

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	Jaime Bolanos Jimenez
Project title	Educating educators on the knowledge and conservation of the marine habitat and species in 'Ocumare de la Costa de Oro'.
RSG reference	71.06.09
Reporting period	October 2009-September 2011
Amount of grant	£6000
Your email address	megapterax@yahoo.com
Date of this report	31 September 2011

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
Planning meetings with educators			X	We participated in planning meetings in high schools in Ocumare, Maracay City and also in regular meetings organized on a monthly basis by the Centre for Improving the Teaching of Science of the State Office of the Ministry of Education (CEFIE/ZEA/MPPE)
Lectures to educators and high school and university students			X	Our primary target was high school students and educators but we received many requests to include young professionals and university students so we expanded coverage of our activities. Attendance to these lectured was of 63 teachers, 222 pupils and 198 university students.
Writing and printing of educational materials			X	The printed educational material was distributed to participants in the activities.
Field trips with educators and pupils (educational expeditions)		X		A total of 664 pupils and 307 educators/university students participated in our educational expeditions.
Field research			X	We provided logistical support and tutorship to undergraduate students Ms. Graciela Castro and Mr. Leonardo Sifontes for conducting field surveys to study the abundance and distribution of dolphin populations in our study area during May-July 2009 (Ms Castro) and September-October, 2009 and August 2011 (Mr Sifontes). The protocol for these studies was setup as part of our field activities conducted during project RSG 08.07.07. Between October 2009-September 2011, teams of 3-4 observers spent 39 days at sea, studying the population aspects of Aragan cetaceans by using photo-identification techniques aboard small boats. Currently, more than 15.000 photographs are being processed by the research team. Many of them are photographs of dolphins that were first

				identified during project RSG 08.07.07. Ms. Graciela Castro presented her thesis and was granted her Degree as a Biologist by the Universidad de Carabobo. Mr. Sifontes successfully presented his thesis project to the Faculty of Sciences of the Universidad Central de Venezuela. All of us have agreed to publish together the results of this project in a scientific journal.
Sharing of results with others (participation in national and international conferences)			X	Our results and activities were shared with others in national and international meetings. Attendance to these meetings was of more than 640 people who learned about this RSG project. A wider audience learned about our project by means of TV specials broadcasted in Venezuela, France, Italy and Spain. It is also very important to mention that the Ministry of Education called team members Prof. Cristina Castillo and Gerson Macia to present the Educational Expeditions Program at the VI International Meeting of Educators who make Innovation from the School, held in the city of Cordoba, Argentina, from 17-22 July, 2011. http://redores.blogspot.com/2011/03/vi-encuentro-iberoamericano-de-docentes.html

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

We were short of achieving our goal in objective number five of taking 60 teachers and at least 1800 pupils to Ocumare de la Costa for participating in our educational expeditions. Nevertheless, I consider that this objective was accomplished at a 60-70%. The reason is that I failed to foresee that it was going to be very hard to get teachers from high schools in the rest of the State of Aragua to organise educational expeditions to our study area. The process for the teachers to get support from both the pupil's parents and high school authorities have not worked the way we would like, despite the endorsement by their regional authorities. Reasons for this include that both the teachers and pupils must get organised for paying for the transportation to our study area and for sharing the cost of hiring the boat, beverages and food for a full day. That has demonstrated to be a very difficult task as we work with high schools where most parents earn a low monthly income. By this reason I requested for an authorisation to extend the deadline for the release of the final report and for increasing the effort for field research.

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

3.1. Awareness considerations. An increasing number of educators, pupils, authorities, community leaders, entrepreneurs and fellow colleagues in the State of Aragua have helped us to setup strategic alliances that make us stronger in order to conserve and study our marine ecosystems. Now, more people is interested in participating in conservation activities and research projects on the status of mangrove forests, sea turtles, ichthyoplankton, fisheries and marine birds in our study area. Local educators more often design and implement conservation and sensitizing activities, working together with their students and the research team. Educational Expeditions, designed by the educators and the research team, are now a formal, academic activity in which students and teachers learn their subjects in the field, in outdoor classrooms, from an ecosystem approach.

3.2. Political considerations. A very important outcome of this RSG project has been the endorsement of our activities by the regional branches of the Ministries of Science/Technology and Education. Also important is consideration by authorities of the Biodiversity Branch of the Ministry of Environment to our proposal to declare Ocumare de la Costa as a pilot basin for implementation of the Strategy for Biological Diversity at a local level. We are convinced that these achievements have only been possible because we can present our proposals as a collective work, designed and implemented as a team that includes researchers, educators, community leaders, authorities and entrepreneurs.

3.3. Scientific considerations. For the first time in Venezuela, wildlife managers and local stakeholders count on scientific information of the population status of dolphin populations inhabiting this region and these results can be used for responsible management of economic activities, in compliance with the National Strategy for Conservation of Biological Diversity. Our photo-identification project has also provided us with valuable information on the residency pattern of dolphins and the prevalence of some dermal affections. We have also been able to help two undergraduate Biology students in fulfilment of academic tasks for their thesis.

