

The Formation of Young Conservationists at the Guapi-Assu Conservation Centre, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Report for the Rufford Foundation

The objective of the project is to increase awareness on the importance of biodiversity amongst young people and to strengthen their capacity and willingness for its conservation. To achieve this, the project will:

1. Organize 50 visits a year on biodiversity and the importance of conservation for approximately 1500 primary school pupils (6 to 14 years) and their teachers (50);
2. Capacitate 20 youngsters (Young Rangers) between the age of 14 and 18 to become biodiversity conservationists in their communities.

The project "Formation of Young Conservationists" has been running for six months. A selection procedure took place to position an Education Monitor to support the implementation of this project. Andre Luiz was selected and is working since March. Highly committed to his work he is recently graduate in Biological Sciences, was grown up in Rio de Janeiro city and now a day's lives in the Guapi Assu community.



Selection procedure for the Education Monitor and Andre Luiz in blue shirt.

The implementation of the Young Conservationists Project is based on a year curricula. The curriculum settles the themes that will be approached during the year. The 2006 curricula was developed with the collaboration of REGUAs technical staff that is composed of

- 1) Leonardo Savatta, Monitor of Ornithology
- 2) Christine Steiner, Researcher for the reintroduction of *Crax blumenbachi*
- 3) Nicholas Locke, President and Monitor of Reforestation
- 4) Andre Luiz, Biologist and Monitor of Education
- 5) Raquel Locke, Vice President and Coordinator of International Volunteers Programme
- 6) Eleonora Pacheco, Biologist and Coordinator of Education

The curricula was formed of themes such as ornithology, Mata Atlantica fauna and flora, conservation areas, seed collection-germination-plantation, environmental law, aspects of Cachoeiras de Macacu, introduction to internet, introduction to English language, good manners, education for sex, cooking skills and introduction to music and theatre. The 2006 curricula will put into operation 28 workshops.



First meeting to elaborate young conservationists' curricula 2006

The procedure to form the group of young conservationist 2006 was as follows. The project was promoted in the local schools of Funchal and Guapi Assu for students of primary school via a power point presentation with the support of a multimedia projector. They were invited to come to the Guapi Assu Conservation Centre for an introductory talk and walk. There were 31 youngsters from 6 adjacent communities present during the introductory meeting. At this occasion, they were invited to participate in a selection procedure. There were 21 candidates from 4 adjacent communities present during the selection procedure. Applied the selection criteria, 15 young conservationists and their parents from 3 adjacent communities were present during the first workshop in the Guapi Assu Conservation Centre.



Young conservationist selection procedure in the Guapi assu Conservation Centre



Young conservationists and their parents during the first workshop in the Guapi Assu Conservation Centre.

The 15 young conservationists formed a group of 50% boy 50% girl, age between 12 and 14, all students, proportionally distributed per adjacent community. The young conservationists of past years were invited to join the group as lidres-veterans (05). Therefore a group of 20 youngsters, 15 new pupils and 5 lidres-veterans compose the 2006 young conservationists group.

The 28 workshops will be held every Friday from 14 to 17 hours in the Guapi Assu Conservation Centre and during field trips. There were 6 workshops developed till today and they were about to walk the forest and recognize aspects of Mata Atlantica, observe nature by using binoculars and magnifying glasses, to watch documentaries about Mata Atlantica followed by debates and to experiment internet.

Activities for July and August will be tree planting within the reforestation areas, seed collection, identification and germination. A first field trip will take place during the same period (school holiday) to introduce the Municipality of Cachoeiras de Macacu social, economical and environmental aspects.

Birders Exchange an American ornithologist organisation donated 10 pairs of binoculars for the Young Conservationists Project. This equipment is an important tool for nature observation and was first used by most of the youngsters involved in this year programme.



Young conservationists' bird watching with new equipment donated by Birders Exchange

Kitchen and classroom in the Guapi Assu Conservation Centre were reformed by the kind donation of Robert Locke; one of REGUAs settlers and a trustee of the Brazilian Atlantic Rain Forest Trust BART an organization based in UK. This infra-structure was fundamental to well host school visit and the young conservationists' activities.



Classroom before and after in the Guapi Assu Conservation Centre

A trail to support school visits was marked and implemented. This trail takes students to experience aspects such as recuperation of wetlands, reforestation and its associated fauna and flora and Mata Atlantic biodiversity and landscapes. To complement this field experience it was organized a presentation about Mata Atlantica Conservation and REGUA. Till today 9 schools, 270 students and 18 teachers had booked and visited REGUA.

Several institutions and schools have asked to visit the Guapi Assu Conservation Centre along the years. To further promote and organize these demands 1000 folders were produced the folders circulated through the Secretary of Education Mail list, through the Council of Education and was also introduced to schools directors (11).



The project “Formation of Young Conservationists” has been running for six months, together with 3 other projects that are under way targeting the adjacent area of REGUA and its communities. These initiatives are the continuation of the work initiated by REGUA during the past years. It is expected that the interaction amongst these projects will increase the levels of understanding and conservation of Mata Atlantica.

Teachers (20) from schools (09) situated close to the Reserve participated in a capacity building course with focus on Mata Atlantica conservation. Teachers will develop activities with their students using the applied theme. Schools involved are stimulated to visit REGUA through the School Visit Programme supported by the Rufford Foundation. This initiative is part of a project developed by partners such as the Tres Picos State Park, Tereviva Ngo, Biotlantica Ngo and REGUA with the support of Conservation International.



Tiradentes one of the 9 adjacent schools

Local community associations (05) will participate in the Guapi Assu Catchments Management Programme that will collect and analyse water quality, discusses and organise actions like the plantation of river sides, construction of septic tanks, reform of garbage collectors and extension of piping for water supply. This initiative is part of a project developed by partners such as the Tres Picos State Park, Tereviva Ngo, Biotlantica Ngo and REGUA with the support of Conservation International.



The Guapi Assu River

Small farmers and rural workers (60) of the Municipality will participate in a capacity building course with focus on legislation and practice for the conservation and sustainable use of land and river sides. This activity is an initiative of Bioatlantica Ngo and REGUA with the support of Ministry of Environment.



Farmers and workers harvesting yam

The Agenda 21 It will produce a sustainable development plan for the municipality of Cachoeiras de Macacu. The Agenda 21 team and volunteers applied a questionnaire that sampled 1% of the municipality population. The questionnaires investigated for population' economic profile and environmental perception. Communities close to REGUA were well covered. Therefore, REGUA will have an important document to base projects that involve adjacent communities. The Agenda 21 project is a partnership between Ministry of Environment, Local Government and REGUA.



Agenda 21 time and volunteers that applied the questionnaire

It is expected that the interaction of all initiatives mention in this report will result in an increase of people's knowledge about Mata Atlantica conservation especially of the ones living close to REGUA.