

## 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](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Thank you for your help.

**Josh Cole, Grants Director**

#### Grant Recipient Details

<b>Your name</b>	Fernando Arbeláez
<b>Project title</b>	Community-based conservation program of three endangered species of river turtles with Amazonian indigenous communities of Colombia and Peru 2012
<b>RSG reference</b>	11943-B
<b>Reporting period</b>	July 2012 – June 2013
<b>Amount of grant</b>	£12,000
<b>Your email address</b>	<a href="mailto:ferarbe@gmail.com">ferarbe@gmail.com</a> , <a href="mailto:info@fundacionbiodiversa.org">info@fundacionbiodiversa.org</a>
<b>Date of this report</b>	10/07/2013

**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
To reduce egg poaching and female hunting during the nesting season			X	This season was by far the most successful of the programme (see outcomes)
To continue training and generating appropriation of conservation by Local Conservation Groups (LCGs) and involvement of new ones.			X	The season also evidenced greater gained experience, training, knowledge and appropriation of the LCGs (see outcomes). Furthermore a new community from Colombia got involved this season totalling four communities, and two more communities from Peru expressed their wish to participate the following nesting season.
To socialise conservation activities and continue raising awareness about the importance of turtle conservation in the area			X	The groups carried out socialisation activities with neighbour communities and awareness-raising activities with local schools. There were good indications of the raised awareness and support from the communities of the area (see outcomes)
To seek for alliances with local public and private organisations for supporting work of LCGs, as an economic alternative for these communities.		X		We presented reports and proposals to different local governmental institutions (Mayor House of Leticia, Amazonas Department Government, the Regional Environmental Agency Corpoamazonia and the Fire fighters Department of Leticia) and a private tourism company (Decameron Hotel) to seek for their support in 2013. Although all institutions showed interest in the programme, to date no proposals were successful and no support from them has been received. Many expressed their wish to support the LCGs in 2014.

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

Many of the initial challenges have been overcome, and the project has reached a great momentum in terms of participation, appropriation and conservation results.

The main difficulty was the lack of funds for continuation in 2013. International applications have been unsuccessful to date and local governmental and private institutions did not give any support

to the programme, despite their expressed will to do last year. This presents a major problem for the momentum the project

Due to the lack of funds for 2013, we used the remaining funds of RSG (£913) together with small contributions from Fundacion Biodiversa Colombia (COP 1,000,000) and from Turtle Survival Alliance (US\$1,000), totalling nearly £2,000. These resources, together with the will of LCGs to give continuation to the activities, will allow us to monitor the impact of not protecting the beaches during the next reproductive period, while continue gathering basic information on the turtles populations. During this period, we will also work hard on fundraising to assure continuity of the monitoring for 2014, using data collected in 2013 to highlight its necessity, and hopefully really commit local organisations to support the project next nesting season.

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

The 2012 season was by far the most successful of all in terms of conservation results, participation of local communities and appropriation of the programme by the Local Conservation Groups. We guarded the three main nesting beaches of the area, including a new large beach that appeared on the Peruvian side of the River. Four LCGs from four communities (three experienced and one in formation) and 50 turtle guardians protected the beaches. Conservation-wise, several results showed unprecedented outcomes:

1. During the season, 60 nests of the three species were effectively protected until hatching; only three nests were lost due to human causes and 1247 new-borns safely reached the river, which are by far the highest numbers since the start of the programme (see fig. 2). This shows that the groups have gained experience and are improving the effectiveness of their conservation work.

2. For the first time, we were able to protect 34 nests of *P. sextuberculata* (the highest of the three species and almost four to sixteen times higher than in previous seasons) and 410 hatchlings (more than six times higher than previous seasons). This is critical because, despite its small size, it is a perhaps the most vulnerable of the three species: it lays the fewest number of eggs per nest (max. 20, avg. 14.5, compared to *P. expansa* that lays more than 120 eggs per nest), it requires a particular type of beach for nesting (compared to *P. unifilis* that can lay eggs in different substrates) and hatching time is longer than the other species (*P. sextuberculata*: min 61, max. 83, avg. 65.8 days; *P. expansa* 57-58 days; and *P. unifilis* min 49, max. 79, avg. 65.4 days), which makes the eggs more vulnerable to destruction by natural causes (flooding, predation).

