



November 2011 REGUA newsletter



Night forest birding is very exciting and REGUA offers superb walks into pristine forest to see its endemic species. One very rare species is this Stygian Owl and now confirmed on site by Mikael Käll from Sweden.

Introduction:

November celebrates the end of a busy year for REGUA and heralds the beginning of a new year, 2012, a year that can include a land acquisition, a new ranger, planting 30 000+ native trees and developing some exciting new projects. We have much news to relate and thank you for your continued interest and support.

Protection: REGUA is planning to contract another ranger to help in its protection programme. A new property has been offered to REGUA, the Coelho farm, virtually all forested and we are already preparing an accurate map to provide details on size, area within the Três Pico Park and vegetation cover. This property lies adjacent to the Joao Paulo land and will increase the protected area there to over 1200ha. Raquel and I had a chance to walk the property with William Eccles. A third Lengruber property is being acquired and it will be the object of an extensive reforestation programme. The process for receiving RPPN status on the São José land is virtually ready and we are providing a reforestation plan of the remaining open patches of the property.



Miss Luana (in orange) of the INEA has been responsible for bringing a large group to REGUA to start birding. The results could not be more encouraging as INEA considers attracting visitors to their parks as a means to promote conservation awareness.

The rangers are all well. World Land Trust has supported some rangers through their “Keepers of the wild”, and a donation of a digital camera by “Media Bounty” has provided pictures from the rangers.



A small stretch of forest bordering REGUA on the Matumbo was cleared. This reminds us of the threat of urban development and squatters rights in the Upper Guapiáçu valley. REGUA’s ranger Jairo “Keeper of the wild”, managed to photograph and communicate with the INEA authorities who later sent the police to arrest the perpetrators and break down the plastic and house frame.

The relationship with INEA as Três Picos Park administrators could not be more advantageous to REGUA. REGUA gains formal institutional and legal support and INEA gains REGUA’s on site protection with its rangers regularly patrolling the reserve.

Education: The education programme progresses in the responsible hands of REGUA’s education officer André. Public visitation has increased as REGUA receives positive feedback by those teachers visiting.

Andre has worked hard contributing to the programme's success and his commitment is much appreciated. Slowly REGUA is building a range of activities that have made the difference to the way the young children see their environment. A mixture of classroom studies, computer studies and an array of activities such as plays, river litter clearing, cycle rides accompanied by expeditions to the city and other conservation projects has been the basis for a broad conservation understanding. The children can see for themselves that REGUA is quite unique and worth working for.



André and Raquel leading a school group visiting the wetlands. Compare for yourself how the hillside vegetation has changed!!



The visits include the nursery, Amanda's new hide and activities include cycle rides with cards promoting "Environmental Clean Up!"

Research: Research projects are steadily increasing at REGUA. The subsidized accommodation continues to attract many students and Jorge as REGUA research coordinator has been valuable in organizing the busy schedule that have recently included activities such as workshops.



The laboratory has been instrumental in attracting workshops and helping REGUA gain promotion in the conservation world.

Students Camilla and Renan have been busy at REGUA under the guidance of Professor Davor of Rio University studying bats and were excited at registering the number of species at REGUA to over 17 species.



Jorge was happy to show us the dragon head caterpillar that seems fierce enough to frighten everything away any predators but in fact is the harmless caterpillar of the darting blue winged *Prepona* butterfly.

Andrew and his family came for some days to visit REGUA. His passion for insects is infectious and it wasn't long before Jorge, Rose and Raquel were busy in tow examining leaves for interesting beetles and other rarities. They were rewarded by a number of valuable finds and we developed the first insect blog featuring pictures of this wonderful world with texts describing the species and their habits. WLT hosted the finds on their web site and we have now been asked to do more. This has been instrumental in encouraging us to develop technical literature and identification guides for publishing. An area of biology little understood and underestimated considering this group forms the basis for the food chain and energy recycling in the decomposition of nutrients for plants of the forest.

We were fortunate to have Kim visit us last year and team member Hank Brodtkin sent us these photos of hairstreak butterflies that go to show the variety and beauty of this small group.



Skilled photographer Hank Brodtkin shows us *Celmia celmus* left and *Arcas imperialis* right.

