



SavingSpecies.org

Instituto Chico Mendes de Conservação da Biodiversidade – ICMBio

PRESS RELEASE

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INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP BUYS CATTLE PASTURE IN RIO DE JANEIRO TO SAVE UNIQUE SPECIES WHILE ABSORBING CO₂

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. A unique partnership of the Brazilian federal government, local and international organizations announces the purchase of a 100-hectare (247-acre) parcel in Rio de Janeiro state, linking tiny “islands” of what remains of Brazil’s Atlantic Coastal Forest, one of the world’s most species-rich but most endangered tropical forests. Protection and restoration of the forest to establish this small but crucial corridor will help assure a future for endangered golden lion tamarin monkeys and more than 35 endangered bird species existing only in this region. The restoration of the corridor will also help our planet’s future by “soaking up” between 10,000 and 30,000 tons of carbon over the next 30 years.

A victim of 500 years of coastal development, only about 7% of Brazil’s original Atlantic Forest remains today, in a highly fragmented landscape. For the past 20 years the Associação Mico-Leão Dourado (AMLD), a Brazilian non-governmental organization, has led successful cooperative efforts to conserve endangered golden lion tamarins, small endangered primates whose lowland Atlantic Forest habitat remains only in eight municipalities (Silva Jardim, Casimiro de Abreu, Rio das Ostras, Cabo Frio, Armação de Búzios, Saquarema, Rio Bonito, and Araruama) in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Based on two decades of scientific monitoring of the entire wild population of golden lion tamarins, their habitat, and threats, the AMLD knows exactly what it will take to save this species — 2,000 tamarins living freely in a landscape of 25,000 hectares (61,776 acres) of connected and protected Atlantic Forest habitat. Working toward this goal the AMLD, the Instituto Chico Mendes de Conservação da Biodiversidade (ICMBio — the Brazilian national protected areas agency), and other local partners have succeeded in increasing the wild population of golden lion tamarins from an estimated 200 in 1983 to the current population of 1,500, over one-third the result of successful reintroductions of zoo-born animals.

A major problem affecting the species’ survival is that the remaining habitat is highly fragmented, with small patches of forest separated by deforested areas that prohibit individuals from dispersing from one forest patch to another. To remedy this situation AMLD is guiding a partnership of local organizations, Brazilian private landowners, and government agencies to restore the forest connections by growing corridors that allow the tamarins and other wildlife to pass from one protected forest fragment to another, thus reducing inbreeding. One of the largest remaining forest fragments is the União Biological Reserve, created by ICMBio in 1998 to protect nearly 3,000 hectares (7,400 acres) in the municipalities of Casimiro de Abreu, Rio das Ostras and Macaé. According to AMLD’s Secretary General, Denise M. Rambaldi, 220

golden lion tamarins live in the União Reserve, but the surrounding cattle pastures isolate these individuals from the rest of the tamarin population. If such isolation persists, the entire tamarin species and many others could become extinct.

Recent analyses by primatologists, ornithologists, and landscape ecologists identified a small but strategic cattle pasture that, if permanently restored to forest, could link the União Reserve to the Serra do Mar forests to the west (Ask us for the link to Google Earth). ICMBio and AMLD appealed to international conservation NGO partners SavingSpecies (www.SavingSpecies.org) and Save the Golden Lion Tamarin (www.SavetheLionTamarin.org) in the USA, and the National Committee of the IUCN in the Netherlands to raise the necessary funds. Their financial support has allowed the AMLD to successfully conclude an agreement with the private landowner to purchase the 100-hectare area of mixed forest and cattle pasture. In January, upon conclusion of the transaction, AMLD will immediately donate the land to ICMBio who will incorporate it into the União Reserve and assume responsibility in perpetuity for its protection. AMLD and ICMBio will continue working together to restore the forest on 30 hectares (74 acres) of the corridor area currently in cattle pasture.

Support from the following made the purchase of this corridor possible:

- the Arnow Family,
- Cassidy Horn, Cindy Horn, and the Environmental Media Association,
- the Firedoll Foundation,
- Robert O. and Reba B. Founier,
- the IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands' Land Purchase Programme, sponsored by the Netherlands Postcode Lottery,
- Usina Termelétrica Norte Fluminense (legal assistance).

In addition to helping golden lion tamarins and other species survive, donors to this corridor initiative are also contributing to reduce their carbon footprint on the planet. According to Stuart Pimm, Duke University professor and creator of SavingSpecies.org:

“Forests soak up carbon as they grow, and forests in warm, wet places like the Atlantic Forest grow quickly. By supporting our partners' work and purchasing about two hectares (roughly 200 yards by 100 yards or 183meters x 91 meters) of tropical forest, individual donors will become carbon neutral for the next 30 years (soaking up somewhere between 6 to 19 tons of carbon per year).”

“Of course, we and all other environmental organizations encourage you to use your energy-efficient car sparingly, turn off the lights when you're not using them, and other actions to reduce carbon emissions. But by supporting this work to protect and restore the Atlantic Forest habitat of the golden lion tamarin in Rio de Janeiro — and other projects in the tropics — you can further neutralize your carbon footprint and make a huge difference in protecting the diversity of life on earth.”

SavingSpecies www.SavingSpecies.org is a collective of senior, conservation professionals, profoundly committed to preventing species extinctions. Preventing species extinctions is the collective's only objective. It provides a ratings service of projects that seek to do this and connect individual donors to NGOs directly. The projects we evaluate protect existing habitats or restore degraded ones. It considered this project to be “one of top global priorities for preventing species extinctions.”

