



Zoo and Golden Lion Tamarin Communities Unite to Save Brazil's Endangered Species Legislation

Brazil's newly minted Endangered Species Legislation just faced a severe challenge of which few people were aware. In 2015, Brazilian Senator Ronaldo Caiado drafted bills designed to revoke Brazil's 2014 Ministry of the Environment Endangered Species Legislation. Caiado is the Senate leader of the representatives of the "Ruralistas", powerful wealthy landowners who are against regulations they feel would negatively impact agribusiness. Votes on the bills were to take place just before Carnival, 2016 (a 4-day national celebration). Made aware of the potential vote at the last minute, Brazil's Associação Mico-Leão-Dourado (AMLD) and partners mobilized social media to focus public attention on the problem. On 4 Feb 2016, Caiado withdrew the proposals in the face of mounting national and international public pressure. This is a significant victory for Brazil, for the many people who worked hard to make Brazil's 2014 Endangered Species Legislation "world class", and for the planet.

What was at stake?

If the 2014 legislation had been revoked, the 2003 Endangered Species Legislation would have been in force again for terrestrial animals including the four species of Lion Tamarins. Brazil's 2014 Legislation is a huge improvement over its 2003 Endangered Species Legislation. Evaluation of species for the 2014 Legislation took five years (77 workshops) to complete and involved 1,383 specialists from 200 institutions. The 2014 Legislation applies to each species the specific category (Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable etc.) used by IUCN, the world authority on categorizing endangered species. These categories are assigned based on field data such as number of individuals, population trends and geographic range. The 2003 Legislation was based on the opinions of local experts and assigned one category: Endangered. The 2003 Legislation included 298 terrestrial animals; the 2014 Legislation lists 698 terrestrial animals. The larger number in 2014 reflects the significant progress made in understanding the status of Brazil's fauna and some changes in category: some improved, as was the case for Golden Lion Tamarins (moved from critically endangered to endangered), and many others are new additions. Also, the 2003 List has several important omissions: Harpy Eagle, Amazon River Dolphin, Pampas Deer and Tapir among others. In summary, reverting to the 2003 Legislation would have endangered the conservation progress made during the past decade in Brazil, and would have put at risk the futures of many species on one or both Red Lists.

How was the crisis averted?

On 28 January 2016, ((O)) Eco (the non-profit environmental news service of a Brazilian NGO that prides itself on having no connection with political parties, corporations, or any other interest groups) sounded the alarm that Caiado's



proposals to revoke the 2014 Endangered Species Legislation would be voted on soon by the Brazilian Congress. A day later, Luis Paulo Ferraz of Associação Mico-Leão-Dourado (AMLD) forwarded the message to national and international partners worldwide. On 1 February, colleagues at the Brazilian Association of Zoos and Aquariums and Parque das Aves developed an on-line petition in Portuguese, English and Spanish shared throughout Brazil and around the world via social networks. As of this writing (Feb. 10), the petition has been signed by nearly 11,000 people, 90% of them Brazilians. Caiado withdrew his proposals and announced that after speaking with environmentalists and representatives of the agribusiness sector he will hold Senate public hearings with members of the Agriculture and Environment Ministries to address this issue.

Lessons learned?

- AMLD's speaking out with Golden Lion Tamarin photos and logo made a difference, lending credibility to the campaign. In two public statements on his own Facebook page Senator Caiado assured the Brazilian public that GLTs specifically would remain protected by the 2003 Legislation. Several Brazilian NGOs mentioned AMLD's endorsement of the on-line campaign. AMLD and partners' work to save GLTs is respected in Brazil. Credibility matters.
- Social media and personal contacts were more influential than the formal media and large NGOs. TV, newspapers and their sites paid little attention to this potential crisis. Ditto for the large international NGOs that lack the flexibility to act at the speed of today's social media. This potential crisis was averted due to a few individuals perceiving the problem, identifying effective ways the public could act, and quickly spreading the word through their social media networks. In this case the entire sequence of events occurred over a period of only 8 days, concluding only 2 days before the beginning of Carnaval.
- Finally, this is a useful example of why AMLD must continue on the very long term to monitor for new threats and be prepared to mobilize its wide net of partnerships and accumulated experience to avert crises like this one. If Caiado's proposals had passed, and they still may, we might have lost decades of work to keep Lion Tamarins safe from extinction.

How you can help:

- Your tax-deductible donation to Save the Golden Lion Tamarin is a great investment in the future of endangered species. Your support is critical to make sure the Associação Mico-Leão-Dourado can continue to coordinate on-



the-ground efforts to save Golden Lion Tamarins in their native habitat in Rio de Janeiro, as well as to continue to monitor new threats that arise and mobilize partners to effectively address them: [Donate Here](#).

- The coalition of Brazilian environmentalist organizations defending the Brazilian Endangered Species List requests that both concerned Brazilian and international colleagues continue to sign and circulate the petitions below. They remain an important tool in a process involving public consultation and possibly Congressional debate.

Portuguese:

https://secure.avaaz.org/po/petition/Congresso_Nacional_Nao_tirem_a_protecao_de_especies_ameacadas/?pv=0&fb_action_ids=10207244034693610&fb_action_types=avaaz-org%3Aassign

English:

https://secure.avaaz.org/en/petition/Brazilian_National_Congress_Brazil_Dont_strip_a_way_protection_of_endangered_species/share/?new

Spanish:

https://secure.avaaz.org/en/petition/Congreso_Nacional_de_Brasil_No Quite_la_proteccion_con_la_que_cuentan_las_especies_en_peligro/?preview=live