

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Small Grants 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	Nelson Ferretti
Project title	Conserving Tarantulas in the Atlantic Forest, Argentina
RSG reference	13042-1
Reporting period	September 2013 - October 2014
Amount of grant	£5500
Your email address	nferretti@conicet.gov.ar – nelsonferretti@hotmail.com
Date of this report	20 October 2014

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
Knowledge of the tarantula's diversity.		X		Although we obtained excellent results in knowing the diversity of tarantulas (for example, the report of some Brazilian species that until now it was unknown to occur in Argentina), according to museum records, we expect to register a couple or more species in the future. The objective was partially achieved because these species probably have different reproductive periods and finding individuals could be more laborious.
Abundance of tarantulas			X	In the areas where we conducted field studies, we obtained good measures of abundances and even we can approximate to evaluate the spatial pattern of one species in natural and modified habitats.
Update of the species cited in Misiones province			X	We were able to update the known species for Misiones, with three more Brazilian species not known to occur in Argentina.
Examination of possible sympatric species.			X	The observation and record of two related species occurring in sympatry at the Atlantic Forest in Iguazú National Park (northern Misiones).
Knowing the natural history, seasonal activity and reproductive period.		X		The reproductive period of only one species was known and we were able to study the mating behaviour patterns and male activity right on the field. Moreover, we obtained good quality data such as habitat characteristics, burrow shapes, shelters, inside and outside burrow temperatures and demography of the species.
Knowledge of the conservation status.		X		The presence of two Brazilian species and one Argentinean of a particular genus that we know that are actually trading at the illegal pet trade alerted us regarding the conservation status of the species. Obviously, it's imperative to know more biological and ecological aspects of these species, but we obtained good

				distribution records and abundance values in preserved areas such as national parks and in small areas surrounded by high disturbed environments. But still more data on modified habitats and direct comparison is needed.
Dissemination of the information to community and to the key decision-makers.			X	Public talks to local community about tarantula spiders were made during all trips. We had a great audience and good dissemination over the community such as radio information. Also, we performed many workshops involving theory and practical activities and talks to park rangers of the national parks where we conducted studies, to tourist guides and public.

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

The project encountered unexpected delay in obtaining collection and study permits necessary to conduct field trips in natural and protected reserves. This influenced the project implementation, budget and outcome in many ways. For example, we needed to delay the field work to the next season. Also, after the first campaign during March-April (2014) the area flooded (<http://www.buenosairesherald.com/article/161754/iguaz%C3%BA-waterfalls-closed-to-the-public-amid-flooding>) during winter (June to August) and we had to cancel one field trip and make another field trip by airplane to arrive to the area. However, according to these difficulties we added more days to the effective campaigns.

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

- Several old studies indicated the presence of certain species of tarantulas inhabiting the Atlantic Forest in Misiones province, northern Argentina; and from the results obtained during the development of the present project we can confirm that there are at least a couple of Brazilian tarantulas that also inhabit the Atlantic Forest in Argentina. All these species are of conservation concern due to their commercial value at the illegal international pet trade. Also, from the present work we can assure that some old records (mainly from Museums and from the 1940s to the 1960s) for some tarantula species reported at this area are erroneous and could be mislabelled or misidentified.
- We obtained a lot of unpublished data about natural history, ecology and reproductive biology of the tarantula species inhabiting the Atlantic Forest in Misiones, Argentina. For example, the reproductive period of one species was observed in detail with the achievement of valuable data about the abundance of active males searching for females, their behaviour at the field and the availability of reproductive females during this period. This aspect is of relevance at the tarantula biology and conservation status, because these

spiders have a very long lifespan and the individuals that actually can produce offspring usually are in low numbers.

- This Rufford supported project has managed to create significant impact on community regarding the importance of **why conserving tarantulas** even if they are creepy spiders! And that is the vision from the community that we intended to change and with excellent results. We have been invited to many public talks about spiders and tarantulas, for example in public libraries and at natural reserves, with attendees of all ages, people that hate spiders, people that love spiders and have them as pets, and even military and firemen that want to know what to do when crossing with this spiders at the field. Also, we offered short workshops at national parks to park rangers and tourist guides about the main topics in spiders and why should we conserve tarantulas.

