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Megadiversity in Virua National Park: a successful history in the Brazilian Amazon

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In the context of

- Lack of human and financial resources
- Large areas needing protection
- Increasing pressure of human activities



Efforts on **supporting research on protected areas** are often seen as “secondary”, “distracting”, or even “superfluous” or “dispensable”.

“Campinarana” → the less studied of all the Brazilian ecosystems!



Virua National Park → completely unknown until 2006, when we started to create the conditions to support research in the park.

The aim was to develop a database that could be used as a reference guide for other protected areas in the Brazilian Amazon.

In order to do so, we adopted three main **strategies**...

1 - **Develop high level standards on supporting research**

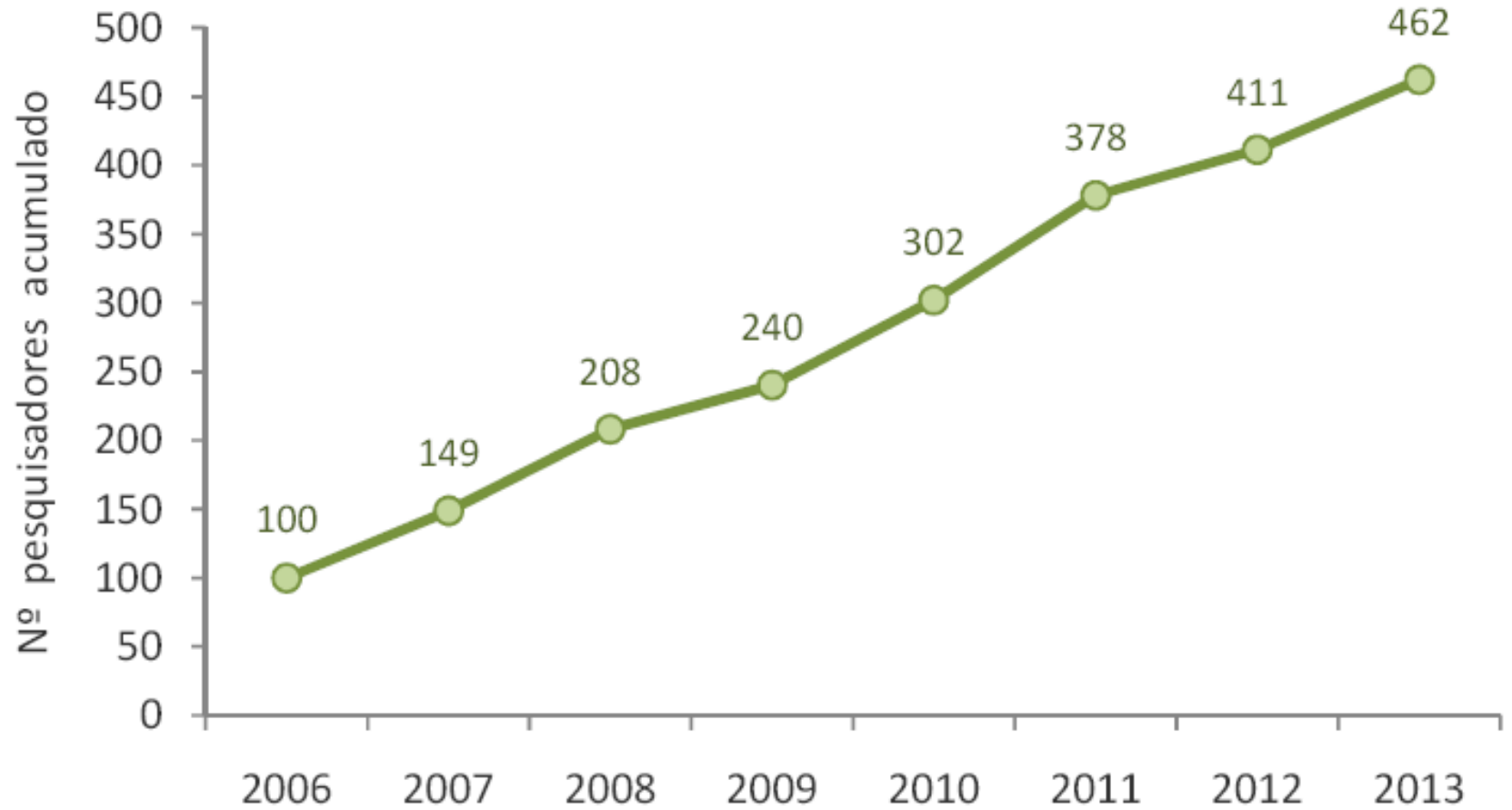
- Defining work patterns for all the logistic process
- Training local people and permanent staff on basic and specialized tasks
- Providing research facilities (ex: a 80Km trail system)

That allowed us to work on the second strategy...

