

**EVALUATION REPORT OF LANDOWNER FELLOWSHIP TEAM
AT THE CONSERVATION RESEARCH INITIATIVE – PANTANAL FAZENDA RIO NEGRO
FROM NOVEMBER 7 - 13 2003**

**REPORT WRITTEN BY: ALEXINE KEUROGHIAN
FACILITATORS: MONICA HARRIS AND HELEN WALDEMARIN**

Introduction:

The multi-disciplinary nature of the program at the CRI- Pantanal makes it an ideal location to engage a diverse audience on conservation issues within the corridor. At the CRI, we are able to offer education programs to those that have the greatest potential to impact conservation now and to sustain the conservation effort in the future. Since the development of the CRI, EWI has offered fellowships for educators, conservation professionals, community members and corporate employees. We stimulate and engage each group with knowledge of conservation-related field research and issues in the Pantanal, and this experience may be applied in the participant's environmental work long after their expedition in the field.

To reach out to the community, we developed a community fellowship team composed of landowners from the Pantanal. CI's environmental education program in the Pantanal is based on the understanding that the Pantanal -Cerrado Corridor requires public support. Since the general public is a key stakeholder in the corridor planning and implementation process, they must be presented with information that will help them understand the importance of their land.

The establishment of a Private Natural Heritage Reserve (RPPN) allows landowners to protect biodiverse tracts of land on their property. Participating landowners either own private protected areas or have set aside part of their land for protection. These reserved land areas are tax exempt, protected against deforestation, hunting, fire, and have priority in obtaining resources from the National Environment Fund (FNMA). CI's priorities include providing technical and financial assistance to landowners interested in creating RPPNs, and to help create a landowner's association. As such, 99% of the Pantanal belongs to private owners. In this manner, CI is able to guarantee the expansion of protected areas and the creation of new reserves for maintaining core biodiversity sites within the proposed Cerrado-Pantanal Corridor.

Objectives:

To enhance stakeholder's knowledge of conservation-related field research and issues in the Pantanal, our objectives include;

- learning about the importance of research, and how data can be applied in regional conservation
- acquiring in-depth knowledge of the Pantanal ecosystem and environmental threats
- promoting the development of ecotourism and RPPNs on private property, applying field experience to daily guiding of guests, and also passing on knowledge concerning conservation issues to workers

More than 3 Pantanal associations and over 20 landowners were provided with the EWI application (translated in Portuguese) within the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. Once in the field, they worked as volunteers on three research projects. They attended lectures concerning the CRI, CI's Cerrado-Pantanal corridor proposal, and the aquatic, otter, bat, and fruit projects. Their field activities included:

- Bats – ecological roles and survey of bats
- Geographical Positioning System - GPS
- Ecological roles of seed predators and dispersers.

- Neotropical river otter and giant otter surveys and ecology.

Expectations quoted from fellows (via application form) before the expedition:

- “ Use the experience and apply it to my RPPN”
- “ How to make my RPPN sustainable”
- “ Increase my knowledge about the Pantanal environment, and learn about the various scientific projects”
- “to learn how the data is applied to the general conservation of the Pantanal, and try to find a way to provide this knowledge to the children and parents of the pantaneiro”
- “ to learn how Fazenda Rio Negro combines ecotourism and research, and in general how it can be sustainable”
- “I would like to learn more about the fauna and flora of my area, and I intend to pass this information on to my visitors”.
- “ how I can possibly conduct cattle ranching without hurting the biodiversity of the my area”
- “it’s important for me to understand about conservation and research projects in the pantanal so that in the future I could support projects on my own ranch.”
- “I believe this expedition will give me a clearer idea about how projects are conducted in the Pantanal. I will be able to pass this information to my workers so that they can understand the importance of conservation in our Pantanal”

Brazil Fellowship Team Participants & Affiliation:

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|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Lauro Roberto Barbosa de Souza | Reserva Ecologica Vale do Bugio |
| 2. Laércio M. De Sousa | Portal do Pantanal Sule RPPN Neivo
Pires |
| 3. Simone & Eduardo Coelho | Cabeceira do Prata RPPN |
| 4. Marcela Lemos Monteiro | Posada dos Monteiros cattle ranch/
ecotourism |
| 5. Silvia and Suzana Coelho Lima | Fazenda Santa Cruz Cattle Ranch- legal
reserve |
| 6. Magali Freire Barcellos | Fazenda Talisma Cattle Ranch |
| 7. Edite Guidolin | Fazenda Salinas Cattle Ranch |
| 8. Daniel & Poliana Rondon | Barra Mansa Ecotourism APPAN |
| 9. George Sweitzer family | Fazenda Barranc Ecotourism/cattle
ranch |
| 10. Fernando Luiz Lima de Barros | Fazenda Mangabal Ecotourism/cattle
ranch |

Feedback from fellows:

Evaluations of fellows revealed general themes regarding the acquisition of knowledge in the following:

- The scientific method.
- The work involved in conducting a scientific research project, and the dedication it takes to actually conduct research.
- The importance of conserving the Pantanal – and NGO’s role in the Pantanal.
- Getting to know, understand, and learn more about the Pantanal’s ecosystem and the key species.
- How they could apply what they learned on their own land (e.g. planting important fruit trees to enhance wildlife), looking in their back yard with a different perception.
- Creating RPPN’s on their land.

