



CENTRO DE CONSERVACION CETACEA

Report to Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation
January to June 2007

The © **Alfaguara Project**, which name comes from an ancient term used by former Chilean 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.

In 2007, the © **Alfaguara Project** received the official sponsorship of the **Ministry of Education** that complement the official supports already granted by the **Chilean Navy** and the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, making the © **Alfaguara Project** a project of national interest.

The new period of the © **Alfaguara Project "Marine Conservation trough Marine Ecotourism"** continues to effectively combine long term research, educational and capacity building programs with the objective of developing an innovative marine conservation plan based in the active and informed involvement of the coastal communities.

The successful results achieved so far have been possible thanks to the invaluable support of the **Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation**, **Global Greengrants Fund**, **Ford Foundation**, the **Municipality of Ancud** and the cooperative work conducted with local communities and authorities of Puñihuil, Pumillahue and Ancud.

The present report describes the activities developed by © **Centro de Conservación Cetacea** (CCC) under the © **Alfaguara Project** during January/June 2007, its results and the financial statement.

CCC research objective is to monitor the status of **blue whales** (*Balaenoptera musculus*) off Isla de Chiloe in order to propose effective conservation measures.

From February to April, © **Centro de Conservacion Cetacea** develop the fourth © **Alfaguara Project** field season with the invaluable cooperation of **Dr. Carole Carlson** and **Dr. Robert L. Brownell Jr.**

This year, the field season incorporated the participation of **seven university students** from veterinary and biological science, as volunteers of the scientific and community programs included in the project. Their participation and the knowledge acquired by them were later evaluated with excellent results. The experience represents the basis for developing a **platform of national scientists** committed with **marine conservation** and local **community involvement**.

The season started with the **christening of the Alfaguara research vessel**, a local tradition where the entire community participates in order to wish good luck to the vessel.

Marine surveys were mainly oriented to **photo-identify individual whales** but **biological samples** were also taken (faeces and zooplankton), **sound recording**, measurement of **environmental parameters**, and collection of relevant data about individual **behavior** and relations, among others.

During 17 marine surveys conducted, at least 156 groups of blue whales comprising more than 200 individuals were photographed, and humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) and risso's dolphins (*Grampus griseus*) were also recorded, making the seasonal work the **best one since** the © **Alfaguara Project** begun. Analyses of the photographs taken and comparisons with previous years were simultaneously developed during the field work. As a result, our Current **blue whale photo ID catalogue** is comprised of **more than 140 individuals**.

Land based observations have been developed by trained observers for 39 days and recorded an average of 19 individuals whales each day.

Finally, thanks to the **support of the Chilean navy** and in attention to the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission, CCC successfully conducted the **first aerial survey for estimating blue whales abundance and determining its distribution in Chile**. This historical survey covered from 36°S to 44°S and recorded blue whales, sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*), risso's dolphins and southern right whale dolphin (*Lissodelphis peronii*).



ALFAGUARA PROJECT CARRYING CAPACITY

Since 1999 three islands are included in the Natural Monument of Puñihuil. The islands compose an important breeding area of **Magellan and Humboldt penguins** (*Spheniscus magellanicus* and *Spheniscus humboldti*). It also houses the most southern breeding area for **sooty shearwater** (*Puffinus griseus*) and is one of the most southern breeding areas for Humboldt penguins. Additionally, it registers the presence of the endangered **marine otter** (*Lontra felina*).