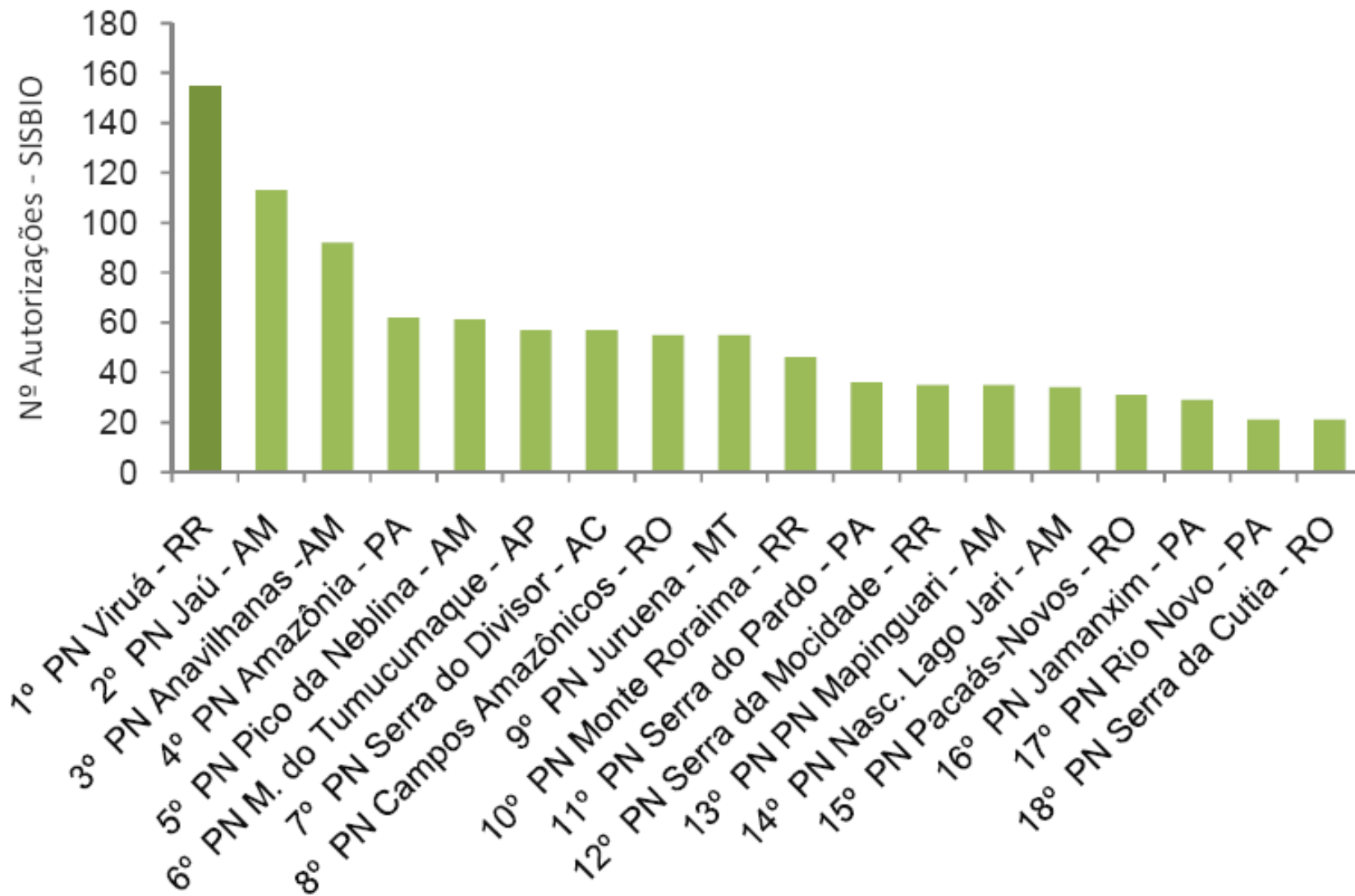
2 – Incorporating stakeholders in the research goals

- Consolidating a long term research site
- Enhancing partnerships with more than 20 universities
- Supporting different interinstitutional projects

Number of licensed researchers working on Virua NP



Ranking of research licenses in the Brazilian Amazon national parks



And finally the last strategy...