Specific comments by the landowners concerning the benefits of this expedition:

- The experience was extremely valid; if each Pantaneiro volunteer shared their experience from the expedition with their neighbor, the pantanal will live another 200 years
- This experience made me realize that landowners can get more involved in the conservation of our region.
- I always loved nature, but today I am more stimulated. Every time I catch a piranha I will make sure to check if there is an otter den. For every fruit I encounter, I will make sure to observe who disperses or predate that seed.
- I enjoyed the interaction with the other landowners. Talking and discussing ideas and problems we all face in the Pantanal.
- I especially enjoyed feeling part of a team of researchers; feeling involved and useful. I had very little knowledge about scientific research, so it was excellent for me to participate.
- This experience provided me with great ideas for ecotourism and conservation actions I can adapt on my land.
- The Bat project helped me tremendously. Most of us are prejudiced against bats, because we really don't know their importance in the Pantanal. Being a Pantaneiro: I became more aware and conscious of the potential the Pantanal can offer.

Specific comments about the personal & educational impact this expedition had on the landowners:

- The experience enlightened me completely concerning my perceptions about scientific research. The patience and teachings of the researchers was wonderful. We learned so much about our own Pantanal. I want to learn more now, and will pass this on to my Pantanal neighbors.
- I learned the importance of plant and animal interactions that everything in nature is about interactions. There is still so much to learn about the Pantanal, and we need to take care of what we have.
- I would like to see an expedition that involves "children of the landowners" so they too can learn about the research, and importance of conserving the Pantanal. After all they will inherit our lands. Today I will observe nature with different eyes.
- I really enjoyed connecting our local knowledge of the Pantanal to the scientific work that occurs here. It nice to see how we all benefited from this interaction on a personal and professional level.
- We learned how the Toucan disperses the Manduvi seed which the Hyacinth macaw needs to make nests!! Most of all, how we all depend on nature, and how everything is connected.
- Bats have become charismatic to me!! And how someone's ignorance can hurt nature. It's amazing the things we are still trying to understand in nature, and how much we need to learn. This knowledge and research is important for us to be able to preserve the Pantanal. Thanks to the researchers for opening me up to these concepts.
- I know the Pantanal for 23 years, and never imagined how important bats and a simple fruit can be to preserve the pantanal. For the first time I saw an otter, and how all those holes on the river banks are potential dens for them!!! So many things I missed in the past... and now I know.

- I'm going to my ranch now, and I will make sure everything is as ecologically sound as possible
- I will now look at researchers with much greater respect!

Comments by the researchers (PIs):

George Camargo: It is with the pantaneiros and other volunteers that I fulfill my need to share my work with the local community and society – this is extremely gratifying for me.

Helen Waldemarin: This was an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas with people that have an empirical knowledge of the region. They know much more about the pantanal and learning about their views was rewarding. They were very interested and opened to learn and work. We received numerous invitations to work on their ranches in other regions of the Pantanal.

Comments by CRI-Pantanal Field Director:

We would like to thank our partners for helping us realize this fellowship group. The success of the expedition was worth the energy and effort it took to convince local landowners that working with researchers would be a good experience. This expedition has allowed us to break many barriers between the landowners, “NGO’s” and “researchers”. Today, we have new friends that will open their doors to us and allow research to be conducted on their property.

We would like to thank the PI’s (Mauro Galetti , Helen Waldemarin, Miguel Rico) for their patience and desire to teach. We also would like to thank George Camargo who agreed to participate as a volunteer PI on this expedition. He did not get financial support from the volunteers but was concerned about how the general public regard bats negatively. He accepted our request to participate and through his passion for bats managed to convey their beauty and importance to the landowners.

Suggestions by CI (represented by Monica Harris) & expedition follow up:

This was the best tool we could use to reach out to the landowners. It was important to learn about the landowner’s relationship with their environment, and use this expedition to involve them in conservation programs in the Pantanal. It was extremely good to see the interaction between the landowners and researchers. They were all interested in having research on their land, and were very enthusiastic in the field. The experience for all was so gratifying that CI would like to bring more landowners to participate on research projects. By the end of the expedition, 2 more landowners were interested in forming an RPPN on their property!!