The Rufford 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	Nicolas Pelegrin
Project title	Measuring the impact of recreational hunting on Chaco reptiles in Argentina. Are educational activities helpful actions to reduce the killings?
RSG reference	18820-2
Reporting period	Nov 2015 - Nov 2016
Amount of grant	£4998
Your email address	pelegrin.nicolas@gmail.com
Date of this report	December 10, 2016

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
1- Determinate the reptile fauna of Salinas Grandes				Although vast areas of Salinas Grandes were not sampled during this studio, the objective was achieved for a huge area of the north and north-east Salinas Grandes, as proposed in the project.
2- Estimate the relative abundance of lizards and snakes in the salt plain				We not only achieved this objective, but gathered important information on the distribution, habitat use, and how climatic events affect reptiles in the salt plain.
3- Increase the information on reptile diversity of the Chaco				This was the very first study on reptile communities in the whole area. A result of these samplings is new information to determine the conservation status of an endemic lizard to this area, and the discovery of a new endemic lizard species, apparently restricted to the northern area of Salinas Grandes reserve. Also, we recorded for the first time the presence of *Ameivula abalosi* in the state. This almost unknown area appears to be one of the most diverse localities in the whole Arid Chaco.
4- Estimate the amount of lizards and snakes killed by local people				It was not possible to estimate a rate of lizards and snakes killed. Moreover, and contrarily to our expectations, we found a lot of people genuinely concerned about the well-being of native fauna.
5- Reduce the killings through educational activities				We carried out several interventions to share our findings with local people, including a meeting and personal surveys. One of the

				important outcomes of this activities was to discuss myths and some erroneous beliefs about lizards being venomous. Interviewed people accepted the new information, which was reinforced presenting live specimens that were later released unharmed. Moreover, an important part of our educational talks was about ophidism.

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

While carrying on the project, the head of one of the villages was removed under corruption charges. This hindered our efforts to organise meetings with local people, and we had to make individual surveys. At the end, after the new authorities had settled, we could finally make a reunion with main actors of the community including the police, personnel in charge of the local hospital, and teachers of different school levels, volunteer firemen, and different authorities from the local government. We delivered educative material and showed live specimens of two of the most feared (but harmless) lizard species.

We originally proposed to carry out samplings and educational activities in two towns. It was not possible to perform these activities in one of them because the area surrounding the salt flat, and next to the town, had a unique private owner who could not be reached, even after several attempts. Local government of this little town was extremely bureaucratic and it was impossible to reach the local head of government. However, we carried out some samplings after and before this village, every time we found a public access to the salt plain.

Besides the difficulties we encountered to give our talks, we gave four extra talks with students of a wide range of ages, between 12 to 25 years old. In total, 85 students assisted to the talks. In these talks, we discussed different subjects about the importance and the role of amphibians and reptiles in natural systems, conservation problems and sanitary importance.

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

1. Determining the diversity of reptiles of the Salinas Grandes reserve. This is by far one of the most important outcomes of the project. The area was believed to house only two or three lizard species. Our study increases this number to 14 species. The discovery of a new endemic species of Salinas Grandes reserve is another important outcome of this project. This seems to be one of the most diverse localities in the whole Arid Chaco, and the locality with the highest number of *Liolaemus* species in sympatry in the whole Chaco ecoregion.

2. *Liolaemus ditadai*, a species endemic to Salinas Grandes, was believed to be threatened by flooding of its habitat, and to be restricted to a very small area within the reserve. We found this lizard extensively distributed along the entire northern, and north-eastern coast of the salt plain which significantly extends its known distribution area. Also, while sampling we witnessed several events of flooding, which did not affect the presence of this species. Moreover, after flooding events we captured not only adult but hatchlings of *L. ditadai*. This information is key to properly assess the conservation status of *L. ditadai*, as well as for developing conservation strategies.