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

In the final report of RSG 08.07.07 project, I mentioned that: *...“30 community leaders in Ocumare de la Costa de Oro, with support and advice from Sea Vida's team, solved intern challenges and finished a proposal for the project “Social Network of Innovative Production for Ecotourism, Ocumare de la Costa de Oro”. The proposal, previously agreed with the People's Ministry for Science and Technology (www.mct.gob.ve) and Fundacite Aragua (www.fundacite.arg.gob.ve), includes a grant of up to US\$ 90.000 for improving the Community capabilities for serving ecotourists. Sea Vida will provide in-kind support for this project, equivalent to approx. US\$ 110.000. This support will be in the form of supporting and conducting three research projects, four training seminars, and providing advice to members of the local network for responsible ecotourism and implementing an advertising campaign”*. At this moment, August 2011, Fundacite Aragua has just released the first grant for the start of the project. Members of this cooperative network, educators and other community leaders are working together for the design of a “community-based initiative for development of Ocumare de la Costa de Oro on the basis of the National Strategy for Biological Diversity”. Benefits for the local community come in the form of environmental awareness, scientific foundation and training in responsible ecotourism on the part of the research team.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, and we are optimistic we are in a stronger position. Recently, team members Auristela Villarroel and I were granted access to the “National Program for Improving Research and Innovation” (PEI Program), of the People's Ministry for Science and Technology (www.oncti.gob.ve). As such, we were called to present (and presented) separate proposals for the projects:

- Marine wildlife (birds, turtles and cetaceans) of the State of Aragua: local development on the basis of Ecotourism and the National Strategy for Biological Diversity, Project 1082 by Jaime Bolanos Jimenez and;
- Educational Expeditions in outdoor classroom: educating educators for conservation of marine biological diversity in the State of Aragua, Project 3904, by Auristela Villarroel (<http://conciencia.mcti.gob.ve/>).

Both proposals comply with important requirements as involvement of local community and strategic alliances with other stakeholders and governmental institutions that make us confident that both will be approved and funded. These proposals are the logic follow up of projects RSG 08.07.07 and 71.06.09 and were designed on the basis of sharing efforts with our local partners and supporters.

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

Each year, we present the result of our project and related activities in at least an international and two national scientific meetings. Besides, team members have participated in the I and II Venezuelan Conference on Biological Diversity, hosted by the People's Ministry of Environment and in the consultation process for the design of the National Strategy for Biological Diversity. Next November 21-25, in Margarita Island, Ms. Graciela Castro and I will be presenting one poster and three talks on the results of our RSG project at the IX Venezuelan Conference on Ecology. An additional talk will be presented in this conference at the Symposium on Clinical aspects for conservation of cetaceans and marine turtles, in which we will present the topic of dermal affections of dolphins detected in our photo-identification project. We will also be participating in the coming III Conference on Biological Diversity, called for May 2012 by the Ministry of Environment.

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

This grant was used over the period October 2009-August 2011. This is four months more than planned. The extended deadline helped us to redirect efforts to increase and improve the field research results.

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 ¹	Actual Amount ¹	Difference ¹	Comments
Per diem expenses for planning meetings in Maracay and Ocumare de la Costa	220	220		
Per diem expenses for lectures in Maracay and Ocumare de la Costa	160	160		
Per diem expenses for field trips (educational expeditions and research surveys)	3150	2237	913	Difference used for covering boat rental for the field survey
Boat rental	0	1050	-1050	
Equipment Nikon D3000 camera: £357, Subaquatic Panasonic camera: £186 Video beam EPSON: £366, Repairing of CANON Rebel Xti camera: £85 + 264),	1450	1258	192	Instead of buying an underwater camera (£1000) we preferred to buy Nikon and Panasonic cameras, respectively, and a video beam to be used during lectures and talks. Also, the Canon camera that we acquired as part of RSG 08.07.07 project required two repairs. The difference was used for covering the boat rental and printing of materials.
Printing of educational leaflet (£567+508)	1020	1075	-55	
Total	6000	6000		Exchanging rate = Bsf 7 per £

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

I think that important next steps include trying hard to accomplish more educational expeditions from Maracay city and the rest of the State of Aragua. By that reason, team member Auristela Villarroel presented her proposal (number 3904) to the Ministry of Science and Technology and it included funding to help teachers and students cover their travel expenses from their places to our study area. Also important are the efforts to keep our research effort going on to include other species and ecosystems and to expand the study area to the rest of the State of Aragua's coast. By that reason I presented my proposal (number 1082) to the MCTI. We will also be providing in kind support to the Social Network for Innovative Production in the form of research effort, training seminars and advice on their advertising campaign.

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?

Yes. It has been used in our power point presentations, posters and leaflets. I also requested for authorization to include it in our 2011 Calendar on the "Dolphin Eco-Route of the State of Aragua", and we are planning to use it in our 2012 calendar that will go to print very soon.

11. Any other comments?

- I would like to thank so much the authorization to extend the deadline for 4 months and for increasing the field research effort for photo-identification of dolphins.
- Link to a TV special in Italian TV Channel: <http://www.abruzzo24ore.tv/news/l-delfini-di-Ocumare-de-la-Costa/15848.htm>
- Link to a TV special in Spanish TVE Channel: <http://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/accion-directa/accion-directa-10-04-11/1069920/>
- Link to a press article: <http://www.elperiodiquito.com/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=9639>
- I will send additional attachments including photographic records, press articles and links to relevant information in separate files.