned REGUA property further up the valley.

## Project summary

The Atlantic Forest is one of the world's top biodiversity hotspots but also severely threatened. After centuries of deforestation, only around 12% of the original Atlantic Forest remains in Brazil, mainly in isolated remnants. These patches are extremely fragmented and REGUA now holds the third largest remnant of it in Brazil's Guapiaçu valley.

This project will expand REGUA by a further 180 ha (444 acres), building on WLT's long-term support to extend the reserve across the Guapiaçu watershed, an area that is not only vital for threatened wildlife and plantlife, but which also provides water for over 2 million people in parts of Rio de Janeiro.

The property to be purchased straddles the valley and is surrounded by well forested areas. Securing this land will expand protection to lower-level forest in the area and further REGUA's ongoing mission to connect and restore the crucial Atlantic Forest fragments that remain. Purchasing this new property will also make it much easier for REGUA's rangers to effectively patrol the protected land. To help with the ongoing management of the reserve, the project will fund the salary of a ranger for one year.

## Main threats to the area

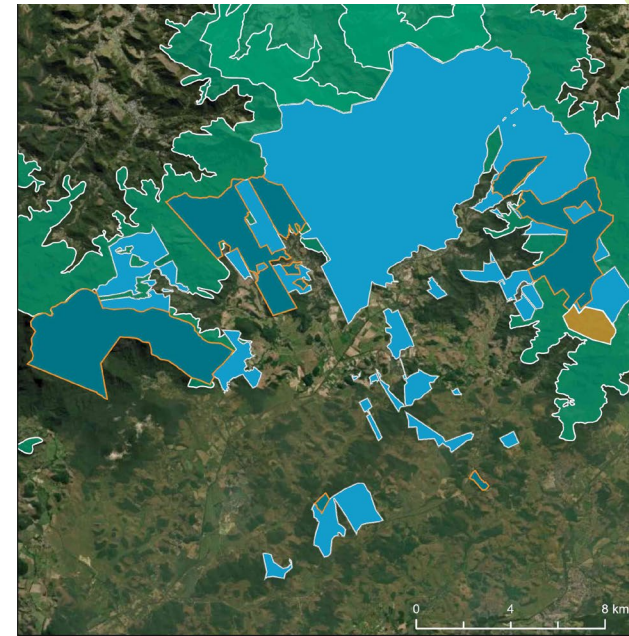
Despite ongoing conservation efforts to protect it, the Atlantic Forest continues to be threatened by deforestation, urbanisation, and illegal activities like poaching.

In the Guapiaçu area specifically, all land is privately owned and therefore under the control and will of the landowner. This means that properties face an imminent risk of being purchased by owners who will deforest the land for agriculture or development projects, such as the construction of new businesses or holiday homes.

This is also true within the Tres Picos State Park which overlaps with the 180-hectare property. Here, lack of adequate management and enforcement by the INEA (Rio de Janeiro Government Environmental Agency), leads to continued threats of hunting, plant extraction, illegal occupation, off-road motorcycle routes and forest fires within the park. The property is also accessed by an unpathed road with utilities and so would be particularly appealing for developers. It is vital that REGUA takes the opportunity to quickly secure this land while they have the chance to protect it from an uncertain fate.

## Global prioritisation

100% of the property to be purchased through this project sits within the Atlantic Forest Biodiversity Hotspot, a region listed as both biologically rich and highly threatened. The forest contains one in 14 of Earth's total plant species and one in 20 vertebrate species. The property is also within the Região Serrana do Rio de Janeiro Key Biodiversity Area, the Serra do Mar coastal forests Conservation Imperative Area, and the Mountain Ridges of Rio de Janeiro Centre of Plant Diversity.



- Hermes property
- WLT-supported properties
- Wider Reserva Ecológica de Guapiaçu
- Other protected areas



## Biodiversity

As one of the most important biogeographical regions in the Neotropics, the Atlantic Forest boasts some 20,000 plant species, over 260 mammals, and close to 1000 species of birds. Although only a small amount of the original biome remains, it is home to a similar number of species to the Amazon. In the Guapiaçu area alone, REGUA has identified 490 birds, 73 amphibians, and 61 mammals. Astonishingly, they have also identified 204 dragonflies, more than anywhere else in the Atlantic Forest. From the insects hidden on the forest floor to larger mammals and birds higher in the canopy, the reserve is bustling with life. Many of the species are endemic and exist only in Brazil. This includes the Southern Muriqui, which is Critically Endangered but currently well protected at the reserve. REGUA also successfully reintroduced the Lowland Tapir to the area in 2017, after the species was extinct in Rio State for many years.



Golden-tailed Parrotlet

## Key species<sup>1</sup>

Southern Muriqui (*Brachyteles arachnoides*, CR); White-necked Hawk (*Buteogallus lacernulatus*, VU); White-bearded Antshrike (*Biatas nigropectus*, VU); Barro Branco Treefrog (*Boana secedens*, EN and endemic); Brazilian Button Frog (*Cycloramphus brasiliensis*, EN and endemic); Brazilian Snake-necked Turtle (*Hydromedusa maximiliani*, VU); Salvadori's Antwren (*Myrmotherula minor*, VU and endemic); Russet-winged Spadebill (*Platyrinchus leucoryphus*, VU and endemic); Golden-tailed Parrotlet (*Touit surdus*, VU and endemic); Lowland Tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*, VU. Previously extinct in Rio State and reintroduced to REGUA).

<sup>1</sup>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). 'Endemic species' are those which are only found within Brazil.



White-necked Hawk



Hermes property



REGUA tree nursery

### Local Communities

REGUA provide education and outreach programmes with visiting public, school children and researchers looking to learn about the importance of the Atlantic Forest. Having built strong relationships with local people, REGUA is now seen as a “Biohub” within the community and a place for social inclusion and learning. REGUA’s forest rangers and other staff are also employed from surrounding local communities. Further afield, the project has an indirect impact on over 2 million people in parts of Rio de Janeiro, who receive water generated from the Guapiaçu watershed.

### Partner/Organisation

Established in 2001, REGUA is a Brazilian non-profit conservation organisation with the aim of protecting and restoring habitats in the Guapiaçu watershed, through land acquisition and partnership agreements, together with ranger patrolling. REGUA was founded with a strong focus on science and the study of wildlife in the area, often

hosting universities to improve knowledge of this rich and threatened Biome. REGUA also successfully runs eco-tourism which helps sustain the reserve and its management.

As a trusted and long-standing WLT partner since 2006, REGUA has demonstrated a deep commitment to the long-term conservation of the Atlantic Forest and its biodiversity. REGUA’s work currently supports the protection of over 15,000 ha (37,000 acres) of the Guapiaçu watershed, and now they continue to expand through this new project.

### UN Sustainable Development Goals directly advanced by this project<sup>2</sup>:



<sup>2</sup>Our projects advance the UN Sustainable Development Goals both directly through conservation outcomes and indirectly through contributing to wide-reaching environmental and social benefits.

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