

## Final Evaluation Report

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Your Details	
<b>Full Name</b>	Eliana Paola Zuazquita
<b>Project Title</b>	Conservation of Southern right whales, <i>Eubalaena australis</i> , through the development of responsible whale watching in Miramar, Buenos Aires province, Argentina
<b>Application ID</b>	31657-2
<b>Grant Amount</b>	£ 6000
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<b>Date of this Report</b>	December 2021

**1. 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
Complete database for habitat uses analysis of Southern right whales in the area.				Land-based observations using scan and theodolite for focal sampling method for records: number of whales, age, composition group, position, and behaviour. During 2020, the effort of scan was 3801 minutes and 2129 minutes of focal sampling, registered 58 groups of southern right whales; in 2021, 279 minutes was scan and 434 minutes focal, we registered 14 groups of whales, mainly adults and juveniles.
Update the SRW photo identification catalogue for Buenos Aires. Each identified individual will be cross referenced with existing catalogues in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay in order to understand migration patterns and to establish conservation criteria.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An aerial survey was conducted with the support of the Prefectura Naval Argentina in September 2021. 42 SRWs were counted in 25 groups; photographs were taken for photo-ID. Those photos are still under analysis.</li> <li>- Several drone flights were made. These images showed us more details of their behaviour and allowed photo-ID.</li> <li>- The catalogue, updated up to 2018, showed four matches with the Peninsula Valdés catalogue of the Instituto de Conservación de Ballenas. The results of this work were published on the 68° Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission.</li> </ul>
Change people's attitude towards the whales and instil a desire to protect SRW. Develop knowledge in the local community, especially among young people, about the value of natural resources, with emphasis on SRW and other cetaceans, and the conservation of				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An educational programme was carried on involving 350 students and teachers at eight institutions (kindergarten, elementary and high schools from Miramar, Mar del Sud and Florida - Buenos Aires province), and San Martín de los Andes - Neuquén province).</li> <li>- Nine lectures were given to students and teachers, who later on continued working with the teachers in the classroom and made some activities</li> </ul>

<p>marine environments.</p>			<p>promoting the conservation of cetaceans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Three SRWs of the Miramar Catalogue were named: "Fluffy" and "Zeus" by students, and "Miramarita" by a public contest carried out throughout social media together with the tourism secretary.</li> <li>- Educational material was re-designed and distributed. The leaflets were given to the participants of the lectures and to the school's libraries of other institutions of Miramar, Mar del Sud, and Mar del Plata (Buenos Aires province) for future reference.</li> <li>- We collaborate with local artists who painted a mural on the Miramar entrance. This mural represents "Miramarita" (the whale named by the community) in real size.</li> <li>- The Secretary of Tourism of General Alvarado and Fundación Cethus, organised an amateur photography contest called "El Océano Y Sus Habitantes" (the Ocean and its inhabitants). 31 photos were submitted.</li> <li>- Dissemination in the local press.</li> <li>- We talked with the local kayakers and the fishing club, and a poster/guideline was made with recommendations based on the International Whaling Commission on how to respond when a whale is close/around the kayak in order to prevent any disturbing and bring calm to fishermen.</li> <li>- In 2017 we established the Facebook group "Ballenas en Miramar", where currently 1153 members report sightings of the species in Miramar and nearby areas.</li> </ul>
<p>Provide local authorities with scientific information needed to draw up proper whale watching activity and plan</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meetings with the Secretary of Tourism of General Alvarado were made with the aim to advance in the establishment of land-based whale watching.</li> <li>- A report was prepared with the most</li> </ul>

<p>conservation strategies for the species in the area.</p>			<p>relevant information relative to responsible whale watching from our scientific studies. Based on this report, a proposal to develop the necessary infrastructure to initiate land-based activities was delivered by the town council to the province authorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Two informative panels on Miramar's promenade were set in 2015 to aware people of the SRW presence. This year, with the collaboration of The Rufford Foundation and the Secretary of Tourism, Culture, and Sport of General Alvarado district, the damaged and old panels were replaced with new ones which include an improved design and updated information based on the results of the project.</li> <li>- A whale watching webinar was carried out with the aim to get all the information that the tourism guide and tourism-related people need to promote the activity.</li> </ul>
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**2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.**

