

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. The Final Report must be sent in **word format** and not PDF format or any other format. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work. Please be as honest as you can in answering the questions – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please complete the form in English and be as clear and concise as you can. Please note that the information may be edited for clarity. We will ask for further information if required. If you have any other materials produced by the project, particularly a few relevant photographs, please send these to us separately.

Please submit your final report to jane@rufford.org.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details

Your name	Didiher Chacon-Chaverri
Project title	Sea Turtle Rescue & Conservation Centre, Pacuare Beach
RSG reference	12721-1
Reporting period	February-October 2013
Amount of grant	£6000
Your email address	dchacon@widecast.org
Date of this report	November 2013

1. Please indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
By a long term effort, to improve the conservation status, stabilise the population and create a management strategy for three species of marine turtles in Pacuare Beach, Costa Rica. (GENERAL OBJECTIVE)		X		It takes years to fully achieve results in a long term effort, especially when the topic is conservation and population status of highly migratory and long lived species with late maturity rates like marine turtles. Also because in several levels involves the participation of local members of the community. We are currently working on a long term conservation and management strategy that would help to achieve this main goal.
To identify and mark nesting females of three species of marine turtles in Pacuare Beach, Costa Rica.			X	A total of 125 nesting females of leatherbacks were sighted on Pacuare Beach. 24.8% (31) were newly tagged. Period: Feb 23 rd -Sep 19 th , 2013. A total of 74 females of Green turtles were sighted on Pacuare Beach. 51.35% (38) were newly tagged. Period: Feb 24 th -Sep 24 th , 2013. A total of 10 females of Hawksbill turtles were sighted on Pacuare Beach. 40% (4) were newly tagged. Period: Feb 24 th -Sep 24 th , 2013. An unusual event occurred during this period. One Loggerhead female was sighted on Pacuare Beach. Period: Feb 24 th -Sep 24 th , 2013.
To increase the survival rate of protected nests of three species of marines turtles in Pacuare Beach, Costa Rica.			X	<u>Leatherback nests protected:</u> -Hatchery: 98 nests -Relocated: 4 nests -In situ: 6 nests Total: 108 nests Poached nests: 89 Nest survival rate: 54.82% <u>Green turtle nests protected:</u> -Hatchery: 72 nests Total: 72 nests Poached nests: 21 Nest survival rate: 77. 42% <u>Hawksbill turtle nests protected:</u> -Hatchery: 4 nests

				<p>Total: 4 nests Poached nests: No data collected Nest survival rate: 100%</p> <p><u>Loggerhead turtle nests protected:</u> -Hatchery: 1 nest Nest survival rate: 100%</p> <p>In 2012, 55.06% of the total nests were poached (including all sea turtles on Pacuare Beach). In 2013, the total of poached nests on Pacuare Beach could be reduced by 10% on Pacuare Beach.</p>
To determine a survival rate and number of hatchlings of three species of marine turtles in Pacuare Beach, Costa Rica.			X	<p>Leatherback turtle nests: -Hatchery Success Rate: 59.25% (n=98) -Relocated Success Rate: 54.09% (n=4) -In situ Success Rates: 88.97% (n=6) -General Success Rate: 60.32% -Total of hatchlings released: 4178 individuals</p> <p>Green's Nests: -Hatchery Success Rate: 71.55% (n=72) -General Success Rate: 71.55% -Total of hatchlings released: 5345 individuals</p> <p>Hawksbill's Nests: Hatchery Success Rate: 76% (n=4) -General Success Rate: 76% -Total of hatchlings released: 290 individuals</p> <p>Loggerhead's Nest: Hatchery Success Rate: 45.65% (n=1) -General Success Rate: 45.65% -Total of hatchlings released: 63 individuals</p>
To Implement an environmental education program addressed to local communities that directly affected the marine turtle populations in Pacuare Beach, Costa Rica			X	<p>The schools Goly, La Margarita and Matina received each 3 turtle workshops, the Pacuare school received 2 educational talks with activities, Bataan school received a turtle presentation and participated in activities.</p> <p>On July 2013, we carried out an Environmental Festival at Bataan with three schools from the region and the local community. In September, we carried out two school visits with 100 children and 40 adults.</p> <p>Through workshops and presentations, the involvement in conservation activities, knowledge about sea turtles increased, and most participants didn't know about marine turtles and the problems they face as species and population status. All school events were</p>

				finalised with evaluations. The local community members of Pacuare participated in a 5 day workshop to be qualified for the field work as assistants. Performance of beach work and data collection has improved.
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2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

The main difficulty the project is facing are the presence of poachers on the beach. People from outside the community arrive in Pacuare Beach and stay during the sea turtle nesting season looking forward to steal the nests or nesting turtles in order to sell the eggs, meat or carapace on a black market already existing around the area. However, during the 2013 season our project achieved to reduce nest poaching of leatherback nests by 10% compared with the 2012 season. Another issue we faced along the season was the low amount of volunteers to work at Pacuare Beach; this situation was radically strong after the crime of our workmate Jairo Mora on Moin Beach. After that We had to reduce the extension of beach patrols during August.

