

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	Laura del Pilar Echeverri García
Project title	Nesting females monitoring and clutches protection of leatherback turtle at La Playona, Acandí-Chocó during 2008.
RSG reference	64.12.07
Reporting period	March 3 th – September 30 th 2008
Amount of grant	£4960
Your email address	lauradelpilar@gmail.com , fundacioncoriacea@gmail.com

Date of this report	February 13 th 2009
----------------------------	--------------------------------

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
Training the participating staff of the JPTC - theory and practice.			Fully achieved	A classroom theoretical introduction was carried out, as well as a virtual one for those who could not be present. Also, field training was carried out, the first day every time outdoors. The field training must be more intensive and standardized.
Monitoring nesting females during 2008 season.			Fully achieved	It is ideal to achieve an effort of standardized sampling along the whole nesting season.
Tagging the nesting females.	Not achieved			It was not possible to get the economic support to obtain the tags. We only got a small contribution of 50 tags, in the middle of the nesting season.
Recording the temperature of natural and <i>ex-situ</i> nests.		Partially achieved		One data logger got deteriorated probably due to the environmental and physical conditions it was exposed to. It is necessary to invest in a greater number of equipments and better quality to increase the number of clutch temperature recordings and the sample size.
Protecting <i>ex-situ</i> clutches			Fully achieved	Just when finishing the nesting season, some dogs got into the hatcheries and dug some nests. The design and materials of the hatcheries must be improved, and a control over the domestic animals during the whole hatching season must be implemented. In order to do this It is necessary to implement community workshops.
Protecting <i>in-situ</i> clutches		Partially achieved		The greatest difficulties to achieve this target were the domestic animals as well

				as the erosion caused by the tide increase; both of them caused the loss of some natural nests. Furthermore, the triangulation previous to the hatching dates had some troubles, for that reason it is necessary to delegate one person to monitor the <i>in-situ</i> nests during the whole nesting season.
Carrying out a rapprochement to child population			Fully achieved	It was a target that came up in the middle of the project. The results were very positive since we had a wide welcome within the community and an excellent response by children, for that reason we are going to keep it on.
Continuing the Volunteer Program			Fully achieved	For the first time in La Playona, a Volunteer Program with international participation was achieved. The staff who took part in those sessions declared a great satisfaction after finishing the volunteer activities.

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

- 1 Reaching agreements with the local inhabitants was difficult since they have had negative experiences in the past years with other work groups, and that is why they show themselves reserved with the information and very sensitive when let in charge of tasks. Finally, we could overcome this difficulty through dialog and conciliation, and encouraging commitments aiming to achieve that each part was satisfied enough to continue and be able to develop the work appropriately.
- 2 The predation of the eggs by the dogs was a difficult factor to deal with at the end of the season. Sometimes, the *ex-situ* nests were preyed on by the dogs which got into the hatcheries at night when coordinators were not monitoring the pen, and ate hatchlings and eggs. The dogs forced hatchery's fence until breaking in. There was predation of natural nests, too. In order to solve this problem, it was necessary to sew the hatcheries' fences with synthetic fiber, camp all night in the hatchery and put fence around and over all the nests.
- 3 The lack of tags to brand nesting females ended in an interruption of the population census. Initially, we had a donation of a tag batch; however, at the beginning of the

season, we had not got that stuff yet. Finally, the donation was not carried out and there was not budget to acquire the tags for the season. In May we could get a small tag batch, which was optimized, putting just one tag per female.

- 4 The flood of a significant amount of natural nests provides evidence of how important moving the nests is. Most of the monitored natural nests were flooded by the rise of the tide and the water table. This phenomenon makes work harder and that is why there is so little information about *in-situ* nests.
- 5 The deterioration of the dataloggers due to the environmental conditions they were subject to leads to a significant decrease of incubation temperature data. The importance of investing in more resistant and expensive materials and the need of extending the sample size becomes obvious.

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

- 1 There was an increase of hatching success relative to that obtained in past years by other researchers.
2. Personal and work relationships were consolidated among local community.
- 3 A social-environmental work program developed with child population was included.

