

## Final Project Evaluation Report

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Your Details	
Full Name	Pablo Gervasio Grilli
Project Title	Towards the Conservation of the Critically Endangered Copper-Lizard ( <i>Pristidactylus casuhatiensis</i> ) in Pampean Hills Of Argentina
Application ID	20133-2
Grant Amount	£4930
Email Address	pablogrilli@gmail.com
Date of this Report	28th September 2018

1. 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) Update distributional range of Copper-lizard.				<p>We carried out five campaigns to search for new populations in the Sierra de la Ventana System during the first season (2016-2017). Thanks to the designation of a ranger exclusively dedicated to working with this species, during the second season (2017-2018) 1540 man-hours of search for new populations were completed by applying Visual Encounter Survey. Four sites were surveyed for the first time; three sites were visited because of old records of the unconfirmed species; we repeated two sites (Cerro Ventana and Cerro Tres Picos) that have already been surveyed during the previous application.</p>
2) Increase knowledge related to natural history and population ecology.				<p>The populations search in Cerro Ventana and Cerro Tres Picos did not yield important results to contribute to the knowledge of the species. However, individuals were found at Cerro Napostá and a new population was discovered at Cerro Funke, where the juvenile of this species could be found and described for the first time. In addition to that, we found that this population has a completely different proportion of males/females to the most known population, Cerro Ventana's. We are working on an individual recognition system through photographs, since it</p>

				was discovered that the colouring pattern of the scales of the face and head is unique for each individual. We have also found that the species feeds on 11 species of arthropods and one mollusc ( <i>Plagiodontes patagonicus</i> , endemic species of the Sierra de la Ventana System). Also, we discover that copper-lizard uses open grassland spaces to move from one rocky outcrop to another.
3) Effect of main threats.				We have searched for American kestrel ( <i>Falco sparverius</i> ) nests at Cerro Ventana, using climbing techniques. We are currently working on a document that has been sent to local authorities and to IUCN.
4) Awareness raising.				We intensified the environmental education actions carried out by conservation agents (park rangers, local tourism guides, environmental educators, etc.) adapting the information we produce in the field to the needs of each message. In addition, the development of the field survey involved students of the National Arturo Jauretche University, Bachelor of Environmental Management.
5) Conservation Action Plan.				We have made progress in the Conservation Action Plan through the definition of a Biannual Operational Program (POB), which has official endorsement by governmental authorities. The POB represents an intermediate instance to the Conservation Action Plan. We are preparing and adapting it to all the information obtained in the permanent field work.
6) Capacity building.				Our training tasks allowed the technical training of a ranger,

				<p>exclusively assigned to the conservation tasks of the copper-lizard and its environment. This conservation agent is a local leader who has the authority and autonomy to efficiently perform their conservation, education, research and management tasks.</p>
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**2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.**

A fire affected the entire south of the mountain system again, making the field work very difficult. As a consequence, the main objectives were delayed and some of the information we needed in order to generate management actions could not be taken.

Given this situation, we decided to work during two reproductive seasons of the copper-lizard (2016-2017 and 2017-2018). Fortunately, during the second season we obtained a lot of information that had never been registered before for the species. However, we could not complete the final edition of some education and management products.

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

1. Capacity building (Objective 6): Our work laid the groundwork for convincing government authorities to designate a ranger who works exclusively in the conservation of this species. This agent of conservation is completely qualified to work in the field and to carry out all kinds of negotiations with the local and provincial government authorities. He has a special vehicle, with a salary and with the State budget for all these tasks.
2. Conservation Action Plan (Objective 5): The POB is the first part of a Conservation Action Plan adjusted to the conservation and management needs of the species.
3. Update distributional range of copper-lizard (Objective 1): We added three new sites for the current distribution known for the species. In two of them we found isolated individuals, but in the third site was discovered a population even more varied than Cerro Ventana's, the best known population until now.
4. Increase knowledge related to natural history and population ecology (Objective 2): During these two reproductive seasons of the species (2016-2017

and 2017-2018) we produced more information regarding the natural history of the species than all the knowledge existed until now. Part of this information was very important to get the government of the Province of Buenos Aires to declare this species as a Provincial Natural Monument by means of Law 14.969 in the year 2017. In addition to that, the species has been considered Emblem of the District of Tornquist through the Resolution 13 in the year 2018.

#### **4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project.**

Before implementing this project, the known populations of copper-lizard were located in two hills, one of which is within a Provincial Park (protected area). The discovery of individuals and a new population outside this provincial park offers management possibilities with the owners of the private fields, to integrate them into a conservation scheme that involves the State and the private sector. Thanks to this, the State of Buenos Aires province guaranteed the resources to promulgate the problem of the conservation of this species and its environment in different social areas of the towns Tornquist, Sierra de la Ventana and Villa Ventana. As a result, a growing portion of local population are aware of this threatened species.

See:

<http://argentinambiental.com/legislacion/buenos-aires/ley-14959-declaran-monumento-natural-la-iguana-cobre/>

[http://www.opds.gba.gov.ar/anp/iguana\\_de\\_cobre](http://www.opds.gba.gov.ar/anp/iguana_de_cobre)

<https://www.lanueva.com/nota/2018-6-17-6-30-24--por-que-la-iguana-de-cobre-se-convirtio-en-el-emblema-de-tornquist>

[http://www.unidospornaturaleza.org/biomas/assets/biomas4\\_herpeto.pdf](http://www.unidospornaturaleza.org/biomas/assets/biomas4_herpeto.pdf)

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

We will continue working so that the copper-lizard becomes the emblem of the Sierras de la Ventana. In this way we contribute to the conservation of mountain grasslands.

