

STORIES FROM SERRA DO URUBU AND MURICI LANDSCAPE

ATLANTIC FOREST CONSERVATION
IN NORTH-EASTERN BRAZIL



THE BENEFIT OF SERRA DO URUBU AND MURICI LANDSCAPE

CEP (Center of Endemism in Pernambuco), north of the São Francisco River in the Northeast of Brazil, is the least protected and most degraded remnant region of the entire Atlantic Forest. It covers the coastal forests of four Brazilian states, Alagoas, Pernambuco, Paraíba, and Rio Grande do Norte. It has only 5% of its original forest, which represents a significant threat to the natural habitat of animals and plants found only in this location.

However, 70,000 hectares of preserved forest still survive in this area, and 7,000 of them are in two priority forest fragments for the Serra do Urubu and Murici conservation. They are likely to form a forest corridor between Alagoas and Pernambuco because, in a straight line, the two territories are only 30 kilometers apart. If connected, they could create a continuous and large privileged area of Atlantic Forest remnants, but the vegetation between them is fragmented.

THE SERRA DO URUBU AND MURICI AREAS

Together, the forest areas are home to

18

endemic and endangered

BRD SPECIES



Therefore, BirdLife International/SAVE Brasil considered them as **Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA)**

THE ALAGOAS ANTWRN

(Myrmotherula snowi)

IS ONE OF THE ENDANGERED SPECIES WHICH ONLY EXISTS IN MURICI



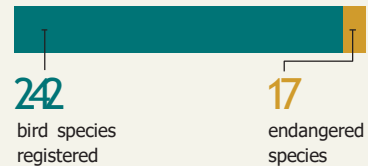
THE SERRA DO URUBU AND MURICI LANDSCAPE



MURICI ECOLOGICAL STATION (ESEC MURICI)

Location: between Murici, Flexeiras, and Messias municipalities in Alagoas

Background: created in May 2001, managed by ICMBio (Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation – a Brazilian government agency)