3 – Involving local communities as a priority

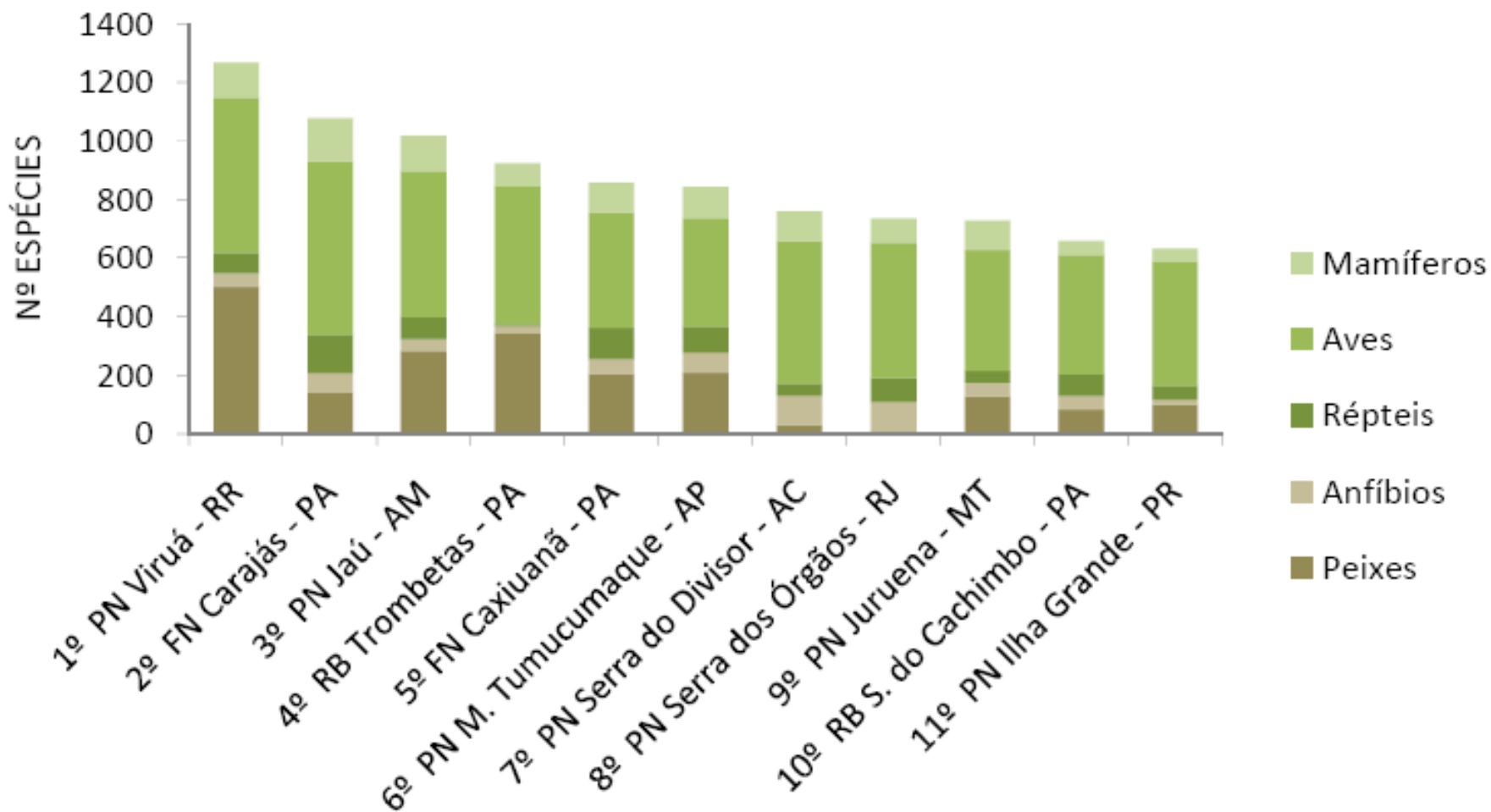
- Incorporating local knowledge
- Training local people
- Contracting local people as support staff

