

# Saving Cherry-throated Tanager

## *Nemosia rourei*

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In September 2021 came exciting news – and a video that went viral – that a nest of the Critically Endangered Cherry-throated Tanager *Nemosia rourei* had been discovered at a reserve in the Atlantic Forest. Here is an account from the field.



All photographs taken at Mata de Caetés, Vargem Alta, Espírito Santo, Brazil, during September 2021. Unless otherwise indicated, all are by Daniel Branch ([📷 danbranchbirding.blogspot.com](https://danbranchbirding.blogspot.com)).

**1** Adult Cherry-throated Tanager *Nemosia rourei* (Critically Endangered).



>> GLOBALLY THREATENED BIRD CHERRY-THROATED TANAGER

8 Adult Cherry-throated Tanagers *Nemosia rourei* feeding a fledgling.

develops. The day before we entered the reserve, news reached us that the nestlings had fledged prematurely due to an attempted predation by a Spot-billed Toucanet *Selenidera maculirostris*.

Fortunately, the fledglings were not particularly mobile, and had been easily followed throughout the rest of the day until they roosted in the evening. The following morning, we were taken to the site by the wardens, Victória Faria and Thieres Fiorotti, a dedicated pair who had spent every daylight hour with the tanagers since they first located the nest. Our arrival was timed perfectly, as we were able to provide more eyes and ears with which to track the increasingly mobile family party as they travelled through the forest canopy for the very first time.

We stayed with the tanagers from dawn until dusk. Initially the birds were reasonably docile, with the fledglings remaining in the canopy not far from the nest while the group of six adults would come and go, bringing food. However, after a few hours the flock began to move with the fledglings in tow and it became a case of following the group through the forest. It was easy to lose them, only to then hear their sharp, high-pitched calls and thus relocate them. Often the chicks would remain silent and motionless until the adults arrived with food. The fledglings would only fly to another tree if accompanied by two or three adults but did not move at the same time, presumably to avoid calling too much attention to themselves. By the time

the birds roosted at the end of the day, they had crossed to the other side of the valley from their nest, no more than a couple of kilometres in total, but presumably quite a feat for the fledglings.

Protecting Mata do Caetés is a primary goal of the programme. Tragically, only a small section of the forest is protected by the reserve, with adjacent sections under private ownership. Although a bid was made to purchase a neighbouring area of forest, this was refused so the fate of the land remains uncertain. The health of the forest is not just important for the Cherry-throated Tanager, as other endangered species are also found here. During our time there, we had brilliant views of Golden-tailed Parrotlet *Touit surdus* (Vulnerable), and we were deafened throughout by the song of Bare-throated Bellbird *Procnias nudicollis* (Near Threatened).

And it is not only the birdlife here that is in serious threat. The aforementioned Buffy-headed Marmoset is Critically Endangered, being found at only a handful of sites in this mountainous region and the beautiful Vargem Alta Flea Toad *Brachycephalus alipioi*, a stunning golden toad species, is also endemic to just a handful of forest fragments around this area. We were lucky to find an individual by rummaging in the leaf litter along the edge of a small stream. Only time will tell if the forest is able to maintain an ecosystem capable of sustaining these species, as well as Cherry-throated Tanager, into the long term.