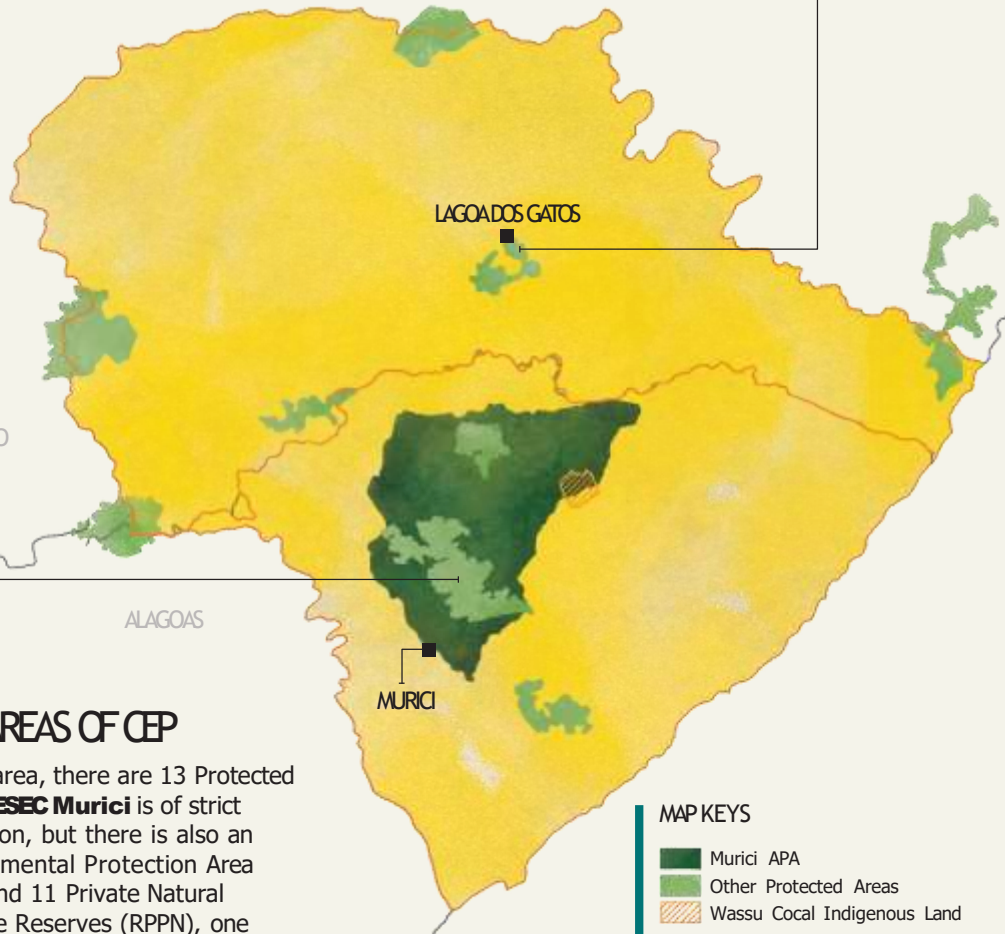


It is the largest remaining area of Atlantic Forest in the north of the São Francisco River, with over

6,000 HECTARES

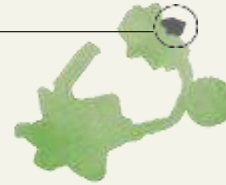
THE AREAS OF CEP

In this area, there are 13 Protected Areas. **ESEC Murici** is of strict protection, but there is also an Environmental Protection Area (APA) and 11 Private Natural Heritage Reserves (RPPN), one of which is **Pedra D'Antas**, maintained by SAVE Brasil



MAP KEYS

- Murici APA
- Other Protected Areas
- Wassu Cocal Indigenous Land
- Serra do Urubu-Murici
- Brazilian states (IBGE, 2015)



SERRA DO URUBU

Location: 30 kilometers from ESEC Murici

Background: in 2011, 355 hectares in Lagoa dos Gatos municipality, Pernambuco, became the Pedra D'antas RPPN. The site was purchased by SAVE Brasil and transformed into a reserve to conserve the species.

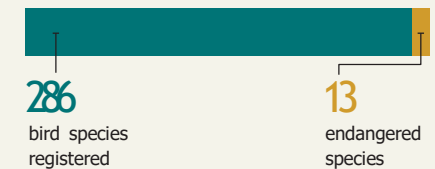
Important dates:

In 2013, SAVE marked out ■ bird-watching trail

In 2015, a Visitor Center ■ was launched

In 2017, Hummingbird Garden ■ was created, a place where people can observe up close more than 150 bird species, of which more than 20 are hummingbirds.

In 2019, a bird-watching tower was ■ opened in the middle of the trail.



Pedra D'Antas and Frei Caneca reserves and other forest portions together are

1,000 HECTARES of preserved Atlantic Forest

GLOSSARY

CENTER OF ENDEMISM

A region with endemic species, meaning that they only occur there.

PROTECTED AREA

A natural protected area by different public authorities, whether municipal, state, or federal, to conserve its elements.

RPPN

A Private Natural Heritage Reserve is a privately-owned protected area.

HOW TO COMBINE CONSERVATION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE COMMUNITIES?

Since there are no industries, many young people from the region are looking for jobs in larger cities. A significant part of the population works in the municipalities' public services and others in trade and services.

The Northeast Atlantic Forest Project, developed by SAVE Brasil, aims to restore 70 hectares of the Atlantic Forest by 2023, focused on the Serra do Urubu and Murici landscape. These are initiatives that generate socioeconomic benefits for the local population and conserve biodiversity.

“Creating corridors and recovering landscapes directly cooperates with a new development model and contributes to local biodiversity conservation. It also promotes quality of life and sustainable economy through the generation of employment and income opportunities in the productive chain of restoration”, says Thiago Belote, a specialist in restoration.

PEDRA D'ANTAS RPPN - SERRA DO URUBU

Ecotourism

The landscape attracts experts and birdwatchers, and there is a natural demand for guides to help visitors through the region. As a result, in February 2020, SAVE Brasil started the **Local Guides Training Course in the Serra do Urubu**, with 16 participants.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, trainees had theoretical classes online, followed by a face-to-face internship at Pedra D'Antas so that future guides could learn how to assist birdwatchers and tourists in the area. SAVE Brasil has promoted ecotourism as a tool for conservation and **income generation for the local community**.

ESEC MURICI SURROUNDINGS

Agroforestry System

At ESEC, only researches authorized in advance are allowed. However, it highly encourages the development of activities that promote conservation and agricultural production at the same time. SAVE promotes forest restoration and implementation of agroforestry production systems to **strengthen production chains** that respect and value local socio-biodiversity, uniting conservation, production, and human well-being. This work has been carried out in the buffer zones of the ESEC, as in the Dom Helder Câmara Settlement region, which is part of the Environmental Protection Area of Murici. The Protected Area also guarantees ecosystem services that promote water and food security for those living in its surroundings.