The COVID-19 pandemic was the main challenge. The work in the study area had to be done by a single person because volunteers and team members could not travel. For this, the methodology of the land survey and other activities were adjusted. The educational activities in the schools had to be adjusted, too. Some schools had virtual conferences, but others received material to work on in the future, or support work in their virtual classroom. All the proposed activities were restructured to be virtual, like the photography contest or the whale watching webinar. The aerial survey must be postponed for the situation, but in 2021 had been developed.

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

The most important outcomes of the project are education and public awareness, improving the knowledge about habitat use of SRWs and the development of a responsible whale watching tourism activity.

- Education and public awareness: although the COVID-19 pandemic, lecture and educational material to eight schools, and another four schools received material to study and participate in the programme. The aim of these talks and material was to involve children and teenagers in the conservation of cetaceans and share with them the knowledge gathered through our research project on Southern right whales in the area.

Printed materials were also distributed to the wider community.

The proposal for schools to name the whales identified in the Miramar catalogue helped bring children and whales closer. This year three new whales were named, "Fluffy" and "Zeus" by students and "Miramarita" by the community. As result of this activity, a group of local artists "Nana Bego" decided to paint a life-size mural of the whale "Miramarita" which was widely covered by the local press. The photography contest also had the aim to propagating the interest of the conservation of the cetaceans and their habitats and their response was good.

- Habitat use of SRW: land-based survey allows us to collect scientific information about habitat use of SRW. This information gives a better understanding of the importance of the area for the species. During this grant period, the position, movement, behaviour, and composition of 72 groups of SRW were recorded through a theodolite and using focal sampling method. The fieldwork was from 21st July to 31st October 2020 and from 24th August to 27th September 2021.

By taking photographs from a helicopter of the Prefectura Naval Argentina and a drone, the catalogue of photo-identified southern right whales of Buenos Aires have been expanded, which is very valuable for long-term projects. Comparing the Buenos Aires SRW's catalogue with the existence in the nursing grounds in the southwest Atlantic will help the scientist to learn more about the migration routes and habitat uses.

- Development of a responsible whale watching tourism activity: several meetings were carried out with Miramar tourism authorities. Dissemination activities were made by social media and the press. The whale watching informative panels were renovated with the collaboration of Miramar council. A report of WW opportunity was made for Miramar to be delivered to provincial authorities in order to get funding for an infrastructure (viewing platform) that facilitates the activity.

#### **4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project.**

Our aim is to include local communities in our educational programme, as we consider this is the best way to reach conservation. We believe that from the knowledge you can achieve the desire to preserve and take care of cetaceans and their habitat.

All the scientific knowledge generated is shared with the authorities and community. The educational programme and dissemination activities were focus on the community to the natural richness that they have, bringing to their environment more value for them and for the tourism that is the major economic input for this location.

## **5. Are there any plans to continue this work?**

Our future plans include:

- Analyse scientific data gathered during the project.
- Continue analysing the catalogue and work with other scientific teams.
- Compare the photo-ID catalogue of SRW in Miramar and nearby with those from Península Valdés, Argentina, Uruguay, and Santa Catarina, Brazil.
- Share scientific knowledge with the Conservation Management Plan on the SW Atlantic population of Southern right whales of the International Whaling Commission and with the Argentine authorities to support the creation of protected areas for Southern right whales.
- Continue advising the Secretary of tourism of Miramar in the development of responsible whale watching tourism.

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

The results of this project are shared with national, provincial, and local authorities through reports. Outcomes of the project are also covered by local and regional press, digital media, and Fundación Cethus social media (Facebook: Fundación Cethus and Instagram: @fundación\_cethus). The educational programme is another way to share information with the community, as well as the Facebook group constitutes a means of diffusion.

At the international level, scientific documents will be submitted to the International Whaling Commission, regional meetings, and published in scientific journals.

