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Brazil Makes Unprecedented Conservation Announcement

Seven New Protected Areas Created in Pará State

Kate Barrett, Staff Writer

Dec. 4, 2006: The governor of the Brazilian state of Pará today announced seven new protected areas in [Amazonia](#) covering an area roughly the size of Illinois. The announcement is an enormous step in [Brazil's](#) world-leading efforts to protect Earth's remaining tropical rain forests.

Stretching from the border of Guyana and Suriname in the north to areas south of the Amazon River, these new protected areas encompass an unprecedented 37 million acres.

"I cannot remember any single announcement like this," says José Maria Cardoso da Silva, vice president of science for [Conservation International \(CI\)-Brazil](#). "This is one of the major conservation announcements of the last decades."

Breaking Down The Benefits

For Brazil's species, people, and climate, these protected regions will play a valuable role.

Two of the seven new areas are designated as strictly protected areas, one of which is the world's largest strictly protected area ever created in a tropical forest. According to CI's Amazonia program manager Enrico Bernard, these two areas alone could be home to as many as 54 percent of all animal and plant species found in Amazonia.

With the addition of the protected areas named today, the region now boasts a mosaic of connected protected areas, which create a biodiversity conservation corridor that allows species to roam vast landscapes. Connecting various populations of species allows these groups to intermingle, strengthen their gene pool, and thereby increase their chances for long-term survival.

The people living in Amazonia also benefit from the contiguous protected ecosystem. For example, local people can be assured of their water supply by maintaining the health of these areas because almost 20 percent of the world's water runs through the region. The protected areas sit atop the Guayana Shield, a massive underlying rock formation containing the most significant freshwater reserves in the American tropics. Five of the newly protected areas also allow for sustainable use and limited production.

On a larger scale, healthy ecosystems will also contribute to efforts to stabilize the world's [climate](#). Since 1970, an area of Amazon rain forest larger than France has been destroyed. As forests are cut, the carbon they

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[Browse gallery of species \(=weblink\) & landscapes \(=link to file\)](#). The jaguar (*Panthera onca*) is one of the Guayana Shield's species. Pará's two new strictly protected areas are believed to contain at least 195 species of mammals.



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[View a larger map](#). Stretching from the border of Guyana and Suriname in the north to areas south of the Amazon River, these new protected areas encompass an unprecedented 40.5 million acres.



© CI, Enrico Bernard
Brazil's dwarf fruit-eating bat (*Artibeus*)

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store naturally is released as CO₂, further contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. By protecting these forests from continued destruction, additional emissions are avoided.

A Remarkable Achievement

Destructive human activities, including logging, mining, and development, threaten tropical forests around the world. Brazil's efforts to protect its forests place it at the forefront of worldwide efforts to preserve these critical landscapes.

"If any tropical rain forest on Earth remains intact a century from now, it will be in this portion of northern Amazonia, thanks in part to Governor Simão Jatene's visionary commitment," says CI President [Russell A. Mittermeier](#).

This year, with major support from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, CI-Brazil, and its local partner IMAZON, Pará's state government was able to achieve this conservation goal.

"This is the greatest effort in history toward the creation of protected areas in tropical forests," says Adalberto Verissimo, senior researcher at IMAZON.


CI-Brazil will now help Pará implement these new protected areas to ensure that Jatene's commitments are carried out far beyond his term in office.

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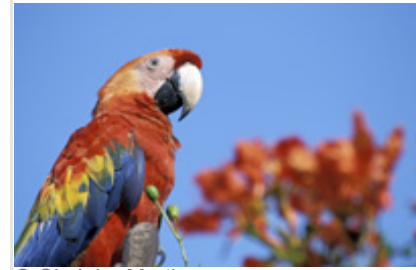
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gnomus) is one of several creatures at home in northern Amazonia.



© CI, John Martin

The scarlet macaw (*Ara macao*) is one of several vibrant species living in rainforest of the Guayana Shield, named for a 2-billion-year-old rock formation beneath the northern Amazon.

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