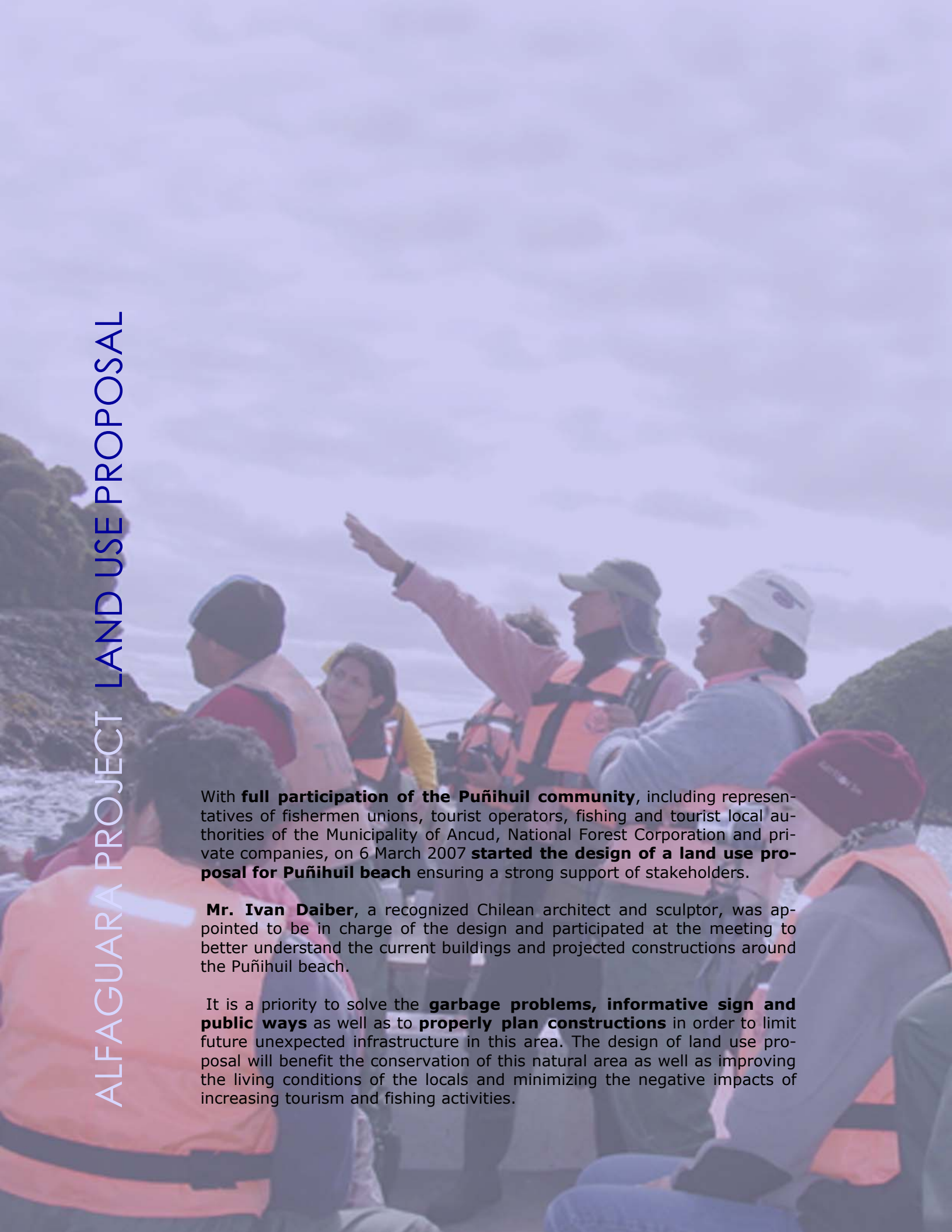
Since September 2006, CCC conducted a **recreational carrying capacity study** in the Natural Monument of Puñihuil in order to **characterize bird watching operations** and **propose management recommendations** for guarantee the conservation of the biodiversity while ensuring the long term sustainability of the tourism activities.

With the cooperation of local entrepreneurs, CCC gathered the necessary information through active and passive observations of the penguins and through surveys and interviews with local people and tourist.

The recreational carrying capacity was estimated as the maximum number of visits recommended to a defined area. The number obtained was then corrected by several factors including the effective sighting length route, period of penguins and tourist peaks, and level of management capacity (described as management plans, restrooms per tourist entrepreneurs, environmental education, etc).

Considering the current management scenario and level of information, the **maximum number of boat roundtrips** recommended around Puñihuil Islands was determined in **30 per day**. The study also revealed that the **management capacity** is low and **it needs to be improved**. The study also suggests the need to **monitor biological and ecological aspects** of the species and their relations with tourist activities as well as artisan fishing operations in the area.

The recreational carrying capacity results and the proposed conservation measures were presented in April to the local operators, with a **very positive reception** and we are now working cooperatively in the **development of a code of conduct** for best bird watching and boat based tourism. The results will be presented to local authorities in august and it is expected to advance on a management plan for marine ecotourism activities carried out around the Natural Monuments Puñihuil Islands.



ALFAGUARA PROJECT LAND USE PROPOSAL

With **full participation of the Puñihuil community**, including representatives of fishermen unions, tourist operators, fishing and tourist local authorities of the Municipality of Ancud, National Forest Corporation and private companies, on 6 March 2007 **started the design of a land use proposal for Puñihuil beach** ensuring a strong support of stakeholders.

Mr. Ivan Daiber, a recognized Chilean architect and sculptor, was appointed to be in charge of the design and participated at the meeting to better understand the current buildings and projected constructions around the Puñihuil beach.

It is a priority to solve the **garbage problems, informative sign and public ways** as well as to **properly plan constructions** in order to limit future unexpected infrastructure in this area. The design of land use proposal will benefit the conservation of this natural area as well as improving the living conditions of the locals and minimizing the negative impacts of increasing tourism and fishing activities.

The **analysis of blue whale data** was conducted during the field season in order to present the information to the 59th annual meeting of the **International Whaling Commission (IWC)**. For a second consecutive year, Miss **Barbara Galletti** represented the **government of Chile at the Scientific Committee** meeting of the IWC, where she presented three papers prepared by CCC related to the **status of the population of blue whales in Chile (SC/59/SH1)¹**, the **presence of skin lesions in blue whales of southern Chile (SC/59/SH21)²** and recommendations for **guidelines/regulations to conduct whale watching with blue whales in Chile (SC/59/WW15)³** that will soon be socialized with the community and presented by CCC to the government for its adoption.

