



03/12/14 OCC Uruguay

Organización para la Conservación de Cetáceos – Uruguayan Cetacean Conservation Organization  
[info@ballenafranca.org](mailto:info@ballenafranca.org) - [www.occ.org.uy](http://www.occ.org.uy)

**REPORT PROJECT  
CETACEAN SIGHTING NETWORK and habitat conservation of Southern Right  
Whale. Uruguay  
RSG Ref: 23.05.07**

**Rufford Small Grant  
(for Nature Conservation)**

**Name of Applicant**

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**Executive Summary**

The *Right Whale Project* has been working since 1995, achieving important goals in conservation, environmental education and the implementation of marine policies. Since 1999 the *Organización para la Conservación de Cetáceos (OCC)*, is dedicated to revalorize the whale resource showing the beneficial relationship between human communities and sustainable economic development with high quality whale watching.

A focus for OCC's work is the promotion of locally public awareness of southern right whale and their critical habitat by means of the *Sighting Network*, to prevent several impacts and increase social participation of the community in coastal resources management and collating reports on whale occurrence. The whales can provide us an ecological monitor for the health of marine environment and increasing funding ours Marine Protected Areas-MPAs.

**Among conservation strategies promoted by OCC-Uruguay we wish to highlight:**

- Sustainable and Responsible Tourism' campaign (2000-2008) as a framework for the Integrated Coastal-marine Management, sustainable development and the improvement of the quality of life of coastal communities;



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- Implementation of Rules and Regulations for Cetacean Observation (Decree 261/02);
- Creation of nine whale watching platforms along the coast (2002);
- Capacity-building courses in partnerships with the government regarding “*high-quality whale watching*” (2002-2007) and organization of eight ‘Whale Week’ events - “Semana de la Ballena Franca” (2001-2008);
- Adoption by Uruguayan Congress of the ‘National Southern Right Whale Protection Day’ (2002);
- The campaign for Uruguayan return to the IWC (2004-2007);
- Support for the proposal of a South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary.

### **OCC Work’s Objectives**

The Right Whale Project has revealed since 1995 that southern right whale *Eubalaena sp.* uses the habitat most of all as a breeding ground (82%, n=133 of observed individuals<sup>1</sup>). As the number of whales seen in our coasts has increased, there is considerable public interest and no intentional threats; we are urgently seeking to educate people in order to know and protect whales. Because the status population of southern right whale is still considerate “*depending of conservation*”<sup>2</sup>, it is also important to prevent whale’s threats, both direct such as sound pollution, fish entanglement and ship collisions and; indirect threats such as chemical pollution (from the industry, harbors). Further, whales, as “flagship” species, can be a tool for raising awareness about the role of marine protected areas in conservation initiatives<sup>3</sup>.

Based on the preliminary investigation, OCC proposed to the Ministry of Environment the creation of coastal Right Whale Marine Protected Areas-MPA’s that is currently under way. As a result, the national government has agreed to implement a specific regulation on whale watching (law decree 261/02) and the Ministry of Tourism, with the advice of OCC, is encouraging land-based whale watching from nine observation towers along the coast. Further, the Parliament approved by law the National Day for Southern Right Whale Protection, celebrated by more than 3000 children’s and in consequence created a law-project called “Guardians of the Marine Bay” (2002).

Later other localities will be included in presentations and workshops (Maldonado-Punta del este-José Ignacio, La Paloma-La Pedrera, Cabo Polonio-Valizas-Aguas Dulces, Punta del Diablo-Santa Teresa) to conform a first step of the *Sighting Network Group* along the coast (1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> month). After this first stage of training to collate reports on whale occurrence and inform about the threats detected; we increase the level of the information to adopt precautionary approaches for the MPA management inside all localities described before.

At last, we must generate a Report that will include the complete process, discussions, proposals, goals, results and recommendations form the communities addressed to government authorities and the public in general.



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### **Sighting Network Group OCC team 2008**

The OCC team this year by the support of RSG was conformed by multidisciplinary profiles: 3 educators, 2 biologists, 1 sociologists and 12 volunteers.

Specially seven communities was involved in this project this year 2008: Piriápolis, Punta del Este, La Paloma, Aguas Dulces, Cabo Polonio, Barra de Valizas, La Coronilla. In this places the media press (multiTV 8 La Paloma, TV 7 Punta del Este, TV 9 ciudad de Rocha; 1560 radio Maldonado and several national and local newspapers) increase public awareness and information about their natural and charismatic resource. An example includes special spaces to inform the sightings, such as multiTV 8 La Paloma, TV 7 Punta del Este, 1560 radio Maldonado, in order to let people know where the whales occur. On the website more people contribute by e-mail with their cetacean observations.

At national level working together with NGOs involved in conservation of marine mammals, foundations which work along the coast with artisan fishermen's (AVINA), the Fishing Club Punta del este, with Live Guards Association (save life's) and sports fishermen's collaborating on sighting from coast. The project was declared of governmental interest by three ministries (Environment, Tourism and Education and Culture) and had the support of the Marine Army for marine policies and regulations. Specially with the Naval Marine AirForce who contribute to sightings and made two coast flights to find and photograph the callosities of whales to fotoidentified them FOTO-ID (32 whales was sighted).