“WE WANT PEOPLE TO BE ENCHANTED BY MURICI FORESTS AND SERRA DO URUBU SO THAT THE ONES LIVING IN THE AREA VALE AND ARE PROUD OF THE RICH LOCAL BIODIVERSITY AND ALSO SEE PROFESSIONAL AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE TERRITORY.”

BÁRBARA CAVALCANTE,
coordinator of the Northeast Atlantic Forest project at SAVE Brasil

I A STORY MADE OUT OF PEOPLE

MURICI

Serving Nature

Antônio Nazário da Silva Filho was born in the Murici region but spent a good part of his adult life in other places.

In search of work, he has lived in three other Brazilian states, São Paulo, Mato Grosso, and Bahia. In 2014, he was back in Murici and settled. After some jobs, he became part of the ICMBio brigade and turned his work into a mission to preserve the landscape where he spent his childhood and adolescence. “I tell my wife it’s the best job in the world. I get paid to do what I like”, he says.

Every morning Tonho leaves the ICMBio base and watches over ESEC. Each day, a different region. The goal is to surprise poachers, check for fires or anything that could impact the reserve. He often helps researchers from the state institutions who spend days camping at ESEC to carry out studies, mainly on the amphibians and birds that live there.

At 38 years old, 5-year-old Sofia’s father is happy when he takes long walks around the reserve. “What satisfies me the most is walking long distances – 7 or 8 kilometers – and getting out of

the forest when the sun is setting, and I haven’t seen any threat. The animals pass me, confident, unafraid. It’s awesome!”

But in Tonho’s routine, there are not only coatis, snakes, armadillos, and agoutis. When there is a flood in the Mundaú river, broad-snouted caimans follow the waters and often lodge in the city’s houses. “Then people call ICMBio or me directly, and I go there to rescue the animal,” he says. Caimans or any other rescued animals are taken to the ICMBio base and, being in good health, released back into nature. Joy for him and Sofia, admired by the photos and videos of her daddy at work with the animals.

“WHAT SATISFIES ME THE MOST IS WALKING LONG DISTANCES AND GETTING OUT OF THE FOREST WHEN THE SUN IS SETTING”



PERSONAL ARCHIVE

ANTÔNIO NAZÁRIO DA SILVA

38 YEARS OLD

BRIGADE MAN AT ICMBIO

Plentifulness comes from the forest



SAVEBRASIL

IRMÃ RITA

49 YEARS OLD

FEMALE LEADER AT DOM HÉLDER CÂMARA SETTLEMENT

Maria Rita Rosa dos Santos was 28 years old when she got married and left the dry land of Sergipe, where she was born, to live with her husband in Murici. It happened in 2000, and the couple arrived right at the time of the great flood of the Mundaú River, one of the biggest floods ever recorded in the state of Alagoas.

Respectfully called Sister Rita, she is one of the leaders of the Dom Hélder Câmara Settlement, a land where, before, there was a sugarcane mill.

“LIFE IS POSSIBLE THANKS TO THE FOREST. BECAUSE OF IT, WE HAVE WATER AND RAIN AT THE RIGHT TIME. I WANT TO TAKE CARE OF THIS LAND TO LEAVE IT TO MY DAUGHTER”

Initially, there were 48 lots in the Settlement. Today it houses 72 families. “At that time, there was only sugarcane planted around us, and we used to go to ESEC to pick up firewood,” she recalls. Over time, and with guidance from local organizations, the community built ecological stoves, which make better use of the heat with less demand for firewood, and started to plant their trees to not take more out of the forest.

Seeds and seedlings harvested at ESEC have been planted on the settlement’s land with the help of ICMBio and other partnerships. “I already have 14 endangered jussara palm trees in my lot,” says Rita proudly. The agroforestry system also has coffee, fruit trees, and non-conventional food plants (PANCs). The crops are for their consumption, and what’s left is sold at the fair. “Life is possible thanks to the forest. Because of it, we have water and rain at the right time. I want to take care of this land so my daughter can inherit it”, says Rita. She doesn’t mind when pacas and armadillos pay a visit to her garden in search of food. She loves the place unconditionally. “They are my friends. All this here was once forest, then it became a farm, and we came to live here. It has always been their place.”

