

DFO Talks Fish in Brazil

By Brian Harvey

Brazil has a fish called dourado that looks just like a salmon except that it's a uniform brilliant gold. Its scientific name, *Salminus*, suggests that it's a close relative, even though it isn't. No matter: the dourado migrates prodigious distances, it's the fought-over mainstay of important local fisheries and its numbers have gone through the floor in many places, all of which make it a surefire conversation starter for a Canadian fisheries expert visiting Brazil. And, as a surprising number of Pacific Region DFO staff have found out over the last few years, once the conversational ball is rolling, a little thing like not speaking the local language doesn't stand in the way of technical cooperation.

When my organization, the Canadian NGO World Fisheries Trust (WFT), received its first support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in 1997 to provide technical assistance in Brazil, we turned immediately to friends at DFO for help. Chris Wood, from the Pacific Biological Station, provided thoughtful advice on the genetic underpinning for conservation goals at a symposium in Santa Catarina, followed by in-the-field comments during a trip into the Pantanal, the world's largest wetland covering areas in Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay.

A second, CIDA-supported project on sustainable management of the Sao

Francisco River, which WFT began in 2003, was barely underway before we were meeting with Fishery Resource Management Director Don Radford about obtaining some technical expertise on enforcement. Herb Redekopp, Lower Fraser Area Chief for Conservation and Protection in British Columbia, took a Brazilian group on an enforcement patrol to show how Canadian Fishery Officers interact with fishermen.

"The exchanges between Brazilian stakeholders in fisheries and habitat conservation, and their Canadian counterparts, are invaluable," says Herb. "Oftentimes, we share the same issues regarding resource management."



Neil Schubert on the Sao Francisco River.

All photos Brian Harvey

At the first Brazilian all-stakeholder workshop on stock assessment for the Sao Francisco River, Neil Schubert, B.C. Lower Fraser Stock Assessment Chief, demonstrated – in Portuguese! – the importance of knowing what the fish population is as part of any fisheries co-management effort.

Participatory and sustainable river management also involves habitat restoration and protected areas. Earlier this summer, DFO's Matt Foy led a team of six Brazilian scientists and administrators through projects in the Seymour and Squamish watersheds, a study tour with added punch for our visitors thanks to the way Matt and BC Hydro's Hugh Smith worked together to provide the broadest possible perspective on water use planning.

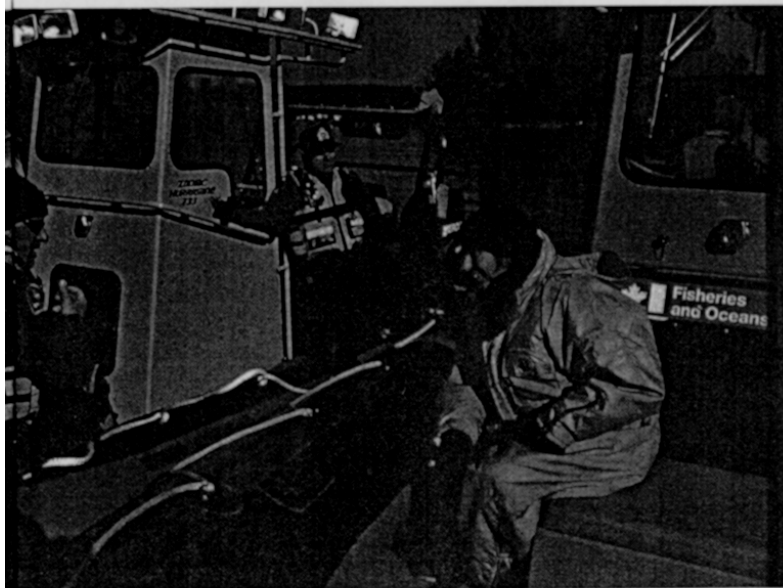
Herb Redekopp considers his trip to Brazil to examine enforcement issues with Brazilian fisheries enforcement cops, policy makers and fishermen, as an eye opener.

"My visit was the best learning experience of my long career with DFO in the area of enforcement," he says. "We can learn a lot from the community policing that's in place in areas along the Sao Francisco River."

Partnerships such as this one allow DFO to sharpen expertise and to discover how different organizations and countries deal with similar situations. It's a valuable experience which helps the Department move forward in innovative ways in its management of Canadian fisheries and water habitats.

Besides, Brazilian fishermen, biologists and agencies thank Canada for it. So, I suspect, would the dourado.

Brian Harvey is the founder and president of the World Fisheries Trust, established in 1994 to promote sustainable use of global fisheries resources. The goal of this non-profit organization is to foster responsible fisheries management at the local, regional and national level.



Matt Foy hosting a tour of Brazilians in the Squamish watershed.