As a result of the work carried out in Miramar a paper will be published in the following months.

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

The grant was used from September 2020 to November 2021 (authorised by The Rufford Foundation on 25th August 2020).

8. **Budget:** 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. It is important that you retain the management accounts and all paid invoices relating to the project for at least 2 years as these may be required for inspection at our discretion.

Item	Budgeted Amount (1£=\$83.1905)	Actual Amount (1£=\$95.55)	Difference (1£=\$95.55)	Comments
<b>Fieldwork Miramar, Buenos Aires Province</b>				
Travel 1 researcher (4 X £64/each) (July, Aug, Sep, Oct - 2020)	256	256		
Ground transportation	60	65	+5	
Accommodation (4 months apartment rental July -Aug-Sep, Oct2020) (£400/each)	1600	1189	-411	We use this difference to the gasoline for the helicopter
Meals for research team	1360	972	-388	
Miscellaneous (internet, phone, equipment repair, print material, etc.)	226	223	-3	
<b>Aerial Census Mar del Plata - Miramar - Necochea</b>				
Gasoline for helicopter (2,5 hs x 1 surveys x £0,8/litre, 900liter per hour)	1450	1868	+418	The difference in the budget is due to the international increase in crude oil due to the pandemic.
Taxis	20	16	-4	
<b>Educative Material</b>				
Design and production of educational materials (2000 leaflets)	382	381	-1	
Photo competition award	63	65	+2	
<b>Responsible Whale Watching Workshop</b>	92		-92	
<b>Insurance for researchers + equipment</b>	200	200		
<b>Publication costs</b>	116		-116	We will publish in a few months
<b>Administrative matters</b>	175	175		
<b>Total</b>	<b>6000</b>	<b>5410</b>	<b>590</b>	

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

It is important to continue analysing the collected data in order to provide scientific information. The research will provide the best support for any decision adopted by the authorities to protect the southern right whales and their habitat. Continue with diffusion activities to improve the knowledge about the marine environment and cetaceans in order to generate awareness about their conservation and threats. Continue advice to the local authorities, to develop the WW activity.

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

The Rufford Foundation logo was used in the leaflets which were widely distributed at the schools, community, and tourists and it was used on the whale watching information panels. The Rufford Foundation is also mentioned in every presentation of this project in the press and digital media, lectures, and workshops:

“El diario de Miramar”: <https://eldiariodemiramar.com/2020/08/cethus-vuelve-a-analizar-a-la-ballena-franca-austral-en-aguas-del-distrito/>

Facebook Miramar Tourism Live Broadcast: <https://www.facebook.com/MiramarARG>  
Live broadcast by the journalist Silvia Fazio:  
[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=163894552532833&id=1804722606&sfn=scwspwa](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=163894552532833&id=1804722606&sfn=scwspwa)

Facebook: Fundación Cethus and Ballenas en Miramar

Instagram: Fundación Cethus

Also, a presentation was submitted to the 68<sup>o</sup> meeting of the International Whaling Commission Scientific Committee (IWC SC) and will also be acknowledged in the scientific articles published on this project in peer review journals and meetings.

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

**Eliana Zuazquita.** Role: fieldwork researcher, educational program and Whale Watching webinar, dissemination activities, and data analysis.

**Jimena Belgrano.** Role: Responsible of the project “Ballena franca austral” of Fundación Cethus, fieldwork researcher, orator of the educational program, diffusion activities, and analysis data.

**Miguel Iñíguez.** Role: Fundación Cethus President, researcher, orator of Whale Watching webinar and lobby at the International Whaling Commission.

**Karina Españadero:** Dissemination activities and data analysis.

## **12. Any other comments?**

Due to the restrictions generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, only one researcher was able to participate in the campaign, so there is a surplus of £474.13 in the food item in the grant. We would like to consult and suggest using these funds to generate more educational material for educational institutions in the locality and surrounding areas. The publication mentioned in the budget needs some more time to be submitted, if it is possible, we are going to expend it in a few months.