

The Rufford Foundation

Final Report

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

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. The Final Report must be sent in **word format** and not PDF format or any other format. 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. Please note that the information may be edited for clarity. 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	Adrián Azpiroz
Project title	Pampas Meadowlark: using a flagship species to promote conservation in South American grasslands.
RSG reference	1037-C
Reporting period	September 2013-December 2014
Amount of grant	£15,000
Your email address	pampasbirds@gmail.com
Date of this report	February 12, 2015

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. Characterisation of new pampas meadowlark populations			X	Two additional populations in Uruguay were studied. Population size estimates and other relevant data were obtained.
2. Identification of pampas meadowlark population trends		X		Overall, data indicate that the Uruguayan pampas meadowlark population seems to be stable. However, additional analyses are needed (in progress) to determine trends of each population (three in total). Argentinean government authorities are currently undertaking a population assessment in their country.
3. Pampas meadowlark population connectivity assessment			X	Genetic analyses are still being conducted. Preliminary results (already presented at a scientific meeting) indicate high genetic diversity within pampas meadowlark populations from Uruguay. Additional results will be available in March 2015
4. Dissemination of conservation-relevant scientific data			X	Conservation-related data was presented in two very important meetings (with scientists and landowners, respectively). In addition, one contribution on pampas meadowlark genetics was presented at another scientific meeting and two articles were submitted for publication in international journals.
5. Scientifically-informed conservation actions		X		Government authorities were informed on key aspects of threatened grassland bird species conservation in Uruguay. Additional specific recommendations will be included in the first volume of the Uruguayan Red Data Book (to be published during the first semester of 2015 with RF and IUCN support).
6. Increased public support for grassland bird conservation through awareness raising			X	Public-awareness activities were extended to four new areas. New materials (including a large format pampas biodiversity poster) were widely distributed throughout the Pampas and Campos of Argentina and Uruguay.

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

There were no significant unforeseen difficulties. One unforeseen situation was related to the fact that only 60% of the original proposal's budget was financed by The Rufford Foundation grant. Thus, we had to adjust our expenditure to try to achieve as many research and conservation objectives as possible.

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

- 1) Pampas Meadowlark Population Surveys:** for the first time all known Uruguayan populations were surveyed. This work provided new insight into population numbers, trends, threats, etc. This data were used (and will continue to be used) to specify conservation recommendations. Also, as part of the general survey, new landowners were contacted and this will probably result in additional habitat conservation for the meadowlark and other threatened co-existing species.
- 2) Grassland Conservation Network Expanded:** we contacted many new key actors working on grassland conservation, especially in Argentina, where we had not worked before. Through meetings, fieldwork and outreach activities we interacted with several government authorities, new private landowners and cattle ranch personnel, as well as other local community members. These interactions will very probably result in future collaborations and positive impacts for grassland biodiversity in the region.
- 3) New Scientific Data Produced:** this information is currently being disseminated in technical articles and other publications. We highlight the publication of the Uruguayan Red Data Book planned for 2015, which will include novel data and specific recommendations to guide species-specific conservation action. Another important contribution has to do with the first genetic assessment of the pampas meadowlark (currently underway), which will provide key insight for population management and conservation.

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

As in previous project phases, local communities were the targets of our outreach activities. Also, during fieldwork activities interaction with locals is very important because they usually provide valuable information on the location of target species within study areas. During these interactions locals (particularly landowners) learn about our activities and the relevance of our work.

In 2014 we produced a large format poster on Pampas Grassland Biodiversity. The illustration was inspired on the local landscape (wildlife and specific geographic profile) of Cerros de Vera, one of the most important areas for the pampas meadowlark and pampas deer. As expected, the fact that people recognised "their" wildlife and geography in this fine product produced a very positive impact within the community.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, we will continue research and education activities in the future. We plan to apply for a Rufford Completion Grant during 2015. We will also seek other types of support from individuals and

organisations and will continue our interactions with people directly involved in grassland conservation in the region.

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

Many results have already been shared through presentations at very important meetings (e.g., Convention on Migratory Species Scientific Council Meeting, Southern Cone Grasslands Alliance Meeting) and other events. Key conservation-related data have been submitted for publication in scientific journals and additional information will be included in the first Red Data Book for the birds of Uruguay. Recent collaborations with Uruguayan and Argentinean colleagues will provide new insight into pampas meadowlark population genetics in the following months (analyses are being conducted).

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

The grant was used from September 2013 to December 2014 and matched the anticipated length and timescale of the project.

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
Lodging	495,00	482,50	12,50	
Transportation	3495,00	4614,12	-744,12	
Meals	2160,00	1663,09	496,91	
Outreach Materials	1665,00	2273,30	-608,30	
Research Data Dissemination	2190,00	1523,81	666,19	
Coordinator Stipends	420,00	259,26	160,74	
Field Equipment	2006,00	2359,04	-353,04	
Genetic Analyses	1469,25	1134,71	334,54	
Office Supplies	349,80	41,60	308,20	
Project Administration Costs	750,00	750,00	0,00	
Total	15000,05	15101,44	101,39	See below for other budget details

Budget Details:

The budget included in our original Continuation Grant Proposal was £24,787 of which £15,000 was approved by The Rufford Foundation. Thus, we had to implement some adjustments in order to try to accomplish as much as possible with the available support. In order to be able to carry out most field activities and to produce high-profile education materials we maintained the original budgeted costs for transportation and outreach activities. To compensate for these additional costs (ca. £1350) we reduced meals and data dissemination-related costs (by ca. £1150). We also reduced costs concerning coordinator stipends, genetic analyses and office supplies and some of these funds

were used for field equipment. In the case of genetic analyses, we were able to obtain new funds to compensate for the reduced original budgeted costs.

We used three different currencies to cover project-associated costs: US dollars, Argentinean Pesos and Uruguayan Pesos. Local exchange rates used were: £1 = USD 1,575; £1 = 11,34 ARG\$; £1 = 35,43 URU\$. The exchange rate for Argentinean Pesos involves an average between two different rates for 2013 (£1 = 9,6 ARG\$) and 2014 (£1 = 12,9 ARG\$) due to a significant devaluation of the Argentinean currency in January 2014.

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

- 1) Continue data dissemination to the scientific community, stakeholders and general public. We will produce more publications and will hold meeting with government authorities and other key actors in the near future.
- 2) Seek new collaborations with individuals, NGOs and government agencies. During the Continuation Grant period we met many new key actors involved in grassland conservation in the region. Now, we hope to identify some common objectives that may be best accomplished through new synergies (e.g., grassland wildlife ecotourism and conservation-oriented research).

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

Yes, I used The Rufford Foundation logo in all presentations and also included it prominently in the new Grassland Biodiversity Poster (figure sent in separate email). The Rufford Foundation's support was also acknowledged in all other education and dissemination activities.

11. Any other comments?

Overall, we believe we were able to achieve significant objectives with this Continuation Grant. We produced novel biological data of threatened species, contacted many new key individuals and organisations and continued increasing public awareness related to pampas grassland conservation within the region and beyond.