Save the Golden Lion Tamarin www.SavetheLionTamarin.org is a U.S.A. 501(c) (3) public charity dedicated to raising funds to support the efforts of the Associação Mico-Leão Dourado (Golden Lion Tamarin Association). Contributions to *Save the Golden Lion Tamarin* are tax deductible under Section 170 of the U.S.A. Internal Revenue Code.

Associação Mico-Leão Dourado (Golden Lion Tamarin Association) - **AMLD** www.micoleao.org.br is a Brazilian private non-profit organization based in Rio de Janeiro State, Brazil. Its mission is the

conservation of the biodiversity of the Atlantic Forest, focusing on the long-term protection of the golden lion tamarin in its natural habitat.

Instituto Chico Mendes de Conservação da Biodiversidade – ICMBio is the Brazilian federal government agency for conservation of biodiversity. It is responsible for the management of all Brazilian federal protected areas.

For more information, please contact

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Tel: 55-22-9987-0887; email rambaldi@micoleao.org.br (Denise has had a problem. Lightning burned out the telephone system in the AMLD office this week, and there is no cell reception there. The best way to contact her is by e-mail or to check with Lou Ann Dietz,

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Stuart Pimm, chairs SavingSpecies.org and is the Doris Duke Professor of Conservation Ecology at Duke University, North Carolina, USA. He can be reached at stuartpimm@aol.com and 1 646 489 5481 (cell).

Photos:

Golden lion tamarin



Photo: Luciano Candisani

AERIAL PHOTO OF AREA TO BE PURCHASED

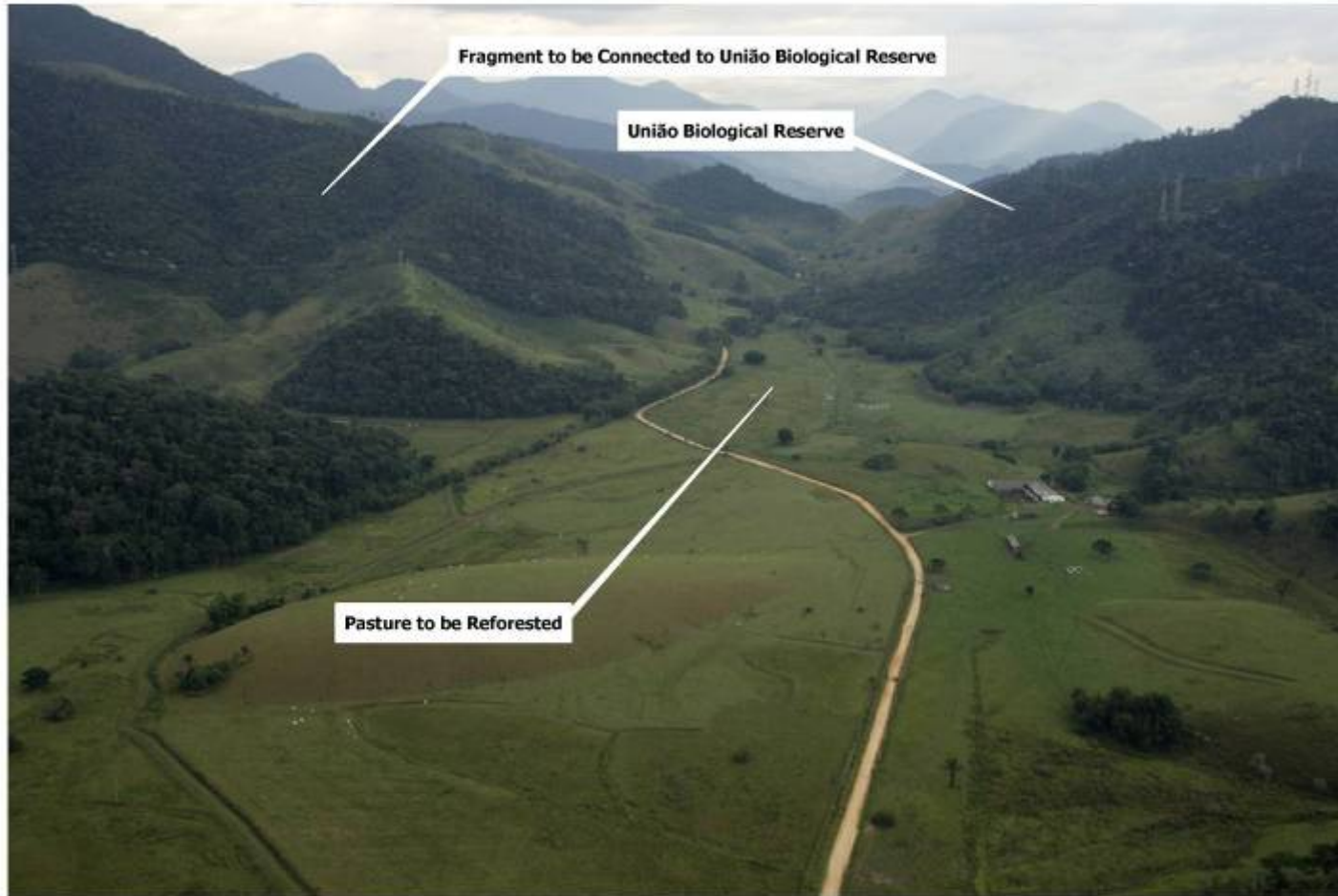


Photo: Meghan Murphy, Smithsonian National Zoo