



## Population expansion of the endangered scarlet ibis (*Eudocimus ruber*) in the southeast of Brazil

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The scarlet ibis *Eudocimus ruber* (Ciconiiformes) is an aquatic bird inhabiting coastal and mangrove areas. It presents a unique bright red coloration which is due to the presence of the pigment canthaxanthin in its major prey item, crustaceans. In Brazil, there are two populations with a disjointed distribution: one in the north-northeast region (between Amapá and Ceará states) and the other in the south-southeast region (between Rio de Janeiro and Santa Catarina states). The population size of this species has declined as a consequence of egg poaching and hunting and this bird became almost extinct in the southeast of Brazil during the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since then, very few scarlet ibis were recorded in Rio de Janeiro (1979 and 1985), at Baía de Antonina, in Paraná state in 1977 and in São Vicente, São Paulo state in 1961. In 1984, one breeding colony of 100 specimens of this species was discovered in mangroves of Cubatão-Santos (São Paulo State) and this population was estimated in 600 individuals during the 90'. In 1998, the birds abandoned this area after starting nest preparation and since then reproduction has no longer occurred there. In lagoons and mangrove habitats southeast of Cubatão-Santos only a few vagrant birds were observed until 2003, when 20 breeding pairs were observed in the northeast of Ilha Comprida. Since then, this area has been monitored by the project "Aves do Lagamar" and the population size has reached 2000 specimens in 2008 revealing that this species has become successfully established in this area and that the population is expanding. Currently, the Scarlet Ibis is listed as endangered on the official list of the endangered animals of São Paulo State. In order to guarantee the protection of this endangered species, we propose the establishment of a wildlife refuge in Ilha Comprida and also in the neighboring area of Iguape, where the scarlet ibis is frequently seen feeding.