

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. 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	Agustina Cortelezzi
Project title	Conservation status assessment of the endemic Tandilean red-belly toad (<i>Melanophryniscus</i> sp.) in Tandil Hills
RSG reference	11867-1
Reporting period	July 2012 – May 2013
Amount of grant	£6000
Your email address	aguscorde@gmail.com
Date of this report	June 2013

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
Assess the taxonomic and conservation status		✓		The <i>Melanophryniscus</i> specialist mentioned that Tandilean red-belly toad could be assigned to <i>Melanophryniscus aff. Montevidensis</i> , a Vulnerable species. However, he recommends us to conduct a genetic study in order to confirm this observation.
Determine the distribution and population size of populations			✓	We got the first estimates of occupancy and population size for the study area
Establish the habitat requirements			✓	We modelled the occupation as a function of the potential breeding ponds characteristics
Quantifying the threats impact		✓		We evaluated indirectly the depth importance for the use of potential breeding ponds, obtained chytrid fungus samples but the results of analysis are not available yet and recorded new predators to the Tandilean red-belly toads like leeches
Develop educational program			✓	We gave talks in some local schools about the ecology and conservation of red-belly toad. We elaborate and distribute stickers and pins. Most of fieldwork was conducted with the help of local scouts groups.

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

We had no major problems during the project. However, during the toad breeding season (August to March) rainfall events were irregular. This limited the possibilities to record the presence of Tandilean red-belly toads. The toads are detected by sound mainly when the males vocalise after heavy rains. Therefore, despite having gone to the field repeatedly, only could to register the presence of toads between August and October. Consequently, some grassland remnants remained unexplored and we planned to continue our surveys during the next spring.

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

1. Our study confirmed the importance of Tandil Hills as refuge for the last populations of Tandilean red-belly toad and we obtained the first population size estimation of this species.

2. Our study identified breeding site depth and distance to nearest road as main variables explaining the presence of toad. We also revealed an unrecorded potential threat for genus *Melanophryniscus* - leeches as predators of eggs.

3. We aroused the interest of the local community and authorities for the conservation of the Tandilean red-belly toad and its habitat.

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

The local community has a direct impact from the results of this project. The local community now has solid scientific information about a local endangered and endemic species. Local NGOs and government can use our results to promote the needs of protected areas in the region and to manage the activities carried out at grassland remnants.

Children of the community (schools and Scouts) received updated information about the situation of the Tandilean red-belly toad and its environment, and participated in the activities of the project.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. Our goal is to guarantee the conservation of Tandilean red-belly toad. We will continue with the long-term monitoring of toads and grasslands, and we will survey not explored areas. The Tandilean red-belly toad, as a flagship species, will help us to involve local authorities and community in a conservation plan for the highland grasslands of Tandilean Hills. We are enthusiastic, happy to work and very committed to continuing conservation efforts in our native landscape.

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

To better reach the community we produced a video summarising our conservation project and another brief video about a reproductive event of the toads in a grassland pond. Videos are available in the web at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/PastizalesSerranos?feature=watch>

We are also in the process of making a documentary that shows the life history of the Tandilean red-belly toads in the high grassland and the importance of their conservation. We have also made presentations to the community, a first-grade school and other open to the community we serve up pins and decals. Finally, we sent two scientific publications that are under evaluation, and we have enough data to complete a third manuscript. We will send a document with recommendations of management to the local authorities.

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

As planned, we used the RSG funds from Jun2012 through May 2013.

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
Research activities				
Field expenses	1,080	1,200	-120	
Vehicle	900	900	0	
Field supplies and equipment	1,100	1,580	-480	
Enclosure experiment materials	280	0	+280	After the first sampling, we decided not to make the enclosures experiment. Our work focused on predatory leeches.
Lab analysis	970	950	+20	
Educational activities				
Posters and pamphlets	450	350	+100	
Trail signs	270	320	-50	
Educational Campaign	950	1100	+150	
Total	6000	6400	400	Difference was covered by the Instituto Multidisciplinario sobre Ecosistemas y Desarrollo Sustentable

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

Next steps must be addressed to determine the area of distribution of the species, to quantify threats and to solve the taxonomic conflict (genetic study). We need to work closely with the local community and the municipality to identify key areas for the protection of the population.

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 support of RSGF was acknowledged in all presentations that were given during the funding period and in the project video. The RSGF was and it will be also acknowledged in both scientific papers that we are evaluating.

11. Any other comments?

We would like to express our sincere gratitude for your support without which the initiation and establishment of this project would not have been possible.