Once we have some publications we can translate complex sounding names into a language that locals can understand and identify rare species. The REGUA butterfly study has now been finalized and the REGUA species list will be published in *Tropical Lepidoptera* magazine. Through the publication of this list, we can consider printing a formal guide.



Hank Brodtkin photographed the beautiful hairstreak *Evanus batesii*, named after the British naturalist Henry Bates known for his essays on butterfly mimicry, who collected in the Amazon in 1848 with Alfred Wallace.



We are very interested in studying the dragonflies inhabiting the REGUA wetlands, images by Hank Brodtkin

There is just an immense insect world at REGUA yet it is poorly known. With this in mind, REGUA submitted a proposal to the Whitley award to set up the REGUA Research Council composed of a

Council committee, 7 University professors with the aim of offering an annual Grant that will fund prospective candidates wishing to produce technical publications or identification guides. Alan's publication of the "*Guide to the Hawkmoths of the Serra dos Órgãos*" has been very helpful not only in compiling data stored for more than 30 years but offering a valuable field guide to the public. It has been well received.

Restoration: REGUA is currently preparing land for the 2011/2012 planting season. A total of 34,500 trees will be planted funded by the Brazilian Organizations "SOS Mata Atlântica" and "Onda Verde" and the UK charity, World Land Trust. We had a superb "One day planting event" hosted with more than 180 people from Miraflores School coming to plant a tree and Jerry K came specifically to REGUA to plant trees helping us with our mission. Thank you all for supporting this important project.



The Miraflores School and Jerry K have helped us plant our trees

REGUA's grant from Chester zoo to restore wetland forest has been invaluable. Rosario organized an event at REGUA with the support by the Rio Orchid Society to plant *Cattleya harrisoniana* orchids that Rosario had taken as a seed pod to her laboratory three years ago. She returned with 120 plants of the original stock. These orchids were fastened to the *Tabebuia cassinoides* trees, themselves planted over 4 years ago. More than 1500 trees have now been planted in other areas of the wetlands as the result of seed collection.



The Rio de Janeiro orchid Society came to help us plant *Cattleya harrisoniana* orchids.

Tourism: The REGUA's bird list continues to grow and three new species have been added to the list this year. Just recently the Swallow-tailed Kite was seen by guests and photographed just today

by Lee. REGUA is becoming well known as a reliable destination not only for those seeking Atlantic rainforest endemic bird species but wanting to see Lepidoptera. The rooms at the lodge are all very comfortable and a new mini bus was acquired and offers increased comfort to those visiting. We are receiving increasingly larger number of tour companies but also individuals and small groups wishing to spend up to 14 days here. REGUA is developing a new lowland trail network, with hides to help see shy wetland bird species. The new Bird check list has been most successful and articles have come out in the Cotinga and Neotropical Birding Magazines praising the site for its birds, reliability and conservation efforts.

REGUA was very pleased to receive Betty Peterson, husband Wayne and friends who contribute to ABA's Binocular Exchange Program. This program has helped provide equipment to local birding guides and in this manner Adilei and Jairo received a very nice pair of binoculars to help them with their work. We are very grateful to Betty and her friends and of course Edson Endrigo who looked after them so carefully. This program is very important to so many people.

The Rutland Birdfair was successful this year and we wish to thank Rick and Else Simpson for providing space on their stand and Lee and Rachel with their many friends for planning, working and patiently answering so many questions that have resulted in increased visitation at REGUA.



Betty and Wayne brought Brooke Stevens, Thomas Lewis McCorkle, Suzanne Francese Goodrich and Carl Ambrose Goodrich III visited REGUA and gave us two pairs of very nice binoculars. We wish to thank them for their generosity

A canopy tower is being constructed at REGUA. This will provide birders and butterfly specialists an opportunity to see bird flocks moving through the forest. More of this in our next newsletter!



Left image shows the beginning of construction of the canopy tower. This is located within walking distance of the lodge at the beginning of the San José trail and overlooks an impressive valley of trees and the upper Guapiaçu catchment. It will be inaugurated this year so all visitors coming to REGUA in 2012 will be enjoying its rare views of canopy flocks and butterflies such as those blue darting *Preponas*.

