

# Come, experience, and share

## The Bird Lodge in the Reserva Ecológica de Guapiaçu

The Atlantic Forest was, originally, a 1.5 million square kilometers forest on the southeastern coast of Brazil. Human activity has destroyed 85% of this region over the past, mainly by deforestation. One of the organizations that aims to preserve and increase what is left of the local flora and fauna is REGUA, the Reserva Ecológica de Guapiaçu. Among their activities, REGUA has set up an ecolodge, offering tourists a chance to experience the effects of the preservation, protection and education. Here people can see for themselves that the Guapiaçu forest is blooming and that REGUA is contributing successfully to a bigger biodiversity, improved water quality and reduction of global warming.

Nicholas and Raquel Locke, passionate volunteers for many years, took over the management of the REGUA project and the operation of the ecolodge in 2006: "The lodge today offers 10 rooms with a total capacity of 18 guests. We employ 4 full time staff and are open 11 months per year. Most of our guests are bird watchers: our bird lists stand at 485 species and in an average week a visitor can easily pick up 300 of them."



### Programme

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Restoration of the Guapiaçu watershed

### Goal

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The long-term conservation of the Atlantic Forest and its biodiversity in the Guapiaçu watershed in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

### Partner

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REGUA

## Strong selling points and promotion

REGUA welcomes guests from the UK, USA, Sweden and The Netherlands as well as many Brazilian locals. Strong selling points of the lodge are the quality of the biodiversity, their ongoing protection efforts, a committed team and the accessibility of the place, just 1.5 hours from Rio de Janeiro. The website features trip reports that are accessible to the public and REGUA has promoted its lodge by participating in the UK International Birdfair to allure international birders. "Our presence at the Birdfair also attracts larger tour group companies keen to break up tours that include the Pantanal."

## A clear message

"Our message is that REGUA is an excellent long-term conservation site, with quality rainforest and very low ecological footprint. The lodge plays an important role: it is a strong promotion and networking tool. Through its function as an ecological basecamp for bird watchers, the lodge spreads our name, fame, and purpose", Nicholas states. "For example, the lodge attracts many local visitors living in Rio who wish to see the local avifauna through day visits. They leave with a great experience and a clear message that there are people and organizations making a positive contribution to the environment."

## Share your dreams and change reality

Raquel and Nicholas like to share their most important lesson learned with their partners within the DOB Ecology network: People will always be curious and eager to explore, and eco-tourism is a perfect model to attract certain types of visitors. Most people are willing to learn and value what we are doing. By offering them a sincere, sustainable experience, eco-tourism offers you a chance to share your dreams, explain your motives and learn from others. You have the possibility to reach a whole generation of future decision makers and to change reality.'



Imagine finding a new bird for REGUA, with its 485 strong list! This was the case with the Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) and Adilei spotted a rare sight of reproduction.

Photo by Adilei da Cunha



The Surucua trogon (*Trogo surracura*) is to be found at all altitudes, can be seen calling like a Pygmy owl, but gently purrs. This bird sits above you and likes to check you out before moving on.

Photo by Adilei da Cunha



As far as colourful birds go, the Swallow tailed Manakin (*Chiroxiphia caudata*) is a common bird in the forests here, but David Attenborough featured and found the lekking bewildering.



The Rufous tailed Attila (*Attila phoenicurus*) is very rare in Rio state but can be found in the higher altitudes in our area.



Birders travel to Brazil to see the skulking endemics, the numerous small antbirds, antshrikes, ant pittas and ant vireos, all specialized in their habits and insectivorous. They are elusive and hard to see, but the Scaled Antbird (*Drymophila squamata*) is just a joy to come across.

Photo by Adilei da Cunha



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