

Lear's homeland inspires community revolution

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Since early 2000, the BioBrasil Fundacion set a priority to save the habitat of the threatened Lear's Macaw. We undertook several actions in order to protect habitat and at the same time to provide environmental education to the local communities where the Lear's Macaw lives in the state of Bahia. Thanks to the generous support of World Parrot Trust, Minnesota Zoo and Disney among others, BioBrasil was able to implement a conservation project in the Lear's Homeland. This project included heightening protection to 20,000 hectares of the main nesting area of the Lear's, conducting a monthly census of individuals that resulted in an official number more than 450 individuals, the survey and cataloguing of the avifauna, developing ecotourism and providing education for the local communities. The last two activities resulted in a local revolution that has yielded the best results we could hope for: self-sustaining programs.

In November 2004 BioBrasil and Cetrel Corp. published the Lear's Homeland Bird Guide online (http://www.ao.com.br/download/l_caatin.pdf). This is a new publication about Brazil's unique Caatinga biome, home of the Lear's Macaw. Since Dr. Helmut Sick's study in 1978, other publications have worked toward a complete survey of the birds and other mammals of the Lear's Homeland. Thanks to Pedro Cerqueira Lima, who authored the book and took many of its great pictures, the Lear's Homeland Birds Book is completely illustrated with pictures of the endemic species and has been made available to anyone who wants to download and enjoy it. The book has had a big impact on the communities, principally in the community of Jeremoabo, Bahia, in the heart of Lear's country. The capacity of the book for raising awareness on the richness of the region was surprising, and the book

soon generated positive comments from all over the region. Among the many positive reactions to this publication, one story in particular is worth sharing in detail.

In early 2005, Mrs. Josilda Monteiro da Silva, who is a teacher of a primary school in Jeremoabo, asked BioBrasil and Pedro C. Lima if she could use the original pictures of the books in her classes. Of course the answer was yes, but Mrs. Josilda went beyond our expectations. She decided to create a program that she proudly titled as "Life Saving Life", which was based on using the pictures of the fauna to create t-shirts to be sold to help a mother of one of her students who was suffering from cancer. The idea was that the life, represented on the wildlife pictures, was helping to save a human life. Mrs. Josilda's program was successful, and more than 500 t-shirts were sold in less than 2 weeks. The money was enough to help her student's



mother, who was previously unable pay for the expensive treatments for the cancer. The program "Life Saving Life" became a revolution in the city of Jeremoabo, and as expected, Mrs. Josilda has requested more t-shirts. At the time, BioBrasil decided to support the first 100 t-shirts to start the program that would generate money to be used on the program. Very soon, the Program became very well known in the region, and today, after starting only with 100 t-shirts, Mrs. Josilda is producing key holders, hats, handbags, napkin holder, etc. and the program still running.

Thanks to Mrs. Josilda and her attitude, pictures of Lear's Macaw and other caatinga avifauna are being seen in all the corners of the Lear's homeland, and the program is now self-sustaining. The program also got the interest of the local enterprises, who are happy to support the program. The municipality of Jeremoabo decided to put the pictures on their public vehicles and more products are being requested from Mrs Josilda. The Program became a revolution in the gateway to the home of the Lear's, and thanks to the local community a vibrant awareness campaign is now running. Every day, more and more people now know how important their region is for the recovery of the endangered Lear's Macaw.

