

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Small Grants Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. 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. 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	Cintia Eleonora Celsi
Project title	Promoting the Conservation of Pampean Coastal Ecosystems through the creation of a Marine-coastal Nature Reserve (Buenos Aires, Argentina)
RSG reference	43.11.08
Reporting period	May 2009 – June 2010
Amount of grant	£5659
Your email address	cintiacelsi@gmail.com
Date of this report	18 June 2010

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) Interaction with authorities to advance with the declaration of the protected area.		X		We held two formal meetings with the provincial authorities of the Direction of Natural Protected Areas and the municipal authorities from Coronel Dorrego to advance on the creation of the nature reserve proposed. They compromised to organise future meetings for the prosecution of the proposal, but no other meetings were carried out during this period.
(2) Research: increase scientific information about structure and functioning of coastal ecosystems in Coronel Dorrego.			X	Two main field campaigns plus additional observation visits were conducted along the year, at the site proposed as a future nature coastal reserve.
(2a) Investigate seasonal changes on beach-dune vegetation and animal assemblages.			X	A complete data set of seasonal changes on vegetation cover and bird assemblages on dunes and beaches was recorded.
(2b) Gather information on marine fauna.			X	We performed the first set of interviews with fishermen from Marisol and collected information on the sightings of dolphins, whales, pinnipeds and sea turtles in our area of interest.
(3) Education and dissemination of information			X	Meetings, expositions and participative activities were carried out with schoolchildren, teachers and community members. Informative and educative materials were produced and distributed.
(3a) Education at local schools.			X	We conducted education meetings with schoolchildren and teachers from Marisol, Gil, Oriente and Dorrego.
(3b) Elaborate informative leaflets			X	Leaflets and other informative materials emphasizing on biodiversity and conservation of dune systems were elaborated and distributed in the localities of Coronel Dorrego, Oriente, Marisol, Gil, Villa Gesell and Monte Hermoso. (*)

(3c) Elaboration of the first handbook about ecology and biodiversity of the southern Pampean coastal dunes.			X	Our work brings together the information gathered during our research campaigns and offers an overview of biodiversity and conservation status of the coastal dunes of southern Pampas.
(3d) Meetings with community members			X	Talks and expositions for the neighbours of our area of interest (Marisol, Oriente, Coronel Dorrego) and other coastal localities (Villa Gesell) were delivered. Meetings were focused on building awareness about the conservation of coastal dunes and to inform about the creation of a protected area.

(*) Our informative and educative materials (including posters, puzzles and leaflets) were exposed in the Museum of Natural Sciences of Monte Hermoso during summer season, reaching a large number of tourists and also local people.

Additionally, during the course of our project, we had the possibility to organize photographic exhibitions in the cities of Oriente and Villa Gesell. The museum of Monte Hermoso will also receive our photos for another exhibition this year, expanding our mechanisms to facilitate peoples approach to the biodiversity and beauty of the Pampean coastal dunes.

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

Although we have organized and carried out the scheduled meetings with provincial and municipal authorities to work on our proposal, the municipal authorities of Coronel Dorrego have still not communicated a concrete resolution about the creation of the protected area. After the second meeting, the local authorities undertook the commitment to organise subsequent meetings to advance with the proposal, but they failed to do this. We know that the procedures for the establishment of nature reserves are generally slow and in this particular case, we understand that we will have to be the drivers of future meetings with authorities.

Educative basis and dissemination activities will have to be strengthened in local communities. Future meetings with authorities will be requested.

In addition, the National Chamber of Deputies declared our proposal of “Legislative interest” (the same had been previously done by the Provincial Chamber of Deputies of Buenos Aires). This represents an important recognition for our proposal and gives us a legislative support to advance with our proposal.

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

Research: We conducted a sequence of research campaigns at the marine coast of Coronel Dorrego, achieving a significant progress in the understanding of the ecological aspects and the biodiversity of a large zone of the Pampean coast in the province of Buenos Aires. We have gathered a complete

data set about the floristic and faunistic composition of the coastal fringe of Coronel Dorrego and its seasonal changes in vegetation cover and bird assemblages' composition.

A total of 26 bird species were registered at the beach and 35 at the dune habitats. 24.5% out of the total bird species were migratory. Preliminary estimates show a slightly high similarity between winter and summer beach-bird (Sorensen coefficient = 0.54) and dune-bird assemblages (Sorensen coefficient = 0.55). Dune birds point counts and vegetation data are currently being analysed.