3. People was very receptive and willing to know about native fauna. Surprisingly, we found that even when hunting is one of the main activities, most people recognised the utility of reptiles, and some even took care of reptiles and amphibians. People in general could recognise native reptiles, especially snakes. Lizards were less known, and most people did not recognize small and cryptic species. This is a very important outcome because it will allow to improve communication channels and educative programmes aimed at conservation of native fauna in other small towns in the region.

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

During our stay in the town of Lucio V. Mansilla (20 days per month from November to March), we interacted with a lot of citizens, including children and adults. Given the small size of the town, we were easily recognised in the streets or when buying groceries. People usually approached and asked about our activities. Soon almost everyone knew about us and that we were working on reptile conservation. We had the chance of receiving visitors at the house we rented, show some of the animals we had there, and talk about their benefits and conservation problems. People was very receptive and willing to know about native fauna. Surprisingly, we found that even when hunting is one of the main activities, most people recognised and even took care of reptiles and amphibians. During the meeting we made with teachers, nurses, firemen, policemen, and authorities and personnel from the city, most of people acknowledged they would avoid killing reptiles (mostly snakes) whenever is possible.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Our work in Salinas Grandes will continue for at least 3 more years in different parts of these huge protected area.

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

We are continuously inviting people to collaborate with us to carry out this study. This year we will focus on working more closely with the state environmental agency, to promote a wider impact of our activities in the region.

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

We used the RSG from November 2015 to March-April 2016, according to plans.

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.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Gasoline	555	613	-45	We made more fieldtrips, spending more days at field
Food	614	600	14	We had less field assistants than planned, but giving we had more days in the field, costs were almost the same.
House rental	0	350	-350	Giving the distances and the harsh environment, we had to rent a house for the period we stayed at field. There we mounted a laboratory, and also served as an "office" were people would find us to ask questions and talk about their experiences with reptiles.
Truck rental	1490	1100	490	We got access to a vehicle of the university for the last fieldtrip
Pitfall traps	330	364	-34	
Plastic sheet	145	145	0	
Head flashlights	251	269	-18	
Batteries	119	100	19	
Snake tong	152	100	52	
Multimedia projector	529	541	-12	
Quick reference cards	417	400	17	
Posters	396	405	-11	
TOTAL	4998	**4987**	11	

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

Salinas Grandes reserve is the second largest salt plain in South America, with about 9000 km^2. During this project we only sampled the north-eastern limit of it, so in the next years we will sample other areas, where different transitions between the Chaco forest and the salt plain occur. The north-eastern of the salt plain harbours

most of the population in the region, so in the other areas surrounding the reserve we will found scattered villages with very low population