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

The local community was entirely involved in the project development. On one hand, it was represented by the GILA during the implementation of the intensive field work of the JPTC. The GILA members were economically benefited from an economic support stipulated on the project. They also acquired more experience on this work and international recognition. On the other hand, the child community of Caleta town was benefited through the “Expedición Caná”, a program aiming to sensitize children on sea turtle conservation. This program provided them with ludic and educational spaces and stuff during its development. Furthermore, the community, in general, in La Playona and Caleta, was benefited from the substantial wave of people during the 7 months the sessions lasted.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Definitely, yes, there are. In fact, we are planning the proposal to continue this work during year 2009, taking into account the results obtained during 2008.

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

We are planning to publish the results on an indexed scientific journal, and present them during symposia, academic meetings and congresses on subject matters such as conservation, herpetology, coastal areas, among other related matters. It will be also spread through the web

site of CORIACEA Foundation (under construction), and there will be an intensive spreading work of the project within the area, through the schools, the municipality, the community councils and the regional autonomous associations.

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

The resources of the grant were used along 7 months in the study zone; the stipulated length was 9 months from January but, due to logistical problems and since we did not have the financial support of the grant yet, the sessions just started in March, 2008. However, training started in February. It is important to make clear that even though field work should have started in January, the preparation for the Protection activities started in October, 2007, so the project implementation was 1 year long approximately.

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
Materials	£ 850	£ 1168	£ 318	Office supplies and batteries exceeded the budgeted investment. Furthermore, it was necessary to include in this concept the expenses for the transport of the material from Medellin to La Playona.
Equipment	£ 949	£ 681	£ 268	It was possible to make low-cost investments in order to get the required equipments.
Transport from Medellin to La Playona; from La Playona to Medellin	£ 1512	£ 1029	£ 483	After the foreign exchange and the wire transfers, it was necessary to reduce the transport budget, so the field coordinators had to pay some of their transport expenses. All of this due to the budget reduction.
Pay local reserchers	£ 1573	£ 1632	£ 59	The difference in British pounds is caused by foreign exchange, since local researchers received a financial support equivalent to the budgeted one in Colombian pesos.
Contingency fund	£ 76	£ 82	£ 6	It was invested in telephone communication and in the first-aid kit

TOTAL	£ 4960	£ 4592	£ 4592 was the amount after applying foreign exchange and carrying out the corresponding wire transfers.
--------------	--------	--------	--

* **The local exchange rate was 1 British Pound = 3,752.14 Colombian Pesos.** This was the exchange rate on the date we received the grant, February 21, 2008.

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

It is important to obtain the resources necessary to brand females and to extend the scope of action to the Chilingos and the Playón de Acandí, both of them beaches where *D. coriacea* nests. It is a must to incorporate the fishermen of the region into this conservation work and also a research topic on the reproductive ecology of the hawksbill turtle which nests in La Playona. Furthermore, it is essential to implement a control, with the help of local inhabitants, over the domestic animals which prey on the eggs. It is also really important to keep on the Volunteer Program and the “Expedición Caná”, so the monitoring of this *D. coriacea* population or the environmental education work won’t be suspended.

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?

The RSGF was always recognized and mentioned as the main entity funding the CORIACEA Protection Sessions. During the “Taller de Estandarización de Metodologías en Investigación para la Conservación de las Tortugas Marinas en Colombia” (Workshop on Standardization of Research Methodologies for the Conservation of Sea Turtles in Colombia, in English) organized by the WWF and the Ministry of Environment, Housing and Territorial Planning of Colombia, the support of the RSGF to our work was made public. The RSGF logo was on the posters designed to present the results obtained by the “Expedición Caná” to the community. One of them is at the Caleta school, the other one was on display at the Town Hall of Acandí and there will be more exhibits during the events aiming to spread the results of this project. The logo was also printed on t-shirts in keeping with this environmental education program, and were given to children, local inhabitants and CORIACEA Foundation members.

11. Any other comments?

We want to thank the Rufford Small Grant Foundation for their solidarity with the needs of the developing countries, and, particularly, for supporting this kind of wild flora and fauna conservation programs, which are trying to raise human communities’ awareness and to encourage a commitment from their daily work in order to have a positive effect on the ecosystem balance.

12. I agree to this report being published on the Rufford Small Grants website

Signed (or print name) Laura del Pilar E.