As a result, the **IWC Scientific Committee encouraged the continuation of CCC work**, it **expressed its concern** about the **health status of blue whales** (skinny whales and skin lesions) and **endorsed the blue whale watching guidelines proposed by CCC**. This information can be found in the Scientific Committee report and its annexes (www.iwcoffice.org).

We also **signed a cooperation agreement** with the **Municipality of Ancud** to develop responsible marine ecotourism activities in north western Chiloé Island that includes the development of trekking paths and coastal platforms for viewing marine and coastal wildlife.

Finally, the **Chilean Senate** approved in May a **Project of Agreement** promoted by CCC that urges the establishment of a legal framework that **guarantee the conservation and non lethal use of cetaceans in Chile**.

1. Galletti Vernazzani, B., Carlson, C., Cabrera, E., and Brownell Jr., R.L. 2007. Status of blue whales off Isla de Chiloé, Chile, during 2007 field season. Paper SC/59/SH1 presented to the IWC Scientific Committee, May 2007 (unpublished). 7pp. [Available from the authors]
2. Brownell Jr., R.L., Carlson, C., Galletti Vernazzani, B. and Cabrera, E. 2007. Skin lesions on blue whales off southern Chile: Possible conservation implications?. Paper SC/59/SH21 presented to the IWC Scientific Committee, May 2007 (unpublished). 6pp. [Available from the authors]
3. Cabrera, E., Galletti Vernazzani, B and Carlson, C. 2007. Recommendations for whale watching guidelines in the blue whale feeding area of southern Chile. Paper SC/59/WW15 presented to the IWC Scientific Committee, May 2007 (unpublished). 9pp. [Available from the authors]

During field season, 2.000 educational leaflets of the © **Alfaguara Project** have been distributed in Isla de Chiloe.

In order to promote the © **Alfaguara Project** and cetacean conservation while ensuring public diffusion, one radio interview, 32 writing articles and 3 TV documentary have appeared at **national and international press**. A **documentary of CCC work** at Isla de Chiloe was seen by more than **3.000.000 people** at Radio y Television Italiana (RAI), the Canal13 showed at a national level the importance of © **Alfaguara Project** as an innovative initiative for **conservation and community development**, and a chilean documentary on **blue whales** and CCC conservation work was first exhibit at Santiago and then would be presented at international documentary festival.

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

PROMOTION & MEDIA



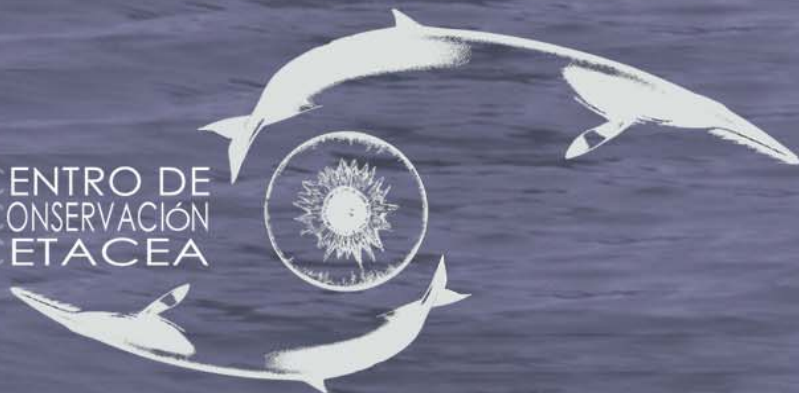
This statement covers the costs related to the period **January to June 2007**.

The exchange rate considered is **1.015 Chilean pesos per GBP**, corresponding to the exchange rate obtained in February 2007 for the **Rufford Small Grant Innovation Award**.

Expenses		Incomes	
Item	GBP	Funder	GBP
Executive Director	591	Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation Balance 2006 (Funds remained from the first batch)	13,317
Coordinators	591		
Account manager	73		
Field Assistant and Skipper	1,299		
Subtotal Personnel Costs	2,554		
Internet & Communications	830		
Office Supplies	304		
Meals	2,154		
Lodging	2,332		
Aerial Transportation	2,052		
Marine Transportation	641	Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation Current branch of funds	13,064
Terrestrial Transportation	3,243		
Educational Materials	640		
Contracted Services	918		
Others	1,004		
Subtotal Operational Costs	14,118		
Field Materials & other equipments	9,685		
Bank Taxes	26		
TOTAL	26,383	TOTAL	26,383



CENTRO DE
CONSERVACIÓN
CETACEA



www.ccc-chile.org