3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

- Been able to keep the beach work (night and day time patrols, to relocate nests to safer parts of the beach or the hatchery, to register nesting females, to tag the turtles, etc.); this increases the possibility to keep this long term project and to contribute to the recovery in sea turtle populations.
- Been able to protect as many nests as possible, increasing the nest survival rates and hatching success on the beach or in the hatchery. Could save 10% more Leatherback nests than the season before.
- Been able to implement an environmental education programme in the nearby communities that strengthens the positive impact of sea turtle conservation and indirectly helps sea turtle populations to grow.

4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project (if relevant).

One of our main goals is to involve the communities as much as possible. Part of the community is currently working as beach monitors at the beach and hatchery. Some others are involved in our volunteer programme providing services to the national and international volunteers. The project tries to create alternatives livelihood for the communities that traditionally used to hunt and illegally poach affecting marine turtle populations. Demonstrating that the value of the endangered creatures higher when it is alive because of their value for tourism or volunteering programs, the community understands that involving themselves in conservation is to their benefit. The education programme also tries to teach communities other skills for further developing of economic activities like handcrafting and rural tourism activities, to improve their financial status while they are supporting conservation. Also, the involving of several schools and many kids and their parents permit us communicate important concepts about the conservation of Sea Turtles and their critical habitats, and particularly the socio-economic importance of the amazing creatures.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. Marine turtles are highly migratory and longevity species with late maturity rates and that is why long term conservation efforts are the only way to finally achieve results on their population studies. The goal is to start again in 2014 with cleaning and preparing the beach for the next nesting season to remove the marine debris, rebuilding the hatchery because is a temporal structure and contacting volunteer programmes and organisations to keep the fieldwork and community participation running. As for the continuation of the outreach activities with the communities it will be a priority to really try to change the perception of people about sea turtle conservation.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

To share results with general public we organise and participate on environmental fairs where we distribute educational material showing results of the study which population goals are local students and their family. As well we will share outcomes with national print media, TV and social networks media to inform about our work. At scientific level the results will be published on scientific journals and the International Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation Symposium and General Annual Meeting of WIDECAST.

7. Timescale: Over what period was the RSG used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?

The grant was used during over February through October 2013. It was spend all over the activities the project developed through the season. The grant allowed us to keep the beach patrols through the whole season which is the most important activity to increase the number of protected nests, protect the nesting females and meanwhile to reduce the number of poached nests. The project was also able to finish the hatchery activities, the emergence of all hatchling and the proper registration of these events.

8. Budget: All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used (Exchange rate: 1 SP= US\$1.6101).

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
1. Salaries	2112	2120	-8	This over expend is cause of the exchange rate.
2. Transportation	1243	1255	-12	We over expend in one of the last school boat trips
3. Field Operations	1243	1251	-8	This over expend is cause of the exchange rate.
4. Materials / Supplies	687	690	-3	This over expend is cause of the exchange rate.
5. Office materials	715	690	25	We under use the budget line
Total	6000	6006		

9. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

The most important next step is how continuous the project could be at Pacuare Beach making a strategic analysis to increase our positive impact over the sea turtle survival rate at this location. Not just because of the record of data but because the presence of WIDECAS in the area really creates a strong bond and credibility with the community. The more the community field assistants are involved in and with the project the more support they can bring to the effort of conservation. It is vital to be present during nesting season and to start with the educational programme, so when the season starts people will have a better understanding and perception of our role as an NGO who protects and conserves marine turtles which as highly migratory species do not belong to a specific community but to all marine coastal areas around the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean. Additional funding for the project will maintain conservation plan for the new season, using legal and technical tools, and networking with more stakeholders as important as the NGO knowledge, volunteers and the community.

10. Did you use the RSGF logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the RSGF receive any publicity during the course of your work?

We plan to use in reports, Symposium posters, power point presentations and our website during the next weeks.

11. Any other comments?

In order to continue our effort and keeping our positive impact over the sea turtles in this beach we will like request to RSGF that consider strongly support any other proposal for our part.