

iracambi

Atlantic Rainforest · Brazil



Iracambi Quarterly Report April - June 2018

After the departure of João Lúcio Donnard, Marina took over the reins as project coordinator. We were also joined by Regis who is active in helping us refocus our activities, complementing our work in reforestry and ecological restoration with the goal of greater productivity for family farmers, through the use of agroecology. This is in line with the growing awareness (about time, too!) that sustainable agriculture that generates income is a better solution to the problem of land degradation than the current extractive model of family agriculture.

Volunteers

The three musketeers from Ghent – Remco, Celle and Antony – moved on, together with Scott who had been their shepherd, but the empty beds soon filled up again with the arrival first of Jenny, to work on some plot mapping for the GIS, and then Kate, Marguerite, Grace, Brian, Emily, Dan and Francie. Shortly after that, in the middle of a national truck drivers' strike that brought chaos to the roads of Brazil a team arrived from Fairfield University in Connecticut: Dayana, Karen, Lucas, Cynthia and Luckario. No sooner had Kate and Grace left than Claire joined us.

Young Eco-Leaders of the Brazilian Rainforest

<https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/young-eco-leaders-of-the-brazilian-rainforest/>

The truckers strike, late rains, the county's budget crunch (cutting down on the use of school buses) have been some of the obstacles we have faced this quarter. But adaptability being the name of the game, we have not been sitting on our hands! In early April we welcomed forty fifth graders from two public schools in Rosário da Limeira. The visits introduced the students to a fantastic new world of adventure and discovery in the Atlantic Forest: for many it was their first visit to a natural environment full of amazing animals and plants. "A lot changed in the class after the students visited Iracambi, they became more curious in class and are enthusiastic to return to the reserve" - reported their teacher, Edna.

Another group that visited us came through our partner CRAS (Rosário da Limeira Social Services). Almost 100 children participated in our Easter scavenger hunt, in the course of which they were able to learn more about the forest animals, walk along the medicinal plants trail, and be rewarded by the gift of a chocolate Easter egg. The volunteers at Iracambi did a great job in leading and organizing the event. Volunteer Scott had so much fun with the children that he remarked that he would never forget the experience.

Taking advantage of his enthusiasm, we invited him to set up English classes to 60 students from the 6th grade – giving them the amazing opportunity of learning English from a native speaker. This was the first time this had happened in any of the public schools in this region. "The students were so excited when Scott came to teach, they arrived in class using their English, and were able to say their names, their age, where they lived, etc. I never thought they would react in this way, it was truly moving to see," reported Aline, their English teacher.

In another piece of great news, we recently partnered with DEMSUR (Municipal Department of Urban Sanitation) in Muriaé. Together we launched the first competition for schools to collect batteries for recycling instead of throwing them away and damaging the environment. The prize is a fun day of environmental adventure in the forest at Iracambi. Iracambi is the first organization in the region to have a program of field science and the only one that brings children into direct contact with the animals and plants of the forest, on the principle that through getting in touch with nature they will learn to love it.

Forests4Water

<https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/forests-4-water/>

After being listed on the funding platform of the Brazilian Stock Exchange we succeeded in raising R\$30,000 to fund the project over the next year. Thanks to this new funding, along with the other donations we have received, we've been able to pay for:

- **Soil analysis**, to be carried out on each property to be reforested, to help us decide the best species to plant.
- **Making and buying biological fertilizers**. As a consequence of the soil analysis, we will understand what type of biological fertilizer each property will need, thereby improving our chances of successful reforestation and recuperating springs.

We started this year's field visits armed with new methods of monitoring, soil and water analysis. First visits allow us to better understand the needs of each family, and to better explain the details of the project. We assess each property to ascertain the following information: number of residents, how long they have lived there, size of the property, crops produced, main water source, water usage, how many springs they have, how many have dried out, what grows near the springs, and if they have any existing methods of water retention. We also enquire about how they deal with domestic sewage.

The farmers accompany us during the visits, and together we choose the best place for reforestation, count and identify the springs, collect samples for analysis, discuss the issue of water scarcity and reflect on the importance of water for agriculture, animals, people and society.

We have made changes to the type of data we collect. Until recently we collected data on local families, springs, fences and proposed reforestation areas using Geographical Information Systems (ArcGIS) with the support of our great friend and partner Cliff. This year we've added new data sets: (seedling species, fertilizers used, dates of delivery and planting,) and monitoring (observing mortality rates among the seedlings, insect attacks, and correct weeding and maintenance.) In this way we plan to produce reliable qualitative and quantitative data to help us make more informed decisions, address any problems more effectively, and more accurately measure our success.

Sustainable agriculture for small farming families

<https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/sustainable-agriculture-for-small-farming-families/>

We are proud to introduce our new program, aimed at focusing on sustainability alongside rehabilitation. The idea is to revolutionize the culture of food production and demonstrate the practical and economic viability of organic agriculture. By implementing productive agroforestry systems for family farmers in rural communities located around the Serra do Brigadeiro, we will blend agriculture with forestry. We hope to work with local communities to transition from current destructive agricultural practices towards adopting production techniques that are healthy, safe, pesticide-free, and environmentally friendly.

Fundraising

The latter half of May saw a mammoth team effort to produce a large funding proposal of ecological restoration in the Serra do Brigadeiro to combine protecting water resources, working with local farmers to ensure that their properties are in compliance with environmental laws, and introducing new agroecological techniques to restore soil fertility, improve crop yields and increase incomes on 200 selected properties in the Serra do Brigadeiro region. Since Iracambi has exactly the skillset and experience to handle a project of this size, we plan to adapt and present this project to a variety of different funders. If you have suggestions for potential funders, please let us know!

Iracambi was There

Director Binka did another of her "Round the World in 80 Days" tours (well, there were 60 days, really), fundraising and friendraising across the United States as well as in London. Highlights included speaking at Fairfield University (whose students spent a highly productive time with us during the month of May,) at the University of Denver, and the University of Northern Colorado where student Jenny Mehren cleared her busy schedule and was working at Iracambi within a month of hearing about our program!