APPENDIX 3. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM OF THE PRÓ-MURIQUI ASSOCIATION

Concept

The southern muriqui is an endangered and rarely sighted primate within the last continuous remnant of Brazilian Atlantic Forest. Following two decades of southern muriqui field research at Carlos Botelho State Park (Parque ECB), the Pró-Muriqui Association has excellent knowledge and field logistics for implementing environmental education and outstanding scientific tourism. The field-site offers great advantages because it is within easy access of the city of São Paulo (210km) and it has two groups of muriquis that are fully habituated to human presence, providing a rare opportunity for observing a fascinating primate in a rich and diverse environment.

Environmental Education for Schools

Pró-Muriqui is a small non-governmental organization with a great potential to catalyse education about the muriqui and the conservation of the Brazilian Atlantic forest. It is developing its educational outreach program in the following sequence: Collaborations will be established with international conservation organizations with strong environmental education programs, such as the Smithsonian Institution and the World Wildlife Fund. Pró-Muriqui staff and school teachers from schools within the state of São Paulo (including a wide range of socio-economic levels) will be trained in communicating environmental themes. Teachers and Pró-Muriqui staff will work together to build a curriculum focusing on the muriqui and Atlantic forest, integrating the material into science and biology instruction. Selected classes will study this material for at least a month before making the first visit to Carlos Botelho State Park. In this way the children will visit the park prepared to appreciate the diversity of the environment. Parties of school children (ages from 6 to 18) will observe the muriqui group and other fauna and flora in the forest, to experience the environment that was discussed in the classroom. The day will end with a workshop run by the teachers and Pró-Muriqui staff to close the program.

This will be the first school environmental education program focusing on the muriqui and Atlantic forest in the State of São Paulo. It therefore has great potential, and is of vital importance considering that São Paulo State holds the largest continuous remnant of Atlantic Forest in Brazil.

Financial arrangement

Schools with adequate budgets will pay a fee to join the program and for the visit to the muriqui and the park. For every paying school, a public school from a poor region will be selected to join the program for free.

Funding requirements

This outreach program requires external funding to build capacity both within Pró-Muriqui and within the schools. Schools with adequate budgets will pay fees for the visit to the park and the muriqui. Additional funding will be sought from governmental and private sources to support visits from low-income schools.

Initial educational partners

Environmental secretary of São Paulo City Council (Municipal Schools of São Paulo city, students 4-10 years old).
Departments of Education of São Miguel Arcanjo, Sete Barras, Capão Bonito and Tapirai (Carlos Botelho State Park is located within these city councils).
Other groups will be added as the program grows.

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Ecotourism

Pró-Muriqui will participate in environmentally low-impact ecotourism to increase public awareness about the importance of scientific research for the conservation of wild animals and their natural habitat. These activities are also expected to generate income to help support the research.

Initial schedule for tourists

To target both international and Brazilian tourists, a standard package to view the southern muriqui in their natural habitat is being developed. This standard package can be expanded to suit more adventurous parties.

Standard package

Day 1. Arrive late afternoon in Carlos Botelho State Park. Informal presentation on Pró-Muriqui Association including scientific research projects, and conservation of the muriqui and Brazilian Atlantic forest. Conducted by Pró-Muriqui researchers. Dinner and videos.

Day 2. Pre-dawn until mid to late morning. 4 hours spent following a muriqui group. Starting with locating the muriqui as they wake at their sleeping site and continuing to follow them during their daily activities. Muriqui ecology and behavior will be explained in the field.

Additional activities to expand the standard package:

Day 2. Afternoon. Lunch in the forest. Extended walk through the trail system of the muriqui home range observing additional characteristics of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest.

Day 2. Evening, or separate evening. Dusk and early evening walk to learn about the night creatures of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest.

Day 2. Afternoon. Walk through forest areas in different stages of succession, learning about the history of the area and past exploitation of the forest for charcoal production.

Recommended reading


Tourists can also take advantage of independent short tours of the park (1-6 hours) with options of audio-tours, as well as visits to waterfalls, and opportunities for bird watching.

Ecotourism Guides

Pró-Muriqui researchers with long-term experience observing southern muriquis in the wild will guide the visitors. Guides fluent in Portuguese, English, French and Spanish are available (maximum of two languages per group of tourists).

Support services

Locally owned and operated lodges and restaurants near the park will provide accommodations and meals.

Price

200 US$ for standard package, excluding travel, accommodation and food. 50 US$ for each additional activity. To make this experience available to a wide range of participants, a fund will be established so that scholarships or reduced fees can be offered to teachers, low-income students, local residents, and others who display special interest in conservation of natural habitats.
Timeline

Visits will occur in the winter between April and September. The winter season is chosen because conditions for observation of the muriquis are best during this period. The first year will consist of a pilot project, with a limited number of schools and ecotourism groups (total of 15). The school program will be run mid-week, and the eco-tours will occur on the weekends. During the first year, the program of education and scientific ecotourism will be evaluated and refined with the aid of questionnaires and interviews.

Eligibility

The terrain is mountainous, often wet, and well endowed with insects. The activities described above require reasonable physical fitness and tolerance for the discomforts of the outdoors.