



ALFAGUARA PROJECT

CENTRO DE CONSERVACION CETACEA



Report to Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation
August—December 2006

INTRODUCTION

The © **Alfaguara Project** has consolidated as a project of national interest for cetacean conservation thanks to the official sponsorship of the Chilean Navy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The © **Alfaguara Project**, which name comes from an ancient name used by former national whalers to designate the blue whale, seeks to promote the non lethal use of this species and other whale species in Chilean waters and shift the term into a new meaning that address conservation of blue whales and its ecosystem.

By effectively combining long term research, educational and capacity building programs, the © **Alfaguara Project** has the objective of developing innovative marine conservation proposals oriented to safeguard the rich biodiversity of the north western Isla de Chiloe and guarantee the sustainable development of the local coastal communities.

The successful results achieved so far have been possible thanks to the invaluable support of the **Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation**, **Cetacean Society International**, **Global Greengrants Fund**, **Ford Foundation**, the **Chilean Navy** (DIRECTEMAR), the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** and the **Municipality of Ancud** and the cooperative work conducted with local communities and authorities of Puñihuil, Pumillahue and Ancud.

The new period of the © **Alfaguara Project** "*Marine Conservation trough Marine Ecotourism*" is the result of three years of cooperative work with local communities and it reflects the concerns and marine conservation proposals of the people that have been dependant all their lives in the ocean and that have experience first hand the negative results of the irrational exploitation of nature.

The activities for the period 2006-2007 include the continuation of the cetacean research program; a set of workshops on marine ecotourism for local communities; a first hand experience exchange with tourist operators of Argentina; a recreational carrying capacity study around the Puñihuil Island for regulating penguin watching tourism; the design of a Land-Use Proposal of the Puñihuil Beach; and the design of a Sustainable Community Based Management Plan for the conservation of the area.

Thus, the © **Alfaguara Project** "*Marine Conservation trough Marine Ecotourism*" begins a new phase in Chile that seeks to apply an innovative approach to guarantee the effective conservation of the marine environment and be replicated as a community based model for marine protected areas in Chile.

The present report describes the activities developed by © **Centro de Conservacion Cetacea** (CCC) under the © **Alfaguara Project** during August/December 2006, its results and the financial statement.

CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM I

First Hand Experience Exchange



Images from left to right: (1) Constanza Poduje (CCC) with local tourist operators from Puñihuil in Argentina; (2) Operators visiting tourist shops while being documented by Channel 13 TV; (3) Operators from Puñihuil holding a meeting with Argentinean whale watching operators and scientists from the Whale Conservation Institute of Argentina,

With the support of the **Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation**, the **Municipality of Ancud** and **Channel 13 TV**, between October 2nd and 8th, five representatives of the local organization **"Ecoturismo Puñihuil"** and Constanza Poduje from CCC traveled to Puerto Madryn and Puerto Pirámides, Argentina with the objective of experience first hand the social, environmental and economical benefits of responsible ecotourism. The experience became a valuable opportunity to strengthen views regarding the importance of marine conservation and was permanently guided by Mr. Goitia, an Argentinean wild life expert that has worked for more than 20 years in the area of Chubut.

The tourist operators from Puñihuil visited several natural protected areas located at Peninsula Valdes. The small urban and pristine places that have been maintained for over 30 years caught their attention as well as the coastal platforms, paths and facilities constructed in harmony with the environment to improve wildlife watching experience. Participants also recognized the educational value of interpretative signs and didactic information given to tourists regarding the importance of having a respectful approach towards nature and its biodiversity.

Participants also distinguished the economic value of nature for ensuring sustainable local development while maintaining the natural environment and promoting the cultural heritage or the local peoples. This issue was highlighted when visiting the small local stores (full of souvenirs, posters of marine fauna and local traditional handcraft artisan) and services (such as Argentinean restaurants and hotels).

First Hand Experience Exchange

Additionally, local entrepreneurs of Puñihuil had the chance to conduct whale watching of southern right whales and compare the great differences of the sea conditions from those found at the northwestern Isla de Chiloe. They also became familiar with **argentinean whale watching regulations** and the importance of the educational factor in marine ecotourism. The absence of a constructed peer and the use of special trucks to load the marine vessels into the ocean captured their attention and helped them understand that less human intervention in the environment enhances the tourist experience and helped conserve the pristine beauty of the area.