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

The local communities were not directly involved in the implementation of the project but they received all the information through public talks, radio interviews and dissemination of the results and the project through the public talks with the presentation of posters, stickers as gifts and also they made a practice section where they can see live tarantulas and how to recognise them observing their morphology using a stereomicroscope.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

During the study several issues were raised by the team and local community. These issues were noted down by the research team for further analysis with a view to identifying key attributes for future study: i) try to locate other tarantula species during different seasons in order to discover if they showed a different reproductive period than the more abundant species located in the area; ii) from the present knowledge of the species and their habitat requirements, made more efforts in studying populations at different disturbed areas; iii) visit more natural areas, either national parks or private reserves in order to continue disseminating the information about conserving tarantulas; iv) develop and present a formal categorisation statement to the IUCN of one tarantula species that we now confirm its presence in Argentina and has relevance from the illegal pet trade.

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

The study outcomes have already been shared in various forms namely presentation to public community and short workshops with local park rangers and tourists guides. Additionally, we are encouraged to present a detailed report explaining all the activities and outcomes developing in the national parks and private natural reserves. Unfortunately, we were not able to present the information and results in a specialized Congress or Meeting, but we submitted an article entitled "First record of *Vitalius roseus* (Mello-Leitão, 1923) (Araneae: Theraphosidae: Theraphosinae) in Argentina: distribution map, natural history, and sexual behaviour" to *Arachnology* (formerly *Bulletin of the British Arachnological Society*, UK) and was recently accepted for publication in the first volume of the next year. One more scientific article is under preparation to be submitted in peer reviewed journal for publication. Once published, it will help disseminating the outcomes of the study to wider scientific community and also to interested readers.

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

The project has initiated upon receiving the grant support from Rufford (I was notified on March 2013). However, the grant was confirmed during late August and I perceived it on September 2013 due to some bank concerns. The official preparation started on October 2013 that involved purchasing the classroom projector and design of colour booklets, picture guides, ecological notes, posters, stickers and t-shirts. At this time, we attempted to obtain the official permits at the natural areas to develop the future study. Field survey was planned to accomplish four campaigns but due to the delay in obtaining the permits and the flooding suffered by the area we needed to compress the field survey only to two campaigns but involving more days than originally proposed. So, we made two field surveys on March-April 2014 and September-October 2014. The actual length of the project was planned for 12 months and we meet this deadline.

8. Budget: Please provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used.

Please consider that when I applied for the project the exchange was 1 £ = 5 ARS (Argentinean Peso) and when I develop the activities the actual exchange was 1 £ = 13.49 ARS with a high devaluation in prices.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Classroom projector	800	800	0	
Colour booklets, picture guides, ecological notes, stickers, posters and t-shirts.	405	400	-5	
Airplane tickets	900	1800	900	Due to the impossibility to arrive to the area by car (after flooding season) for 4 people. This item was replaced by the fuel for two trips.
Fuel for 1 trip.	306	355	49	Price hike due to financial problems at the country with devaluation.
Accommodation	1000	237	-763	I obtained prices adjustments and free stages at some natural reserves.
Food	1544	1544	0	
Materials	526	300	-226	We decided to buy less material for field work, since the collection permits did not allow us to install pitfall traps.
Total	5481	5436	45	

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

The study opened up a promising window for promoting tarantula conservation at the Atlantic Forest because we are treating with relevant species from a point of view of the international illegal pet trade. Moreover, is of our intention to categorise one of the species at the IUCN. Having financial support, we can evaluate if these species are adapted and in which way the modification and disturbs of habitat affected them. Also, through the knowledge of the reproductive period and sex ratio of some species we can evaluate their conservation status. Finally, we expect to continue developing field studies and disseminate the results at other natural areas that conserve other habitat types in Misiones province.

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?

I used the RSGF logo on power point presentation, stickers for gift to local community, posters, ecological notes, cups and t-shirts (always used when given public talks). The publication submitted acknowledged the financial support of the RSG while conducting the field research. The RSGF received publicity in radio dissemination of the public talks at Iguazú city.

11. Any other comments?

I submitted a more detailed report in pdf format with information and pictures of the activities related to the project.