

Protecting Brazil’s Atlantic Forest: Expanding the Oasis Araripe Reserve for the Critically Endangered Araripe Manakin

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In Brazil the Araripe Manakin (*Antilophia bokermanni*) is called Soldadinho-do-Araripe, or “little soldier of Araripe,” having been given this local name on account of its helmet-like crown that is prominent among the males. This striking bird earns its nickname as the population perseveres in a difficult climate and in a rapidly developing landscape. The Araripe Manakin is one of the most threatened bird species in the world and is endemic to the steep slopes of the Chapada do Araripe Plateau, located in the deep south of the state of Ceará in northeastern Brazil. The Araripe Manakin is also an Alliance for Zero Extinction species, found in just 6,918 acres along a narrow 68 km escarpment. Clinging to a narrow strip of forest on the slopes of the Araripe Plateau in northern Brazil. The manakin numbers fewer than 1,000 individuals and is threatened significantly by a lack of suitable breeding sites. In 2014, American Bird Conservancy helped their local partner, Aquasi, purchase 140 acres in a prime breeding area for the protection of the Araripe Manakin, which is also an Alliance for Zero Extinction species.

In 2016, with help from a grant from GCBO’s Tropical Forest Forever Fund, American Bird Conservancy was able to purchase an additional 158 acres to add to this preserve. This property has the potential to support eight new breeding territories for this critically endangered bird. This acquisition connects the reserve to the Araripe National Forest, which protects forest right up to the steep cliff face that represents the westernmost edge of the Araripe Manakin’s range.



The Araripe Plateau

The Araripe Manakin is dependent on the vegetation along these forest streams to breed. They also feed upon a variety of fruit species found in the dense understory, and shares its habitat with other Brazilian endemics, such as the **Silvery-cheeked Antshrike**, the **White-browed Antpitta** and the **Caatinga Antshrike**.

In 2012, Aquasis began discussions with local landowners about the possibility of creating Privately Protected National Reserves (RPPN), a Brazilian Conservation Unit (CU) category that can be created by an individual land owner. The RPPN must remain fully intact, with no natural resource removal, but ecotourism, education and research activities may be permitted on the land. RPPNs are the most popular CU being created in Brazil presently, with benefits to the land owner being an exemption from the Rural Territory Property tax for the amount of area within the RPPN.

With support from American Bird Conservancy (ABC), Aquasis was successful in the completion of papers for a 27-acre RPPN called Araçá with a local landowner. Then, in 2014, ABC assisted Aquasis with the purchase of a 140-acre property to create a new reserve called the Oasis Araripe Reserve, which borders the RPPN. The creation of this first reserve was a very significant step in the conservation of the species as it protects critical nesting sites of the manakin. It also made Aquasis a local landowner and part of the community, facilitating subsequent conservation efforts with neighboring landowners.

In 2014, ABC also began to support a reforestation effort with Aquasis to increase the amount of suitable habitat for the Araripe Manakin. The reforestation focused on areas on the RPPN, the Oasis Araripe Reserve and two other parcels of private land in the region. In total, 5,400 seedlings have been produced from 18 plant species and planted over 27 acres. The tree nursery continues to produce saplings that will be utilized in future reforestation plans.