During their visit, participants also held meetings and exchange points of view with, Mr. Mario Muro, **Director of Protected Areas and Conservation** of the Province of Chubut, researchers from the **Whale Conservation Institute** of Argentina and **local whale watching operators**. During the meetings, local operators from Punihuil shared their experiences and understood the necessity of conducting cooperative work between NGOs, government and entrepreneurs. They also became aware of the need to develop a careful planning to guarantee the conservation of the marine environment and the long term success of the economic activities.

In conclusion, the experience helped participants to broaden their views and have a better understanding about **concepts** such as **sustainable marine ecotourism**, the importance of **educational and conservation components**, the **diversification** of tourist **services** to avoid high pressure on one specie, the effectiveness of **cooperative work**, and the benefits of consolidating a **local identity** with its marine biodiversity.

This was fundamental to demonstrate the advantages of developing sustainable and **regulated wildlife watching activities** and to strengthening the commitment of the Chilean local operators to develop **responsible marine ecotourism**.

As a result, tourist entrepreneurs of Puñihuil are now planning to **expand** their tourist **services** and **promote** their **culture** as an integral part of marine ecotourism. This will reduce the pressure generated on local fauna such as penguins. They are also planning to construct an **interpretative center** to provide tourists with an area where they can learn about the fauna of Chiloe, their culture and art, along with informative signs that promote the conservation of the area.

The first action taken by the participants after returning from their **First Hand Experience Exchange** with Argentina was to implement garbage containers in the Punihuil Beach in order to maintain it clean. The containers were given by the **Municipality of Ancud**.

CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM II

Workshops on Marine Ecotourism



Images from left to right: (1) practical lessons on how to monitor bird species found in the Punihuil Islands; (2) theoretical lessons on biology and conservation of bird species found in Punihuil area; (3) representatives from Ecoturismo Punihuil, CCC and Aves de Chile after the end of the second workshop.

The **social survey** conducted by CCC during **February 2006** among tourist operators and fishermen of Puñihuil and Pumillahu -, and the feedback information collected from the communities during three years of work—revealed that there was an urgent need to develop **workshops on marine ecotourism** in order to strengthen the educational level of the community in issues related to marine conservation.

Since education is a key factor for the successful development of marine ecotourism, the capacity building program includes the implementation of five **marine ecotourism workshops** that comprise theoretical and practical lessons with group discussions after the end of each workshop to gather information about ideas, proposals and concerns of the community in relation to each subject.

With the support of **Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation** and **Ford Foundation**, from October 2006, CCC developed two important workshops regarding the **current state of marine environment** and **responsible bird watching** that were oriented to promote the sustainable development of the activities developed in the area.

In accordance with the **cooperative spirit promoted by CCC**, the workshops were conducted by specialists in fishing issues and ornithologists from other highly recognized **Chilean NGOs** and were attended by more than 15 people of Puñihuil and Pumillahue, including all tourist operators and other neighbors related to fishing activities.

Considering that the target people for the workshops are local tourist operators, we decided to continue the development of the rest of the workshops after March, when the summer tourist season ends and local operators have enough time to attend the workshops.

Workshop on Current State of the Marine Environment



Between 27 and 28 of October a two-day workshop was conducted by Juan Carlos Cardenas, Executive Director of the **Chilean NGO "Centro Ecoceanos"** regarding the fragile interrelations between all the marine species and its ecosystem and the current state of the marine environment.

It focused mainly in **marine ecosystem processes** as well as fishery's and **aquaculture's** social and environmental **impacts**. All the participants were related to tourist activities and many of them to fishing activities also. They showed great interest in the issues addressed and most of them did not knew the critical status the fisheries are facing currently in Chile and worldwide, nor the negative social and environmental impacts the aquaculture industry is having in southern Chile, particularly in Isla de Chiloé.

The workshop was fundamental to **broaden the view of the local community** regarding the negative impacts suffered by coastal communities worldwide due to over exploitation and the development of unregulated activities. It was also essential to **raise real and long-lasting support towards the implementation of conservation measures** for the Puñihuil area in the future.

Workshop on Responsible Bird Watching

A three-day workshop was conducted between 23 and 25 of November on responsible bird watching. The workshop included two lectures and a field class made by Juan Aguirre, director of “**Aves de Chile**” (Chilean Association of Ornithologists) and the biologist Juan Canepa.

