

PREVENTING EXTINCTIONS

Restinga Antwren
Formicivora littoralis



Pingo D'água



A male Restinga Antwren (© Luiz Freire)

Background

Restinga Antwren has an extremely small and highly fragmented range around Cabo Frio in Rio de Janeiro state, Brazil. The species inhabits coastal scrub vegetation, notably restinga – a beach-scrub habitat dominated by cacti and bromeliads that develops on sand-dunes. Although found at high densities within its favoured habitat, the species is likely to have undergone a dramatic decline. Today the population numbers only 250-1,000 individuals. Its range occurs within an area of major tourism development, and suitable habitat is under considerable pressure from clearance for beachfront housing and holiday resorts. The species is also threatened by the salt industry and the increasing presence of squatters.

Actions being implemented

1. An **action plan** for the Restinga Antwren has now been completed as is set for publication. Its key aim will be to support the **creation of the Costa do Sol State Park**, a new public protected area in the Maçambaba region. The park will have about 3,962 ha overlapping the State Reserve of Maçambaba and State Reserve of Jacarépia, and will cover the main habitat of the Restinga Antwren. Lobbying is currently taking place to obtain final governmental approval for the creation of the park with support from various field surveys, reports and research conducted over the past few years. It is currently thought that officials in the Environmental Institute of the Rio Janeiro State are committed to its creation, leaving only legal proceedings as an obstacle, and legal proceedings will commence in 2010 to formally establish the park.
2. **Research** on the species's population size, breeding ecology and foraging behaviour is underway. This includes mapping of nests during the breeding season, and a study of reproductive success located 15 nests (only three of which were active) and resulted in the colour-ringing of five fledglings. Research by the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) has improved knowledge of the distribution range of the species. Marmosets (*Callithrix spp.*) in the Restinga de Massambaba have been identified as an important threat to the species, and a proposal has been approved to capture and remove them from the area. Further research is due to take place in 2010.

3. An **environmental education programme** has been developed to raise awareness of the species's plight and the importance of restinga habitat. A capacity-building workshop for school teachers in the municipality of Araruama has been held and educational materials have been distributed in local schools. Working with local NGO Pingo d' Água, the environmental education programme will work with communities covering all cities within the range of the species. An exhibition of photographs is set to show the scenic beauty of the region and will contribute to the long term goal of establishing the species as a symbol of conservation in the Restinga de Maçambaba. Pamphlets, stickers and t-shirts have all been produced and distributed amongst the local community.



Searches for Restinga Antwren in beach-scrub habitat at Maçambaba. Understanding the range of the species is crucial given the rate of development in the area (© Ariane Alvarez, SAVE Brasil).

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