

Title: Upper Parana Atlantic forest - Argentina

LOCATION/Geography:



The priority area is the Upper Parana Atlantic forest which is at the border between Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay. It contains a total of roughly 750,000 ha. of strictly protected continuous forest.

CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE

In spite of its highly fragmented condition the Atlantic Forest remains one of Earth's most biologically diverse ecosystems, containing about 7% of the world's species. The priority area of the Upper Parana (at the tri-border area) forms an extremely rich habitat harboring amongst others the jaguar (*Panthera onca*), puma (*Felis concolor*), and ocelot (*Felis pardalis*). Other common mammals include tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*), coati (*Nasua nasua*), and four species of monkeys (*Cebus apella nigrinus*, *Alouatta caraya*, *Alouatta fusca fusca*, and *Leontopithecus chrysopygus*). About 500 species of birds are found here, including five species of toucans.



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The Upper Parana Atlantic Forest ecoregion also constitutes an important source of freshwater.

The Upper Parana Atlantic Forest plays an important role

in the conservation of watersheds, ensuring the water quantity and quality essential for the conservation of the Upper Parana Rivers and Streams. The countries are also heavily dependent on hydro-power which finds its source in the forest.

PROBLEM/THREAT

The largest threat to biodiversity in the Upper Parana Atlantic Forest ecoregion is the extreme degree of forest fragmentation and degradation, where the main proximate cause is the expansion of agriculture, both large- and small-scale. In Argentina, in Misiones, the native forest is being

converted into large-scale pine plantations or pasture for cattle ranching or to small-scale tobacco, and yerba mate plantations. Other causes of forest conversion and degradation include squatting by landless people, the construction of infrastructure (dams, roads, etc.), illegal and unsustainable hunting of wildlife, and unsustainable exploitation of the native forest.

WWF'S ACTION

WWF is working with its Associate organisation in Argentina, Fundacion Vida Silvestre Argentina (FVSA). Focussing on the municipality of Andresito, the objective is to work with landholders to ensure the connectivity among four strictly protected areas (two of them World Heritage Sites: the Iguacu National Park in Brazil and the Iguazú National Park in Argentina) by developing and implementing a fine scale landscape design that includes sustainable land use methods in addition to forest conservation and restoration techniques.

The following has already been achieved:

- Planning at a landscape scale to identify land uses of each property, potential corridors and areas that need restoration to increase connectivity.
- Different forest restoration techniques are being implemented and monitored.
- Studies on natural regeneration of abandoned lands to identify critical factors that favour or retard the secondary succession of the forest.
- A population model for sustainable harvesting of heart of palm.
- Detailed field surveys to map distribution and harvesting potential of the natural population of palm trees (palmitos) in each property in the area.
- A market study to identify potential new markets to increase added value to palmito production.
- Estimation of fuel wood production needs for drying yerba mate.
- Creation of three wildlife private refuges (an agreement between FVSA and landowners) in Andresito, where sustainable productions (e.g., yerba mate under forest cover) are combined with native forest protection.

Future priorities include:

Working with landowners to establish sustainable production of heart of palm, developing a management plan for each land holding, negotiating the design and implementation of a conservation and sustainable use landscape with landowners; offering them training and also monitoring the pilot restoration parcels to evaluate cost-benefit effectiveness of different restoration techniques.