One particular finding of our work was the report of a new locality for the pinnated bittern (*Botaurus pinnatus*) in the coastal dunes of Coronel Dorrego. This represents novel and relevant information regarding the southern distribution of this scarcely known species, and highlights the potential of the area as wildlife refuge. We elaborated a manuscript about this issue and submitted it to the journal Cotinga. It was accepted for publication and will be published next year.

Our results and findings were presented at the XIII Reunión Argentina de Ornitología (Argentine Meeting on Ornithology) Tafí del Valle, 3rd – 6th June 2009; and at the VII Jornadas nacionales de Ciencias del Mar (National meeting on Sea sciences) Bahía Blanca, 30th November – 4th December 2009.

Additionally, we contributed with a chapter for a future book on “Costal dunes. Ecology, biodiversity and geological perspective” (Ed, Dr. Sridhar Ramaih).

Education: The achievements of our work on environmental education and dissemination of information are highly satisfactory. Schoolchildren and teachers have shown great enthusiasm and a positive response to our work. They have received information and have participated in education activities. This was very important for them, since we are the only researchers working on nature conservation in the area. Our contribution helped them enrich their knowledge about their own coastal environment and the native biodiversity. In turn, they have responded by generating ideas and contributions to help coastal conservation and support the creation of the reserve. The teachers have incorporated the contents of our studies in the education programmes. This is a good indicator of the success of our work on education.

Elaboration of our handbook: “Southern Pampean Coastal Dunes. Biodiversity, ecology and conservation between the Quequén Salado River and Pehuen-có village”. Dissemination of information and awareness rising. We could edit the first handbook about ecology, biodiversity and conservation of the southern Pampean coastal dunes. This is the first material edited in Argentina containing specific information about these ecosystems. Its availability for people is important to raise awareness and disseminate information. We printed 250 copies to be distributed in local communities, schools and museums.

Additionally, we could elaborate and distribute a wide variety of educative materials (puzzles, posters, leaflets) that let us interact with the different social groups, facilitating information and promoting the knowledge about the importance of coastal dune systems and biodiversity conservation. Much of these materials focused on children from local schools, who received it with great enthusiasm and curiosity. Graphic materials were widely distributed among the neighbors of the region and surroundings’.

All these mechanisms of information also helped us disseminate more widely our proposal and the need to protect the coastal ecosystems.

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

Our greatest contribution to local communities was through education and information. Teachers and students from schools in the region benefited from the acquisition of information on biodiversity and ecology of the coastal zone. We gave them participation in field study activities and talks. We have interacted with the rural schools from the localities of Marisol and Gil, and the schools from the cities of Oriente and Coronel Dorrego.

On the basis of the study material provided by us about local coastal ecosystems, and the interaction with our project activities, the students of the Secondary Basic Education School N° 2 from Coronel Dorrego presented their own works about the coastal ecosystems, dune biodiversity and conservation initiatives to the community in the annual Arts and Science Congress that they organised in the city of Coronel Dorrego (November 2009). In this event, also by initiative of teachers and students, there was a public collection of signatures to support the creation of a nature reserve in the coast of Coronel Dorrego.

At the request of a local teacher, our reports and publications were used for teachers training courses in Coronel Dorrego. This was a novel initiative, since information about native biodiversity and the local coastal environment could be incorporated into training programs.

We have also given participation to local university students of biology (Universidad Nacional del Sur) in the research activities of our project. They were very encouraged and decided to focus their theses on topics related to biodiversity of the coastal dunes at the study site (Colonel Dorrego).

Local people in general have received participation in the meetings that we have organized with presentation of the issues of our project. They have enhanced their knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the environment where they live. Neighbors from the city of Oriente have taken the initiative to sign a letter together with some of the main local institutions, to be submitted to the authorities of Coronel Dorrego in support of coastal protection.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, the project is planned for the long term. Our most ambitious goal is to achieve the creation of the coastal marine reserve Arroyo Los Gauchos, and to work on its implementation afterwards. In this sense, we will continue education programmes, we will further field research and we will strengthen interaction with official authorities.

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

Regarding research, we will communicate our results and conclusions in publications in journals, expositions in scientific meetings and other available means of communication within the scientific community. We plan to write two main articles, to be submitted to an ornithological journal and a vegetation journal, respectively:

- Seasonal changes in bird assemblages at the Pampean coastal dunes and beaches (Buenos Aires, Argentina).
- Seasonal variations in vegetation at the coastal ecosystems of southern Pampas (Argentina).