3. For the first time, two nests of *P. expansa* were protected and 215 new-borns hatched safely, which is also an historical result within the programme (max. one nest and 50 hatchlings in previous seasons).

The fact that only three of 63 nests were destroyed by human causes and that the beaches were not visited during the night where the monitors were present is a highly significant result of the raised awareness of communities in the area and of the effectiveness of the monitor's work.

The LCGs continued to improve their data gathering (e.g. species, track width, number of eggs, number of living hatchlings, female dimensions), their use of equipment (GPS, digital cameras) and their monitoring skills (following tracks, finding nests and females, erasing tracks). Furthermore, they showed appropriation with initiatives of their own, such as inviting children from different schools of the area to witness hatchling and carry out awareness raising activities. Finally a new community

from Colombia got involved this season totalling four communities, and two more communities from Peru expressed their wish to participate the following nesting season.

The LCGs by their own initiative invited local schools to witness hatching of the new-borns and carried out awareness-raising activities and environmental education speeches with the children, which is a clear indicator of their appropriation of the programme. They also carried out three socialisation events where neighbour communities, authorities and local institutions were invited that were supported by the Environmental Police.

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

The programme is entirely community-based. It seeks for appropriation of conservation and empowerment of local communities as key actors and decision-makers in conservation and sustainable use of their natural resources, through Local Conservation Groups. The idea is to give to LCGs enough tools (capacity, training, experience and certification) so they can find an economic alternative through conservation.

**5. Are there any plans to continue this work?**

As stated above, it is crucial to continue the activities and profit the momentum and impact expansion the project has reached. Due to the limited funds for 2013, “absence of monitoring scenario” will be evaluated in 2013 season. However, we expect that, on the basis of these results and joining efforts with international funds (such as Rufford Small Grants, MBZ, Turtle Conservation Fund and Turtle Survival Alliance, among others), governmental local and regional agencies and the tourism sector, we will give continuity and constantly growing impact of the project for several years at a time, and not in a year-by-year basis.

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

The project was presented in the “Environmental Education in Continental Turtle Conservation Projects” national workshop held in November 2012 in Cali, Colombia, organised by World Conservation Society - Colombia, Turtle Survival Alliance, Asociación Colombiana de Herpetología and Zoológico de Cali.

It was also presented in the “Regional Workshop about new strategies for the integration of wildlife management in integral planning processes in the Ecosystemic Approach framework”, organised by WCS and sponsored by the Andean Community of Nations’s BioCAN Program and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland.

Finally, the project was included in the “Perspectives for research and conservation” section of the *Podocnemis unifilis* chapter, in the recently released “Biology and conservation of Colombian Continental Turtles” (2013) (Escalona et al., 2012).

News of the program updates are posted on the Webpage of Fundacion BioDiversa Colombia ([http://www.fundacionbiodiversa.org/proyectos\\_tortugas\\_amazonas\\_eng.htm](http://www.fundacionbiodiversa.org/proyectos_tortugas_amazonas_eng.htm)) and in the Facebook group page <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Fundacion-BioDiversa-Colombia/379586135314>.

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

The activities were carried out according to original timescale (July to December 2012). Remaining budget was used in June 2013 to implement the evaluation of “absence of monitoring scenario” that will take place during 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.**

The main reason for differences between the budgeted and the spent amount was that, due to lack of other funding sources (apart from RSG and some remaining funds from of the 2011 Mohamed bin Zayed Species conservation fund), we had to find creative ways to readjust and optimise the budget to be able to carry out all the planned activities. For example, we had to cover pre-monitoring activities, transport, food and lodging for researchers and communications and stationery (that were not budgeted for the RSG), by reducing the number of monitors visiting the beach each night (therefore reducing budget for economic incentives, snacks for monitors and materials for monitoring). We bought small engines for the LCGs for monitoring instead of the large engines they already had, which reduced significantly fuel, oil and grease consumption both for nesting and for hatching periods. This will also reduce fuel, oil and grease budget for upcoming seasons. There were several unexpected new participants from two new communities, which increased the collective incentive for the new groups. Finally, we also eliminated the support for economic initiatives, although we continued supporting handcrafter families by selling their handcrafts in Bogota. Finally, the remaining funds from 2012 (£ 921) were used to implement the evaluation of “absence of monitoring scenario” for 2013 (gas, oil, grease, materials, 1 researcher expenses in June).