They gave general concepts on the biology, conservation status and behavior of bird species that are present, seasonally or permanently, in the area of Puñihuil. These species represent a great potential of tourist development for coastal communities and strengthen the need for conservation actions of the biodiversity, focusing mainly in **Magellan and Humboldt penguin** (*Spheniscus magallanicus* and *Spheniscus humboldti*) which are currently the main tourist attraction.

The field lessons were mainly directed to teach about the methodology to develop **high quality bird watching** and to monitor the status of the species in the long term.

As a result, the participants of this workshop were highly interested in learning every aspect of bird biology and conservation and were invited to **continue working cooperative with CCC and Aves de Chile** to increase the general knowledge of the species. They also learned to monitor the species and committed themselves to collaborate in the filling of standardized sighting forms that will contribute in evaluating the status of local bird populations. One concerning issue that was raised by Aves de Chile and the community was the increase of the number of Kelp gulls (*Larus dominicanus*), probably due to garbage and by-catch that from fishing that is left in the beach. Since this could generate **negative impacts on the breeding penguin populations**, participants evaluated possible solutions to the problem, such as keeping the Puñihuil beach clean and discarding by-catch in open ocean.

Thus, the activity was fundamental to **raise the standard of the tourist service** provided by the local operators and to actively involve them in the monitoring of the species found in the area.

RECREATIONAL CARRYING CAPACITY STUDY

Since September 2006, Dr. Cristian Perez, **MSc medical veterinary** and **expert in penguins** in conjunction with Dr. Gabriel Lobos, **PhD medical veterinary**, are conducting the recreational carrying capacity study oriented to **propose conservation strategies** to ensure the tourism does not negatively impact the Humboldt and Magellan penguins that breed in the Natural Monument Puñihuil Islands as well as marine otters (*Lontra felina*) that live in the surroundings of the Islands. This research will help to **minimize negative impacts of the current tourism**, as well as **set guidelines and conservation measures** oriented to ensure the sustainability of tourist activities conducted in the area.

The study is oriented to develop an **ecological characterization of the area** and a **characterization of the current practices** developed by tourist operators along with **identifying potential management conflicts**. This is being done through regular monitoring of the marine fauna found in the islands, active and passive observations of the penguins, and surveys and interviews with local people. The data will help to design a model to determine the effective, real and physical carrying capacity as a strategy to reduce negative impacts of fauna watching in the Natural Monument.

Three field surveys have been conducted from September to December 2006. The active **support of the local community** has been essential to collect information regarding the number of visitors, navigation routes and frequency of tours made around the islands, as well as penguins' paths, numbers of individuals seen and times used for essential activities as feeding.

Currently, tourist operators have different forms of conducting their penguin watching operations, including approach distance and information given to the tourist, so **there is a need to improve and standardize the quality** of the marine tours. As for the recreational carrying capacity, the relatively few operators might not currently be negatively impacting the penguins but there is a **need to agree frequencies and navigation routes** of the tours in order to ensure that tourism is not impacting the penguins feeding activities or disturbing them.

CONSERVATION I



Images from left to right: (1) Barbara Galletti presenting the Alfaguara Project during the First International Seminar on MPAs conducted in Chile in October 2006; (2) CPPS representatives (including Barbara Galletti) attending the First Workshop Anthropogenic Impacts on Marine Mammals conducted in Colombia in November 2006; (3) Governmental representatives (including Elsa Cabrera) of the Buenos Aires Group that met in Buenos Aires, Argentina in December 2006.

Between 13 and 16 of November, CCC was invited to participate at the **First International Seminar of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas** in Caldera, Chile, organized by the **Global Environmental Fund—Marine Project** (Proyecto GEF-Marino) oriented to address several current problems of Marine Protected Areas, such as the scientific criteria to design them, the importance of social participation, the ways of raising funds and management systems.

Ms. Galletti gave a presentation regarding the importance of the social involvement to ensure an effective MPA, emphasizing the importance of the © **Alfaguara Project** as an innovative approach of cooperative work with coastal communities that would be a community based management model to be replicated at a national level.

