

The Rufford Foundation Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford 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	Melina Alicia Velasco
Project title	Conserving the threatened Laguna-Raimunda Frog (<i>Atelognathus reverberii</i>) at the Somuncura plateau, Argentina
RSG reference	20610-2
Reporting period	November 2016 - December 2017
Amount of grant	5,000
Your email address	mellazuli@hotmail.com
Date of this report	December 20 th

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
Objective 1. Find new populations				We reconfirmed the presence of extant populations and found three new local populations at three lagoons never explored in the past. This information was included in a report to local authorities and was sent to IUCN in order to update the current information related to this species in the Red List.
Objective 2. Effect of threats				We successfully completed surveys and gathered enough data to make a robust analysis related to the main variables affecting occupancy and detectability in this frog (including threats). We also took samples to assess the degree of infection of chytrid fungus in relation to these variables. We still are in the analysis step but we are confident that results will be available by the first months of 2018. After that, we plan to write at least two manuscripts and send them for revision to two peer-reviewed journals.
Objective 3. Monitor and maintain two artificial ponds				We successfully monitored two artificial ponds created in the frame of a previous RSG. After that, we successfully conducted searches of individuals during reproductive season aimed at testing the effectiveness of these ponds as better reproductive sites, by comparing with lagoons. However, these ponds become drought rapidly in a few months, thus, its usefulness depends on continue management. This information was sent for publication in Conservation Evidence Journal (currently under review).
Objective 4. Fence and improve key habitats for frogs.				We created and tested the usefulness of two kinds of management aimed at providing habitat of high quality for

				<p>frogs. In this frame, we created two pools surrounded by rocks (from the bank of the lagoon towards the water) and also created two quadrants fully of rocks (one of them fenced) that frogs use as shelter (from the bank of the lagoon towards the ground). We confirmed the second kind of management resulted in a habitat preferred by frogs. Results are being prepared for sending for publication to a peer-reviewed journal.</p>
Objective 5. Change current way of water acquisition by farmers to alleviate threats on frogs				<p>We engaged three local farmers who properties include lagoons with confirmed presence of this frog, and encouraged them to fence water pits for water consumption as a way to have water of better quality and impeding the entrance and die of frogs. We left them material for fencing and they agreed with our suggestions. Since they stay a short period in these properties, they fenced water pits during their stay, and when left, they fully covered the pits with dust, saving fencing materials for the next period.</p>
Objective 6. Awareness raising activities for Laguna-Raymunda Frog and Valcheta Frog				<p>We successfully conducted educational activities in the school of Chipauquil and spread outreach material related to Somuncura frog and Valcheta frog. We also conducted a workshop with stakeholders, and have continuously updated information on our Facebook web page.</p>
Objective 7. Writing a Conservation Action Plan for both frogs' species				<p>We conducted a workshop and several meetings with stakeholders from the Secretary of Protected Areas of Rio Negro and developed two Log Frames (one for Somuncura frog and one for Valcheta frog). Based on these log frames, we wrote Action Plans for both species and presented it to local authorities in order to promote its implementation.</p>

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

Regarding objective 2. Our main focus was put on assessing the effect of threats on the occupancy of frogs. Lamentably, the type and frequency of threats among lagoons were very homogeneous during surveys, thus, this objective could not be effectively tested. However, we successfully gathered enough data related to habitat variables that will be of key relevance to determine frogs' preferences. This information will be important to plan future management based on giving habitats of high quality to frogs. Regarding the swab samples to assess the degree of infection of chytrid fungus, we are delayed with respect to our planned timeline. We took the samples and sent it for analysis to a US laboratory, thus we still are in the analysis step. We expect to have the final results soon.

Regarding objective 3: we successfully maintained the artificial ponds created in the frame of our previous RSG. We observed that these ponds are effective as high quality habitats for frogs, but they become rapidly dry, thus, their usefulness depends on continue management. We expected some support by park rangers in this matter but they could not spend time for artificial ponds management, thus, these artificial habitats were dry during a great part of the year.

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

1. Scientific information gathered in the frame of this project allowed us to have a deeper insight related to the conservation status and the main requirements of this species in terms of habitat conditions. This information was used to make a re-assessment of the species at the IUCN Red List, to write a conservation action plan and to write scientific manuscripts (some of them already published in peer-reviewed journals).