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Pre-monitoring activities	£0	£142	-£142	Not budget originally for RSG
Gas, oil, grease, snacks for nesting monitoring (107 days)	£2,579	£973	£1,607	Smaller engines led to significantly less fuel consumption
Small engines for LCGs (4)	£0	£1,145	-£1,145	Bought to reduce fuel consumption
Economic fee for experienced groups (107 days)	£5,426	£4,287	£1,140	Reduced by less monitors per night to adjust budget
Collective incentives for new groups	£764	£1,062	-£297	Unexpected new participants from new groups increased collective incentive
Gas, oil, grease for hatching monitoring (61 days)	£490	£268	£222	Smaller engines led to significantly less fuel consumption
Economic fee for experienced groups (61 days)	£857	£878	-£21	
Materials for monitoring	£299	£62	£238	Reduced to adjust budget

Closure event	£8	£17	-£9	
Transport for researchers	£0	£587	-£587	Not budget originally for RSG
Food and lodging for researchers	£0	£214	-£214	Not budget originally for RSG
Support to economic initiatives	£263	£0	£263	Eliminated to adjust budget
Communications and stationery	£107	£240	-£133	Not budget originally for RSG
Administration fee (FBC)	£1,200	£1,200	-£0	
Evaluation of the “absence of monitoring scenario” 2013	£0	£921	-£0	Not budget originally for RSG
<b>Total</b>	<b>£11,995</b>	<b>£12,000</b>	<b>£5</b>	

Exchange rate: 1 GBP = COP 2,646.85 (10/07/2012)

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

For the 2013 season, two new LCG were enlisted to the programme: the Colombian Santa Sofia LCG, based on the volunteers that participated in 2012 from that community, and a joint LCG from two Peruvian communities: Yahuma II and Barranco. We expected a total of 75 turtle guardians from six LCG and six communities (three Colombian and three Peruvian) that would be guarding the four main nesting beaches of the area (two in Peru and two in Colombia). It was crucial to continue the activities and profit the momentum and impact expansion the project had reached.

However, due to the limited funds for 2013, it was impossible to continue monitoring activities. Therefore, an “absence of monitoring scenario” will be evaluated in 2013 season, in which experienced LCGs will receive a small incentive to visit the beaches at dawn and count poached nests and hunted females, while continuing gathering basic biologic information of the nesting season.

However, we expect that, on the basis of these results and joining efforts with international funds (such as Rufford Small Grants, MBZ, Turtle Conservation Fund and Turtle Survival Alliance, among others), governmental local and regional agencies and the tourism sector, we will give continuity and constantly growing impact of the project for several years at a time, and not in a year-by-year basis.

We have attracted the attention of several local and regional institutions about the importance of the programme, and these have expressed their will to support to the LCG for the 2013 phase. These include governmental institutions (Mayor House of Leticia, Amazonas Department Government, the Regional Environmental Agency Corpoamazonia and the Fire fighters Department of Leticia) and a private tourism company (Decameron Hotel). Informal meetings have been carried out and we are currently presenting them officially the project. We expect to gain enough economic support so that the three experienced LCGs start receiving an economic retribution for their work, so that conservation starts becoming an economic alternative for them. The new groups and the LCG in formation (Yahuma) will continue receiving collective and individual incentives for their work, while they gain enough training, experience and leadership.

**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 logo was placed with a link in the webpage of the project in Fundacion BioDiversa Colombia website as one of the funding institutions:

[http://www.fundacionbiodiversa.org/proyectos\\_tortugas\\_amazonas\\_eng.htm](http://www.fundacionbiodiversa.org/proyectos_tortugas_amazonas_eng.htm)

LCGs distributed an awareness-raising brochure to socialise their conservation work, with the logo of RSGF (see appendix) and in the individual and collective certificates given the local conservation groups.

In any further printed or audio visual material using media or information produced so far by the program, credit will be given to RSGF and scanned copied will be sent to the Foundation.

**11. Any other comments?**

In the name of the participating communities and of Fundacion Biodiversa Colombia, we would like to thank Rufford Small Grants Foundation as well as other funding institutions (MBZ Species Conservation Fund) for their invaluable and constant support to this conservation initiative.