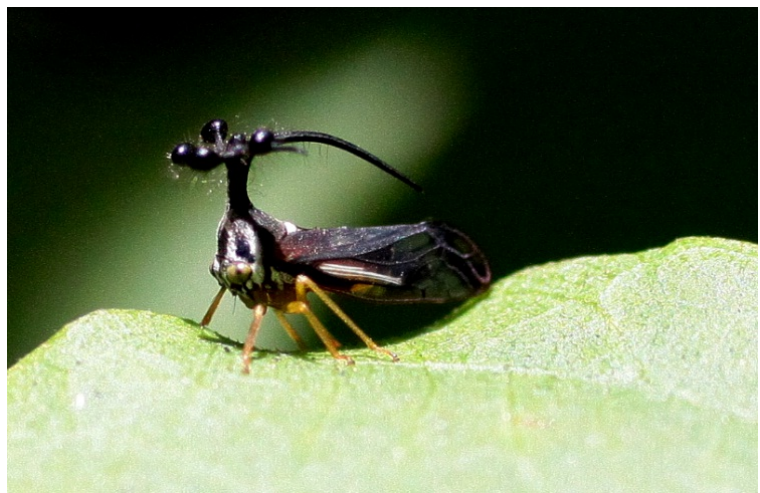


A visit to the gigantic 1500 year old *Cariana estrelensis* tree is always a good one. This tree is the pride of Cachoeiras de Macacu municipality and considered the oldest example in Rio de Janeiro state and this time we all kept Helen, Richard and Siri company. A merry lot indeed!! Below; Volunteer Helen Cavilla.



REGUA dedicates this issue of the REGUA newsletter to Helen Cavilla who has helped us at the lodge patiently for the last 5 months overseeing visitors at the lodge. Helen from Newquay in Devon had come on the BIAZA (British & Irish Association of Zoos & Aquariums) visit to REGUA last November. As all visitors will agree, Helen has been heaven sent and we shall deeply miss her.

Volunteers have been very helpful with our various activities. REGUA received Duncan who was great company for Adilei and spent two months doing a comprehensive bird survey. We have had Richard and Siri who also came to visit for 2 months. Rich's passion for insects is unrivalled and he took over 3000 images in seeking out those little fellows so important for the decomposition cycle. Thanks to Richard we are seeing these insects as a whole new world and will be sharing this with the children visiting opening their eyes to some of the many wonders of Nature.



Leaf hoppers come in all shapes and sizes and Membracidae are very common in the tropics. Whilst there are 3200 species in the world only three species live in Europe!!

Siri's experience in ecology was beneficial for us and we developed the project proposal for the Whitley award, the creation of the REGUA Research council and its grant for the publication of technical reports and identification guides. This will help us develop a panel of professors and identify lines of study and later provide the general public with the means to identify some of those species occurring at REGUA and in so helping us with our conservation message.

The Conservation model at REGUA is something young people from around the world are taking seriously. We are very grateful that they come and spend time here with their zeal and experience.

Conclusions: The REGUA project continues to generate much interest and appeal. More tourists are visiting and field research has developed as seen by the rising number of workshops and projects from students wishing to study at REGUA. All other programmes have been successful and we have had much institutional planning support from many visitors including Duncan, William Eccles, Emma Donne and Alan Martin. This review process is invaluable as it looks at an increasing success in 2012 with the objective of consolidating what has occurred to date and identifying areas for potential growth.

The REGUA project is not yet financially sustainable at present but it is on the path of sustainability. The project needs to become an adequate size providing a stronger position for negotiations, it needs to get its RPPN status; it must keep employing people as this takes the message of conservation into the local community and it must keep promoting its work with a clear message. If we all help then we can make the difference. We are planning to make this project the best in SE Brazil and a reference in conservation. Many people are surprised with the scope of the work that already has gone on and say they have never seen this anywhere else.

This would not have been possible without your support.



With our sincere appreciation of the continuous and generous support by Stephen and Tasso, we made these dedication plaques at the entrance of the lodge.

Thank you for your continual support

Nicholas & Rachel Locke