We are going to add other endemic species of these mountain system, such as the red-belly toad (*Melanophryniscus aff. Montevidiensis*), the listed culebra (*Lygophis elegantissimus*), the Ventana's gekko, and some emblematic species such as the puma (*Puma concolor*) and the guanaco (*Lama guanicoe*). Also we plan to add bird species that inhabit the area but are rare in the rest of the region, to highlight the importance of the Sierras de la Ventana as an island of biodiversity.

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

We spread the work through social networks that are already working and also through newspapers, scientific papers, meetings and congresses.

(<https://www.facebook.com/Monumento-Natural-Iguana-de-Cobre-1646397398748911/> and <https://www.facebook.com/Grupo-Casuhat%C3%AD-492827000891995/>)

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

The fund from the RSG was used through October 2016 to September 2018, making the most of all the resources contributed by the grant during two reproductive seasons of the copper-lizard.

**8. Budget: 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. It is important that you retain the management accounts and all paid invoices relating to the project for at least 2 years as these may be required for inspection at our discretion.**

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference
Field expenses (lodging and food)	1,320	1,960	(640)
Vehicle	800	1,100	(300)
Equipment	800	750	50
Posters and pamphlets	300	130	170
Educational campaign	1,290	790	500
Awareness raising (workshops)	150	250	(100)
Capacity building (training courses and material)	270	220	50
Total	4,930	5,200	(270)

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

1. Finish the Conservation Action Plan that we started with this work (starting with the POBs).
2. Look for copper-lizard populations in the north of Ventana´s Hills.
3. Involve stakeholders in the north.

4. Add other species with conservation problems by taking advantage of the roads we opened with the copper-lizard.

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

The GSR logo was used in the production of shopping bags that were distributed in the stores of Sierra de la Ventana, Villa Ventana and Tornquist (picture below).



**11. Please provide a full list of all the members of your team and briefly what was their role in the project.**

**Jorge Williams** is professor of herpetology at the University of La Plata and curator of the herpetology collection at the La Plata Museum. Prof. Williams is one of the main specialists in the systematics and conservation of amphibians and reptiles in Argentina. He advised our work with his experience.

**Patrick Gado** is a biologist and works in the Dirección de Áreas Naturales Protegidas of the Province of Buenos Aires. Patrick is a key member in both field and management work.

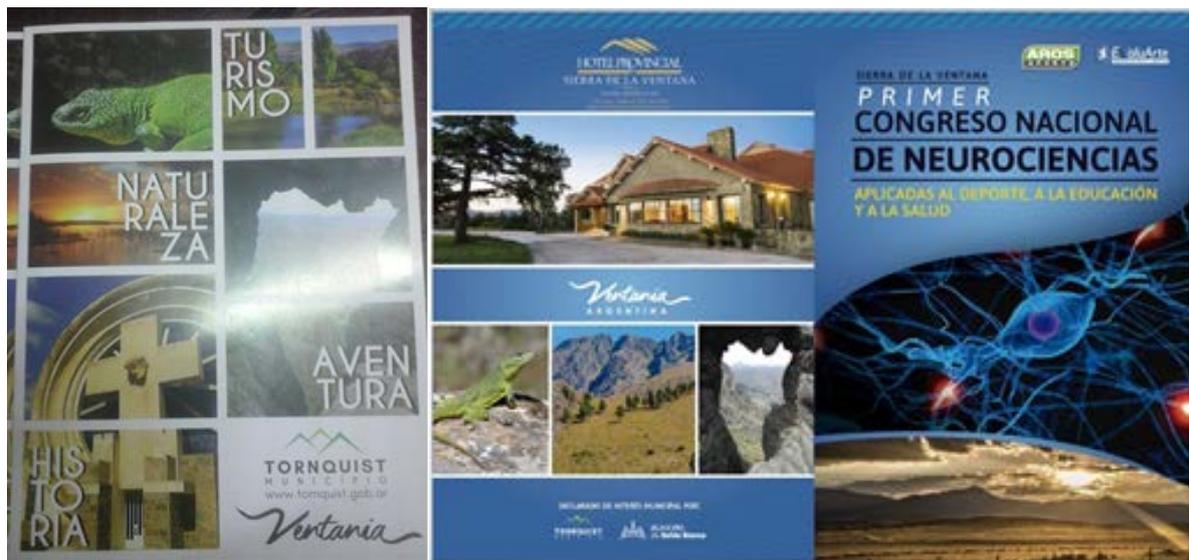
**Gabriela Brancatelli** is a young biologist and tourist guide, specialized in the Ventana's Hills. She lives in Ernesto Tornquist Provincial Park (ETPP). Gabriela collaborated strongly with the educational campaign outside of ETPP.

**Diego Di Pietro** is a young herpetologist. Diego has completed his doctoral thesis on reptiles from the Ventana's Hills and knows the area very well. He helped us coordinate field research activities.

All this work was possible thanks to the support of the park rangers who work with our team: **Daniel Novoa, Anibal Areco, Martín Belaunzarán, Paola Russo, Facundo Casalle Pintos** and **Rubén González**. Thanks to them we can work in the Protected Areas, and their knowledge and experience guarantee that the campaigns go well. Different university students from the National University Arturo Jauretche are part of our group, since the project works as a real field school.

## 12. Any other comments?

I just want to thank RSG again. Our work at Ventana's hill continues. Fortunately the Copper-lizard is becoming an emblem of the region (see below), and as a result the local community and tourists began to value the mountain pastures more. The next step is to add other natural conservation values to the area.



# Monumento Natural Iguana de Cobre