In this regard, CCC also had several meetings with governmental authorities, including the **Technical Committee of Marine Protected Areas**, in order to stress the necessity to consider **all the available scientific information** to understand the blue whale critical habitat and **design a sound strategy for conservation**, that could be achieved by establishing an **international working group of experts**, as well as develop an **open and participative process** that include **coastal communities** and other stakeholders of the area in order to ensure effectiveness of any marine protected area for blue whales and the proper implementation of conservation measures.

CONSERVATION II

In November 2006, **CCC was invited by the Chilean government** to be **representative of the Chilean official delegation** at the **First Workshop on Anthropogenic Impacts in Marine Mammals in the Eastern South Pacific of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals in the Eastern South Pacific of the Permanent Commission of the South Pacific (CPPS)** and the **United Nation Environmental Program (UNEP)** conducted in Bogotá, Colombia.

Thanks to the support of Chilean government, the CPPS and the UNEP, Ms. Galletti assisted to the workshop and presented **two scientific papers**. One was oriented to cetacean strandings along Chilean coast from 1970 to 2005, and their associated cause of death, while the other was oriented to the whale watching potential in Chile. In the presentations as well as during the discussion, Ms. Galletti raised the **need of develop conservation plans for each specie** and **areas** that are most negatively impacted in the country as well as address current and potential problems of blue whales and the **necessity of establish a marine protected area representative of blue whale critical habitat** in order to avoid ineffective conservation measures as unfortunately occurred for many years with several cetacean species in other Latin American countries.

Between 1 and 2 December 2006, Ms. Elsa Cabrera, executive director of CCC was appointed as **advisor of Chilean delegation** and participated in the Buenos Aires Meeting Group meeting that was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Governmental representatives and International Whaling Commissioners from 12 Latin American countries participated at the meeting and signed the **Second Buenos Aires Declaration** that stresses the non lethal use of cetacean as a permanent commitment of the countries of Latin American, reiterate their firm commitment to the moratorium, the necessity of put an end to scientific whaling and to initiate negotiations towards the creation of a Latin American agreement on the non lethal use and conservation of cetaceans, among others.

PROMOTION



Images from left to right: (1) Interview of Elsa Cabrera published in the women magazine of the main national newspaper in Chile “El Mercurio”, where marine conservation was the principal issue; (2) Video documentary of Channel 13 TV, one of the most important channels in Chile, regarding the experience interchange in Chubut, Argentina.

Between August and December, CCC participated in a **new documentary of Channel 13 TV** that will address the **capacity building program**, including the **first hand experience exchange in Argentina**, oriented toward the development of sustainable marine ecotourism and the implementation of the first innovative experience in Chile for the design of a community based management plan for marine conservation.

In order to promote the © **Alfaguara Project** and cetacean conservation while ensuring public diffusion, 9 radio interviews, 13 writing articles and 4 TV interviews were made during the period in local, national and Argentinean media press.

All media coverage mentioned **Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation** as sponsor of the © **Alfaguara Project** and its new stage “*Marine Conservation through Marine Ecotourism*”.

FINANTIAL STATEMENT

This statement covers the costs related to the period **August to December 2006**.

The exchange rate considered is **964 Chilean pesos per GBP**, corresponding to the exchange rate obtained in September 2006 for the **Rufford Small Grant Innovation Award**.

Investment coats for field materials, including artisan fishermen boat and engine were not spend this period, since better prices are obtained in southern region of Chile thus we decide they will be acquire in January 2007.

Expenses		Incomes	
Item	GBP	Funder	GBP
Executive Director	692	Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation	8.338
Coordinators	692		
Account manager	21		
Subtotal Personnel Costs	1.405		
Office Supplies	378	Ford Foundation	1.802
Internet & Communications	723		
Meals	1.461		
Lodging	779		
Aerial Transportation	1.289		
Marine Transportation	34		
Terrestrial Transportation	1.976		
Educational Materials	397		
Contracted Services	1.256		
Others	869		
Subtotal Operational Costs	9.162	Global Greengrants Fund	446
Field Materials	0		
Bank Taxes	20		
TOTAL	10.587	TOTAL	10.587

The background features a large, light-colored whale silhouette swimming upwards. Scattered around it are several smaller, white starfish and other marine life silhouettes. A solid blue vertical bar is on the left side of the page.

CENTRO DE
CONSERVACIÓN
CETACEA

www.ccc-chile.org