

## **Project Update: November 2023**

From September 12 to October 20 2023, we performed our second field campaign regarding the project “Expanding our Chaco eagle outreach, research and conservation campaign towards new areas in the Dry Chaco ecoregion”. The outreach campaign (first field campaign) done between August and September yielded a total of 13 independent sightings, of which five corresponded to adult individuals (with three of them featuring both adults). Our strategy was to follow these important adult sightings which could potentially lead us to a reproductive territory and/or an active nest.

Therefore, during more than 3 weeks, we traversed over 6000 km in Santiago del Estero province, covering six departments (Banda, Jiménez, Alberdi, Moreno, Avellaneda, and Sarmiento). In each of these places, we explored the area, walking and traversing the fields, interviewed ranch owners and rural workers, and gave additional outreach talks at schools and local councils to enhance our searching capacity between the local community.

We could visually confirm the presence of four Chaco eagle territories in Santiago del Estero province (i.e., we saw one or both of the adults in the area where they had been sighted before). This is very important in a province where Chaco eagle sightings are very scarce and opportunistic. However, we faced some difficulties in what concerns active nest searching. In two of the territories, we were not allowed to enter the fields; although we do have the permits of Santiago del Estero province to perform fieldwork activities, the entrance to the fields is always subjected to the allowance by the owners. One of the fields is currently under a bureaucratic revision of the ownership by the province, so there is no way to enter it until this is solved; concerning the other one, we are now contacting the owner (who lives in another province) to ask for the necessary permission. Concerning the other two territories, we found a surprising fact: in both cases, both male and female adults were wandering across the area, which means that they had not built their nests yet. This is a curious and potentially problematic issue. It seems that the extreme drought that these regions are suffering due to “La Niña” climate pattern (El Niño–Southern Oscillation - ENSO) consequences (it is expected that “El Niño” is returning next year, so probably this will improve the conditions) has delayed the laying dates of these eagles (it has also happened to us in Santa Fe province, where we are also doing fieldwork this year). We will confirm these trends in December.

In addition, and, by following additional Chaco eagle records in eastern Santiago del Estero (near the frontier with Santa Fe province), we were able to identify an active Chaco eagle nest just on the side of Santa Fe province, 500 m away from Santiago del Estero province! This is remarkable, since it demonstrates the importance of doing outreach, no matter the political borders, to be able to find the nests of this elusive species. It is important to mention that The Rufford Foundation funded the first ever project in this province, which has given us the opportunity to monitor the reproductive populations of this endangered eagle across the years (<https://www.rufford.org/projects/diego-gallego-garcia/rediscovering-and-protecting-chaco-eagle-populations-in-a-critical-area-for-its-conservation/>).

Sadly, we found the first confirmed Chaco eagle drowned in a water reservoir in Jiménez department (central Santiago del Estero), which encourages us to start installing rescue ramps (we will do this in December 2023).

Last but not least, our project has appeared in:

- November 15: A national TV program ("Estamos Conectados, TV Pública"): [https://twitter.com/TV\\_Publica/status/1724879012386804158](https://twitter.com/TV_Publica/status/1724879012386804158)
- Four provincial newspaper reports ("El Liberal" and "El Departamental"):
  - October 17: <https://www.elliberal.com.ar/nota/5737/2023/10/santiago-del-estero-es-un-area-importante-para-la-conservacion-del-aguila-coronada->
  - October 26: <https://www.elliberal.com.ar/nota/6470/2023/10/destacan-el-exito-de-la-campana-de-divulgacion-del-aguila-coronada>
  - October 26: <https://www.elliberal.com.ar/nota/6471/2023/10/destacan-que-varios-pobladores-ya-aportaron-datos-de-avistamientos>
  - November 28: <https://eldepartamental.com/contenido/28486/prometedor-segundo-viaje-en-busca-del-aguila-coronada-en-santiago-del-estero>
- Six regional, and local, radio programs.

We again thank The Rufford Foundation for the opportunity to launch a Chaco eagle outreach, research and conservation project in Santiago del Estero province, northern Argentina. Hope that in the next field campaign (mid-December) we are able to find the first Chaco eagle active nest! Here are a few pictures of this campaign!





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