

Project Update: August 2009

We completed the winter field research stage in southern Pampas's marine coast, in Coronel Dorrego.

We sampled the beach and coastal dune habitats in the area proposed as a future Nature Reserve, focusing special attention on birds and vegetation. This constitutes the first known winter studies in the coastal zone of Coronel Dorrego and will be available to complement previous information and to produce adequate management guidelines for the area. Preliminary results indicate a total of 1,843 birds recorded in a 35 km beach strip, comprising 14 species and 10 avian families. The presence of migratory shorebirds like the two-banded plover (*Charadrius falklandicus*) and the sanderling (*Calidris alba*) is of special conservation interest.

Regarding dune bird assemblages, we performed a set of point counts representing different habitat types. Plant associations, vegetation cover and floristic composition were explored along 4 lines transects across the dune area. Data will be compared with summer records to detect seasonal changes in the structure and biotic composition of coastal habitats.

Additionally, we performed the first interviews to fishermen from Marisol village aiming to gather information on the presence of marine fauna, including pinnipeds, cetaceans and marine turtles.

We also integrated the community of Marisol in social activities through education at local school and informative meeting with community neighbours. We elaborated and shared didactic materials (puzzles, posters, leaflets and oral presentations) with schoolchildren and teachers. These activities let us interact with local people, disseminating the values of Pampean coastal ecosystems, promoting the knowledge of native biodiversity and informing about the benefits of a protected area. We agreed to make further meetings throughout the year.



Left: Developing educational activities with schoolchildren in Marisol. Right: Ñandues (*Rhea americana*) - emblematic species of the pampean region- in a coastal dune grassland.

