Project Update: January 2023

First period - Fieldwork activities

Mountainous regions support a great species richness and endemism. Despite the fact that northwestern Argentina is a region with a high diversity of small mammals, there is a lack of knowledge about highland communities. This region and its fauna are particularly vulnerable to climate change. Therefore, the main objective of this project is balance our knowledge about these small mammals communities using both genetic and taxonomic studies. The information of this project is essential to establish a baseline for comparison and biomonitoring of climate change effects on highland environments, and to identify priority areas for conservation.

We carried out two field trips, in July and December 2022. We used Sherman traps to survey mountain environments between 3000 – 5000 m asl in Salta and Jujuy provinces. Students of the National University of Jujuy collaborate with the fieldwork. In two campaigns we captured 117 individuals of 13 species in 12 localities. In addition, we put in each locality a datalogger which records climatic data.

Figure 1. Individual of Abrothrix jelskii from Salta province. © Miguel Cura.

In September 2022, with the support of National University of Jujuy we taught a course destinated to students about small mammals which included conservation topics. Also, in November 2022 we presented partial results in the Jornadas Argentinas de Mastozoología of the Sociedad Argentina para el Estudio de los Mamíferos (SAREM).

The support of The Rufford Foundation has been crucial to the development of this

project, allowing us to buy traps and field tools, cover travel costs and buy laboratory supplies.

Figure 2. Individual of *Abrothrix jelskii* during the release. © Miguel Cura.

Figure 3. One of the localities of Jujuy province, December 2022. © Agustina Murgia.

Figure 4. Individual of *Abrothrix andina* (pregnant female). © Agustina Murgia.