Results of the strategies:

- A large and high quality scientific database to management planning
- The recognition of Virua as the actual most megadiverse Brazilian national park

(including 530 bird species, 504 fish species, and more than 1250 vertebrates at large)

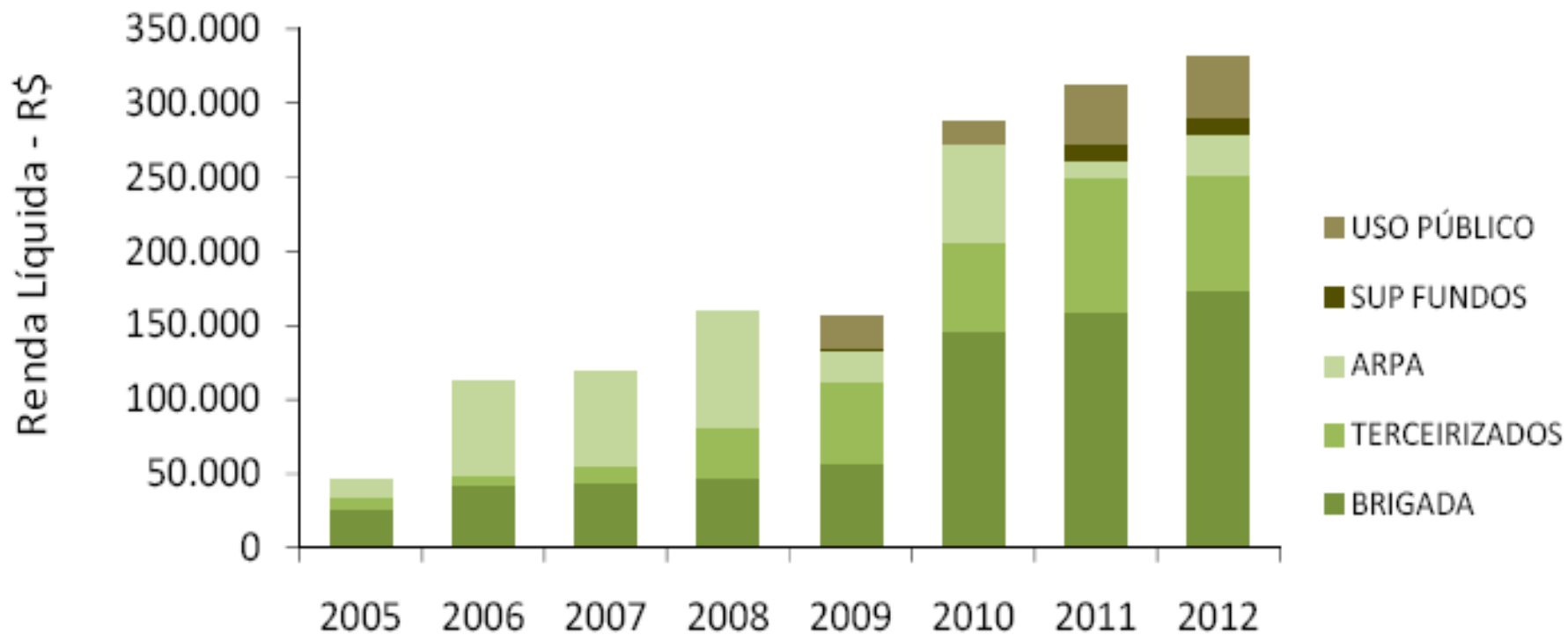
Brazilian Ranking of Vertebrates Diversity in Protected Areas



Other positive benefits of the strategies:

- Enhancing protection
(by increased vigilance for illegal activities)
- Increasing attractiveness to ecotourism
(by showcasing its enormous biodiversity)
- Engaging local people with conservation goals
(by increasing jobs and income generation and providing education to local communities).

Income generation by contracting local people in Virua NP



Our approach goes against the prevailing view that research is a “luxury”. Our **experience** is that investing in research has a multitude of tangible benefits.

Integrating people, resources and innovative ideas, the Virua experience proves that employing efforts on **supporting research**, much more than a secondary problem can, sometimes, be an astounding **solution!**

Thank you all!