2. We successfully tested the effectiveness of three kinds of management aimed at improving better habitat for frogs, including the creation of artificial ponds that provide not only high quality sites but also might be useful as a way to deal with a potential increase in drought in lagoons in the area caused by global warming. This information was included in the action plan for the species and was sent for publication at Conservation Evidence Journal (still under revision).

3. A key outcome of this project (including the first and second RSG) was the strengthening of the relationship between us and some stakeholders, mostly the local farmers and the people at the charge of the protected area (technicians and park rangers from the Secretary of Protected Areas of Río Negro Province). These relationships allowed us to get permits for freely access the entire area, and to apply several management approaches to improve the conservation of this species.

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

Through this project, we made strong relationships with the local community. We developed an educational campaign that included personal talks with farmers; creation and spread of outreach material and meetings at the local school of Chipauquil guided not only to students but also to teachers and local inhabitants. In the case of local farmers, they became benefitted with our suggestions (and with the material we left them to fence water pits) since besides stopping frogs dying, they obtain better water for consumption. In the case of the rest of the people, they benefitted through a deeper knowledge of the values of the area. Some people are starting their own eco-touristic activities, thus, the knowledge related to endemic species result in a useful tool for them.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. We plan to continue this work, and we are planning to make an application for a Booster Grant. Besides continuing to gather information for this species, we plan to find a sustainable way for artificial ponds in order to avoid management dependence. In this way, we are planning to create a perforation to access water of good quality and to install a system of solar panels associated to a water pump to ensure a continuous acquisition of water (stopping droughts). This management will also allow local people to get access to high quality water, reducing the necessity of creating water pits (reducing this threat for frogs). In future work, we also plan to include in the project another threatened amphibian, the Critically Endangered Valcheta Frog (*Pleurodema somuncurens*). During this project, we included this species in the educational activities, but now, we plan to start specific management to protect both species.

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

We have several ways to share results from this project. We send reports to local authorities and to RSG. We share information related to this project through personal talks, meetings, workshops and outreach material among the local community. Scientific results are presented at scientific congresses and are also sent for publication in peer-reviewed scientific journals. We also continuously update information on our Facebook page.

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

The RSG was used over a period of a bit more than a year (November 2016 - December 2017). This was almost as same as the length period anticipated for this project (we delayed an extra month in finishing the planned work).

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. 1 £ sterling = 4.44 Nuevo Sol

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Expenditure	Difference	Comments
Per diem expenses for local workers	400	400	0	
Lodging and food during fieldwork	1,200	1,600	400	We developed an extra campaign to get some extra data and complete some activities. We covered the difference with some money saved from the item "workshops".
Outreach material (design and edition of banners and booklets)	800	800	0	
Educational campaign	300	500	200	We developed an extra campaign to get some extra data and complete some activities. We covered the difference with some money saved from the item "workshops".
Fencing and improving key habitat for frogs	600	600	0	
Fence and cover water pits	400	400	0	
Workshops for Action Plans	1,300	700	-600	We save £600 since we developed the workshops at the beginning of the field trips. We used this saved money to cover extra expenditure on other items.

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

As we described below next steps should be focused on finding a sustainable way for artificial ponds in order to avoid management dependence. In this way, we are planning to create a perforation to access water of good quality and to install a system of solar panels associated to a water pump to ensure a continuous acquisition of water (stopping droughts). This management will also allow local people to get access to high quality water, reducing the necessity of creating water pits (reducing this threat for frogs). As part of next steps, we consider relevant to start specific management actions to protect another threatened amphibian in the area, the Critically Endangered Valcheta Frog (*Pleurodema somuncurense*).

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

Yes, we used the logo in a poster exhibited at the National Congress of Biodiversity Conservation. We also included Rufford Foundation in the acknowledgment's section of any paper related to this project.

11. Any other comments?

Yes, I want to thank Rufford Foundation for giving me the opportunity to develop this project during two consecutive years. Besides benefits for endangered species and the local community, these two grants allowed me to gain experience and skills in working with endangered species. I really appreciate the commitment of this organization by giving me the opportunity developing myself as a conservationist in my country.