The bird expert

Since the age of 19, Zezito, born José Antônio Vicente Filho, in Maraial, a town near Lagoa dos Gatos (PE), has taken care of the forest in the Serra do Urubu.

He started at the Frei Caneca RPPN connected to an old bankrupt local sugarcane mill. In 2004, when SAVE Brasil bought the lands neighboring Frei Caneca, Zezito began to help in the recovery of this region as one of the volunteers and was hired by the institution in 2009. His contribution was significant for the area to develop and gain the status of RPPN in 2011. “You could only see bushes in Pedra D’Antas, no animals, because poachers and people who cut down trees to make charcoal harmed the land,” he remembers. “I took care of it, gardening, and the animals showed up again,” says the current field assistant, responsible for the inspection rounds at the RPPN and for the maintenance of the drinking fountains and feeding troughs at Jardim dos Beija-Flores, which he helped to build in 2017.

The SAVE team counts on Zezito’s field practical knowledge to carry out bird monitoring annually in the reserve. Among all the birds that have returned to inhabit the place, the vulnerable seven-colored tanager

(*Tangara fastuosa*) is the one he most admires. For two years now, Zezito has been doing more than observing and caring for the seven-colored tanager and other birds, such as the long-tailed woodnymph, in danger of extinction. With the camera he has recently got, he takes beautiful photos. At 51 years old, in addition to making the rounds and taking care of the garden so that the birds can feed, what he likes most is planting trees. “If it were up to me, trees would cover every water source in the country.”



“WHAT I LIKE THE MOST IS PLANTING TREES. IF IT WERE UP TO ME, TREES WOULD COVER EVERY WATER SOURCE IN THE COUNTRY”

JOSÉ ANTÔNIO VICENTE FILHO

51 YEARS OLD

FIELD ASSISTANT AT NORTH-EAST ATLANTIC FOREST PROJECT

Conserving through Birding



SAVE BRASIL

JAQUELINE E JACIELE TAVARES DA SILVA

25 AND 23 YEARS OLD

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS AT LOCAL
GUIDES TRAINING COURSE OF SAVE BRASIL

Jaqueline Tavares da Silva, 25 years old, is a teacher who works with children aged 3 to 5 in Lagoa dos Gatos, Pernambuco. She reckons to love what she does, but her dream has always been different since she was a bit older than her students. “Since I was a little girl, I used to say that I wanted to be a biologist, and I wasn’t even sure what that meant,” she says. Living on a rural farm, she grew up seeing and hearing birds in her backyard, including the tanager (*Tangara fastuosa*).

It is hard to say if Jaciele, Jaqueline’s 23-year-old sister, also a teacher, learned to love birds with her sister. Both are equally passionate about birds, and from admirers, they became specialists.

They are among the 16 students in the training course for local guides in the Serra do Urubu, offered by SAVE Brasil. “Most of the birds we only knew by popular names so, during the course, we learned the scientific names and where to look for information on the internet. Now we can recognize many birds from the region”, says Jaciele. “Including their calls,” adds the older sister.

Thanks to these new resources, Jaqueline found out about the little bird that sings in her backyard. “Searching on the internet, I could match its song and image and discovered it is called long-billed gnatwren, *Ramphocaenus melanurus*”, she cites. Jaciele’s favorite is the sooty-fronted spinetail (*Synallaxis frontalis*), “which people here call pituim.”

The sisters’ routine remained tiring even with the pandemic. Besides the Local Guide Course, they had blended classes at college (sometimes in Caruaru) and worked as teachers. “College and the SAVE course were completely online, but we had to produce printed material to distribute to our students because the children can’t access the internet at home,” says Jaciele.

Even so, both do daily what they like most: “every day we go out for birding,” says Jaqueline, about the observation tours.

**“WE WANT EVERYONE TO KNOW THE
IMPORTANCE OF CONSERVING. THERE’S NO POINT
IN LOVING BIRDS AND PUTTING THEM IN A CAGE.
YOU MUST LOVE THE BIRD FREE”**



HUMBERTO TAN

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SAVE Brasil (The Society for Bird Conservation of Brazil) is a non-profit civil society organization that focuses on the conservation of Brazilian birds. SAVE has been working for over 15 years to conserve birds and environments, connecting people to nature. Learn more at: savebrasil.org.br