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

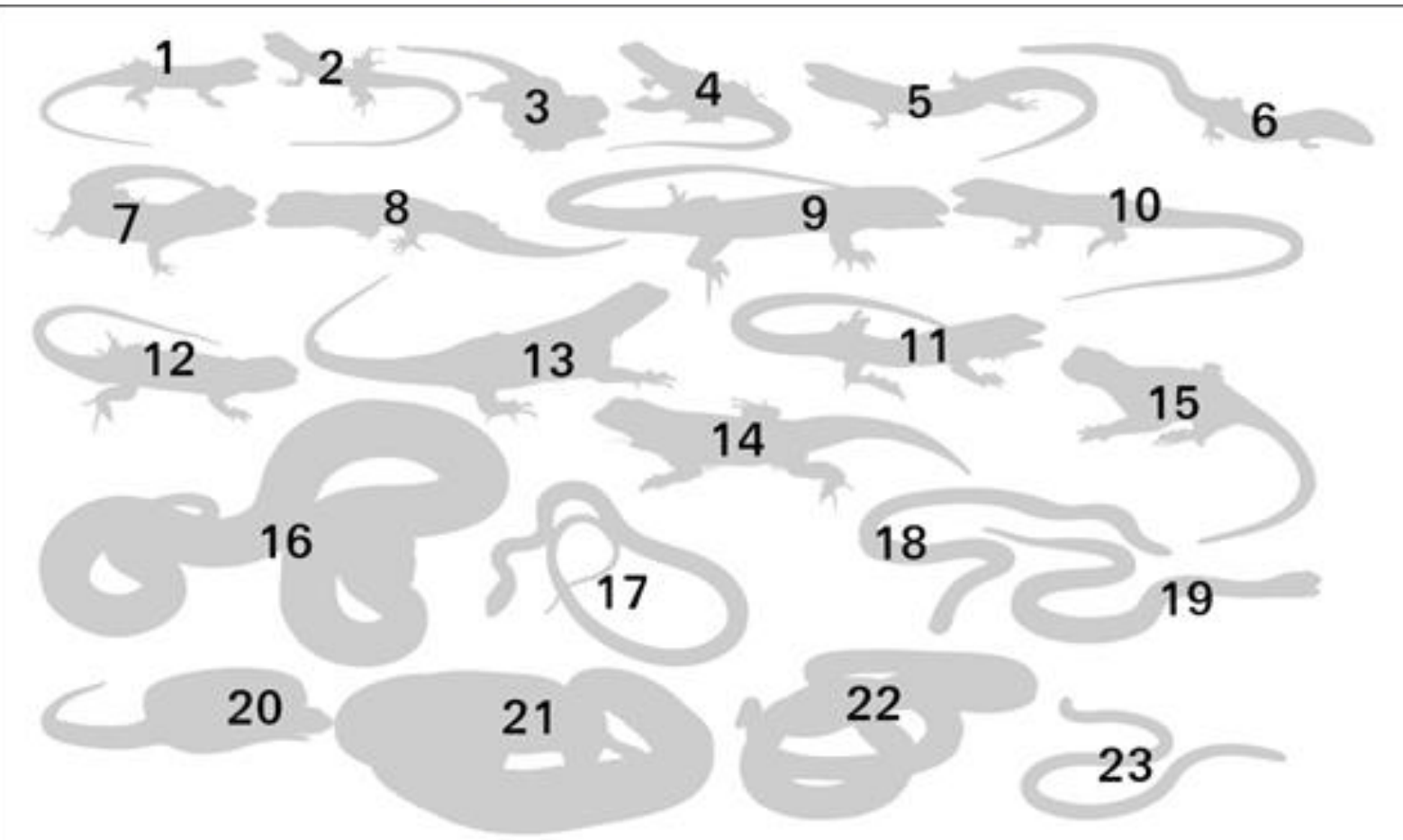
Yes, the RF logo was used in every product, and every presentation we made. Also, RF is acknowledged in our website at http://pelegrinnicolas.wixsite.com/lecoherp/projects

11. Please provide a full list of all the members of your team and briefly what was their role in the project.

12. Any other comments?

We want to thank The Rufford Foundation for the support along these years. This was our second RSG, and they make possible to carry out field work in novel locations, and increase our knowledge aimed to the conservation of reptiles and amphibians of the Chaco.

SERPIENTES Y LAGARTOS DE SALINAS GRANDES, CÓRDOBA



1. Liolaemus chacoensis 2. Liolaemus sp. 3. Liolaemus ditadai 4. Liolaemus darwinii 5. Aspronema dorsivittatum 6. Vanzosaura rubricauda
7. Homonota fasciata 8. Homonota borelli 9. Teius teyou 10. Ameivula abalosi 11. Aurivela longicauda 12. Stenocercs doellojuradoi
13. Tropidurus spinulosus 14. Tropidurus etheridgei 15. Leiosaurus paronae 16. Epicrates alvarezzi 17. Philodryas psammophideus
18. Phalotris tricolor 19. Pseudotomodon trigonatus 20. Xenodn merremii 21. Bothrops diporus 22. Micrurus phyrhocryptus 23. Rena unguirostris