At regional level we integrated a global Network for conservation of cetaceans in Latin-American with emphasis on MPAs (Red Cetaceos).

### **Results and Products**

**Eight (8) talks, workshops and fees in Maldonado and Rocha States:** participation of 155 local people. Official support of: Culture House of the Maldonado State Government (Casa de la Cultura IMM), Institute for Secondary Teaching (Instituto de Formación Docente de Secundaria), Tourism Ministry, Environment Ministry, UNESCO-Montevideo.



Left to right: Gubernamental authorities of Tourism Ministry, National Tourism Director, Superior Departamental Intendancy of Rocha and Maldonado; Talks and local workshops in Rocha and La Pedrera.



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Workshop on Punta del Diablo and La Coronilla.



On Piriápolis with the participation of a Tourism Ministry representant.

Below: with the whale watchers and naval authorities, to training about sighting and whales.

Exhibiting the POSTER in more than 180 public and private places (hotels, restaurants, information centers, bus stations).



The front view of the Marine Interpretative Centre, OCC headquarter and local public of talks, workshop and information of the whales presence.



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Printing: 1000 (one thousand).

Localities: Piriápolis, Punta del Este, La Paloma, Aguas Dulces, Cabo Polonio, Barra de Valizas, La Coronilla.

### Printing educational pamphlets



Printing: 6000 (six thousands).



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**Sighting Network Group:** 15 integrants (3 local coordinators).  
International volunteers: 4 (from Argentina, Brazil and Colombia).



With the flag identification of the Sighting network in the beach of Maldonado, Punta del Este, 4 integrants obtain data about the presence of southern right whale.



The General Coordinator in La Paloma.



In La Paloma sight point two volunteers sighting whales. The last picture was a Colombian volunteer.



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1: In the Barra de Valizas sight point, called “Punta del Diablo de Valizas” with workshop participants.

2: Working together a Brazilian team sighting, reinforcing regional methodologies.



Two international volunteers from Brazil and Argentina, working two months from landbased platforms.



Working together Brazilian Team.



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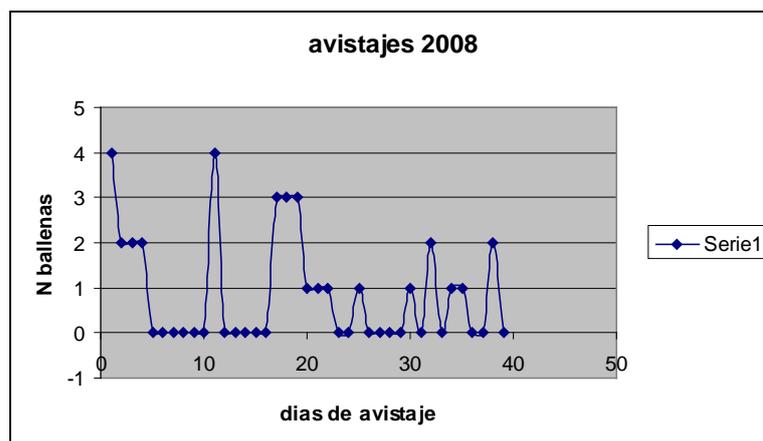
Exhibiting the POSTER in more than 180 public and private places (hotels, restaurants, information centers, bus stations).

Whale sightings put into the web for more than 250 volunteers that see the POSTER with the email.

The people inform us several times boat perturbation to whales and we called to the authorities, bring information to 50 schools, 15 Secondary Institutions, 4 Naval Army coastal headquarters.



Collecting data of number and whales behaviours by the volunteers.



Graphic that show number presence of whales and days of sightings in one point sighting LA PALOMA.



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**Google Alert has searched the entire web and found the following [new results](#):**

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<http://www.occ.org.uy/> - Rank 28 - [cached](#)

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**DVD of flight and educational issue:** a video made with images of the flight and photographs about the Sighting Network, was done to authorities, institutions, colaborators and others. This video was show on local poublic TV.



With the Naval Marine AirForce and Brazilian team from the International Wildlife Coalition, who contribute to sightings and made two coast flights to find whales to fotoidentified and finding in the areas to sight.



Cabo Polonio: view from one of the most amazing communnities who made the Sighting Network.



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<b>BUDGET REQUESTED</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>PROGRAM Sighting Network</b>	
<b>MATERIALS</b>	
1. Printing educational pamphlets (6000)	400
2. DVD of flight and educational issue	150
3. Posters 20 x 50 cm (1000)	160
4. Pullovers identify members (10)	200
5. Print Report	170
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
6. General Coordinator (1)-	1800
7. Assistant (1)-	400
8. Educators (2)-	640
9. Designer (1)- materials (5)	300
10. Web master (1)	150
<b>TRANSPORT</b>	
11. Bus- (58) 25 x 12	300
12. Others (cellular telephones x 3 each zone, administrative costs)	330
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£ 5000</b>

Thanking you for your kind attention we wish to extend our best wishes, and for more information and pictures we are available

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<sup>1</sup> Published on a 9<sup>a</sup> REUNION DE TRABAJO DE ESPECIALISTAS EN MAMÍFEROS ACUÁTICOS DE AMÉRICA DEL SUR; 3<sup>a</sup> SOLAMAC, Buenos Aires, Octubre, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> IUCN 1998

<sup>3</sup> Augustowski and Palazzo, 2003.