The general information that we gathered this year (including data and photos) together with the most important advances of our project will be incorporated in our web site, which we also expect to continue improving in future stages of the project.

We expect to continue incorporating local students to our project, in order to share with them the background information that we have generated and to encourage them to generate their own research initiatives to contribute to the study of the Pampean coastal zone.

We will elaborate general articles and publications so that our information will be available for everyone interested.

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

May 2009 – June 2010. The actual length of our activities extended for 1 month more than predicted.

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
<u>Field campaigns</u>				
Transportation	473	473	0	
Beach vehicle rental	359	356	3	(*)
Fuel	72	93	-21	Fuel was more expensive than expected
Accommodation	269	269	0	
Dairy expenses	323	323	0	
<u>Education/Dissemination</u>				
Printings (Reports, Leaflets, Posters, others)	735	735	0	
Elaboration of Handbook	717	1566	-849	Due to a rise in the prices and our decision to choose a better printing quality, handbooks elaboration exceeded the amount budgeted, so we decided to use the amounts of "personal assurances", "contingencies" and the differences in other items to afford the difference in Handbooks printing.
<u>Meetings organization</u>	896	729	167	We calculated the rental of a room for meetings but the Italian Club from the city of Oriente gave us the room for free.
<u>Equipment</u>				
Camera	359	346	13	The price of the camera was a little lower than expected.

Rechargeable Batteries	287	107	180	We needed less quantity of batteries than expected.
Stereoscopic microscope	215	196	19	The price of the stereoscopic microscope was a little lower than expected.
Books	54	53	0	
GPS	143	214	-71	We decided to acquire a more complete GPS, and therefore, expenditure was slightly higher than expected.
Office equipment				
Cartography	18	18	0	
Photocopies	36	36	0	
Pen drives	57	57	0	
General supplies	18	18	0	
Personal Assurances	538	0	538	This amount was used to afford Handbooks printing. Each of the team members decided to cover their own personal assurances with personal funds.
Contingencies	90	90	0	
TOTAL	5659	5679	-20	Difference was covered with personal funds.

(*) Differences are due to variation in exchange rate between date of budget versus date of accreditation.

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

To continue strengthening the interaction with local communities through education and dissemination of information; we believe this will impact positively on the conservation of Pampean coastal ecosystems and will help to facilitate the insertion -within local people- of the proposal to create a coastal marine nature reserve. The community response to our actions has been very positive up to now, and we believe this should be encouraged and should be continued so that the concepts of conservation and protection of native biodiversity will gradually be incorporated by local people.

Research should also be continued. Our study area has not been thoroughly explored yet, and there are still many aspects of ecology that need to be examined. Our work has let us identify new species for the region and for the area, thus investigation needs to be improved in this regard to explore the full potential of the area's biodiversity.

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

Yes, the logo was used in posters and brochures that were distributed in the local communities where we develop our project, and in other localities of the Atlantic coast of Buenos Aires. The logo and references of RSG Foundation were also included in the materials provided to the museum of Natural Sciences of Monte Hermoso for public exposition. The logo was also used in the posters exhibited in scientific meetings, and it was included in our Handbook on "Southern Pampean Coastal Dunes. Biodiversity, ecology and conservation between the Quequén Salado river and Pehuén-có village", edited by ourselves. The Rufford Small Grants Foundation was mentioned in the Acknowledgements in the articles submitted to scientific journals and in our contribution for a future book on 'Coastal Dunes - Ecology, Biodiversity and Geological Perspective' (Dr. Sridhar Ramaiah, ed.).



The Rufford Small Grants Foundation was given wide publicity in the meetings that we organized for general people in the localities where we have developed our work.

The logo was incorporated into our web page: fundacionazara.org.ar/Investigacion/Proyectos/Costas.htm in the item “Colaboran con este proyecto”.

11. Any other comments?

We want to thank The Rufford Small Grants Foundation for the support given to our project. This helped us improve a lot our work and allowed us to give a wider scope to our actions. Specially, it allowed us to produce and distribute education and information materials and reach more people through different mechanisms of communication, which was a key component of our action plan, to strengthen our proposal for conservation of the Pampean coastal ecosystems.

