

This is the first update from the project “An integral approach to the conservation of the endangered Chaco eagle in semiarid habitats of Argentina” (Rufford 1st Booster Grant 44634-B). During the months of October and November, we have carried out two fieldwork campaigns, one directed to Santa Fe province (northern Argentina) and the other to San Luis and Córdoba provinces (central Argentina), but all of them in the Great Chaco realm. During those visits, we have combined outreach talks, interviews at fields and ranches, exploration of potential territories due to citizen science sightings, survey of power lines and water reservoirs, and installation of camera traps at nests.

OUTREACH → We have carried out 12 environmental education talks at rural schools, reaching more than 300 alumni, and dozens of parents and teachers. Likewise, we have given four outreach talks at fields and local councils, reaching around 80 local producers, landowners, and veterinarians. We have also interviewed 16 rural workers at private ranches. “The seed that we planted is now growing”, meaning that little by little we are gathering important information on the Chaco eagle in these areas. So far, we have received a dozen of Chaco eagle sightings by the local community.

EXPLORATION OF TERRITORIES AND NEST MONITORING → We have found seven Chaco eagle active nests, four from other years of research (in Santa Fe province), and three of them being new for us. We have also installed the first camera trap at a new Chaco eagle nest in San Luis province, the other nests still being in incubation stage (thus, we cannot do anything yet).

CHACO EAGLE MORTALITY FACTORS → We have surveyed hundreds of kilometers of power line pylons, writing down which of them might be dangerous for the Chaco eagle and other birds. Sadly, we have found ten electrocuted individuals (two of them being Chaco eagles) belonging to eight bird species, in different places of the study area. Fortunately, we are already working with the EPE (Empresa Provincial de Energía – Provincial Energy Company) of Santa Fe province, in a new design that will be implemented from now on, on every new power line pylon made of concrete. This design is not dangerous, since cables pass under the crossarm. We are now willing to reproduce these efforts in the other provinces.

On the other hand, we have started monitoring water reservoirs, already finding drowned individuals on them. We have given the Environment and Fauna authorities of both San Luis and Córdoba provinces 20 rescue ramps (10 for each) to be installed in any field that they visit in the province, and we have ourselves installed five more in the northern part of San Luis province.

CHACO EAGLE LEGAL PROTECTION → Thanks to all our outreach efforts, Córdoba province is now working on a document to declare the Chaco eagle as a “Natural Monument”, a figure that gives the species a special protection status, as well as visibility. Besides, Tostado town (Santa Fe province) has been officially declared “The Town of the Chaco eagle” by the Chamber of Senators of the province. This is the first time, ever in Argentina, that a town or city is “nicknamed” honoring a bird species.