

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. 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. 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	Martin Julio Monteverde
Project title	The huiña: conservation and ecology of a threatened endemic cat of Patagonian forest - ARGENTINA
RSG reference	29.08.07
Reporting period	February 2008 to April 2009
Amount of grant	£4700.-
Your email address	martinmonteverde@gmail.com
Date of this report	July 2009

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
Identify main conservation needs		X		We verified some threats as the potential negative interaction with culpeo foxes (intraguild interactions) and the sympatry with domestic animals. However, we need to study more about huiñas ecology to detect more threats.
Provide substantial ecological baseline data		X		We could establish some relationships between the huiña cat and the rest of the carnivore assemblage, but we still need to explore more about huiña spatial ecology and habitat use.
Health status in Lanín National Park		X		As we didn't capture any huiña during the study, we couldn't evaluate the health status of this species in the park. However we could make the necropsies of a huiña killed in this park for a settler and another from a nearby National Park, so we were able to achieve some information about this issue.
Upgrade plans and actions that are carried out inside the Park			X	As we were able to take the first record of a huiña cat alive in the Lanín National Park, authorities are now more aware of the huiña situation and are working in updating plans.
Education activities			X	This was one of the best parts of the study because we could carried out several presentations and workshops in order to share information about this feline with the community and parkrangers
Human activities-carnivore interaction consequences		X		Interaction between domestic animals and huiñas, gave us an idea of a negative interaction between human activities and native carnivores. And this is a major problem for us to solve and considered in the new plans.
Analysis of faeces			X	All the scats collected in the field were analyzed in the laboratory in order to estimate food habits of carnivores. All of the scats collected were of culpeo foxes.
Camera-trapping			X	Because of some problems to bring the cameras from de USA, we began with the camera trapping in October 2008

				and it is still ongoing.
Live-trapping		X		We live trapped for 4 weeks (distributed in two months) during summer 2008/2009 with the collaboration of two veterinarians.

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

In general, there were not major difficulties once the project began. However, one of the main difficulties that we had was the huge delay (approximately five months) between the moment we effectively bought the 15 cameras with the solar panels and their arrival to Argentina. We had several problems with the seller in the United States and some others with our Customs because we had to demonstrate that these items would be used for scientific purposes in order not to pay extra taxes.

By the time the cameras arrived, the other issue we had to face was the bad weather conditions in the study area. The cameras arrived at the beginning of winter when it is almost impossible to access to the area, delaying the beginning of the study even more.

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

- The most important outcome of this project was, without doubt, the obtaining of the first record of a live Huiña cat in the Lanín National Park. A regional newspaper and some local radios informed about this finding.
- One of our objectives was to encourage general interest in this cat and to generate greater awareness of conservation for local people, and I think we made it. Regional community is now talking about this cat and the project. They now know that this cat exists and needs protection. Huiña conservation issues are now part of our whole community not only of the scientific community.
- The Huiña recorded in our study alerted the authorities of other parks where huiña is also present, as Nahuel Huapi (Rio Negro province) and Los Alerces (Chubut province) National Parks. We generated a notable increase in the interest of the people involved in the conservation decisions in these parks. The enhancement in huiña awareness is very beneficial since it increases the probabilities of continuing working to assure the survival of this species. Other important outcome is our new relation with our Chilean colleagues that are working with huiña. This relationship could facilitate the development and application of bi-national conservation strategies.

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

Since the beginning of the past century, much exotic wildlife has been introduced in this part of Patagonia. These fauna have become part of important economic incomes of the region and people begging to lose the conscience of the real and true value of our native wildlife. In consequence, many native species are not being valued in any aspect as it is the case of the huiña. Moreover and regrettably, some of the rural people that cohabit with this cat consider it as a harmful and worthless animal due to the predation of their domestic poultry. I believe that our project is a good

opportunity to banish certain negative and groundless perception about the huiña. We think that the educational activities we carried out encouraged general interest in this cat, involved people in its conservation and produced a long lasting change in the local community in terms of conservations awareness. As an example, a local settler on the Park offered voluntarily to help us with the project and he is now in charge of feeding and checking the poultry used as live bait.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, this project will continue. Huiña cat is an extremely difficult animal to study so more effort is needed to deal with this challenge. Moreover, there is an ongoing bi-national project with Chileans colleges to study genetics and phylogeny of huiña and Geoffrey’s cats in both countries and we are working in some other ideas.

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

The information obtained, was shared through progress reports to all the members and technicians from all the institutions involved as Lanín National Park, NGO Conservacion Patagonica, and the Centre of Applied Ecology of Neuquén province. Educational brochures and posters of huiña status and conservation needs will be distributed in a short time, all over the area inside the three Parks and in the nearby towns. We are going to continue with workshops in schools and with local people. Finally, we will try to publish an article in a scientific magazine in order to share the data with the scientific community and to set preliminary data about huiña status and main threats in Lanín National Park to help to delineate possible futures research projects. Finally, as most of the information with which the IUCN-Cat Specialist Group counts is from Chilean studies, we will also share the data with this institution in order to update the Huiña Action Plan by increasing the Argentinean knowledge contribution.

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

RSG was used from February 2008 up to April 2009. However, all the equipment that we could acquire thanks to the generous help of RSGF, would be use in this project during the following years.

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	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
15 Moultrie M40 Digital Trail Camera Scout Cam + 15 Solar Power panels 12v + 30 1GB SD memory cards (www.huntbuzz.com)	£1750	£2424.5	- £674.5	We also bought 90 rechargeable “D” batteries and two battery-chargers for them.
Digital camera	£200	£206.3	- £6.3	Sony DSC-H7 (15x optical zoom and 8.1 megapixels) with a memory card of 4GB

Odour scents, attractants and baits	£350	£250	+ £100	All the baits were bought in Argentina (chicken, meat, etc) and almost all the specific scents and attractants were bought in Montana (USA) with the advice of its Fish, Wildlife and Parks Agency.
Maintenance of the used small field truck	£650	£500	+ £150	
Fuel	£550	£550	£0	
Volunteers and team food and accommodation	£250	£150	+ £100	
Educational brochures and workshops	£300	£300	£0	This money was used to design and to print brochures and posters that are going to be distributed in Lanín, Nahuel Huapi and Los Alerces National Parks and cities that surround them. Also, we organized two workshops.
Infectious Disease Serology	£650	£250	+ £400	As we didn't capture a huiña during the study, we used part this money to buy some materials to carry out two necropsies of huiñas.
TOTAL	£4700	£4630.8	+ £69.2	

We finally received the grant the 02nd of February 2008, which was \$29.068,04 Argentinean pesos (with all the bank discounts and commissions). The local exchange rate used was approximately **£1 - \$6.23**

The positive credit of the total budget (+ £69.2) was used in two other items of the project:

1. **Workshop with Chilean colleagues:** We organized an International Workshop with three Chilean colleagues (Constanza Napolitano, Nicolás Gálvez and Felipe Hernández) who are also working with this species in Chile. The workshop was carried out in National Parks Headquarters in San Martín de los Andes city on 6th November 2008. The main objective of this event was to update all the research that is being held with this endangered cat in both countries, to share information and to coordinate possible bi-national actions.
2. **Construction of a henhouse.** In order to have "live attractants" for the huiña, as we already know its preference for poultry built a hen house. We expect to have better pictures of this cat and to enhance our probability of capture.

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

I think it is very important to continue with huiña studies over the time. Queñi is an area that possesses excellent biological qualities as a critical conservation area for huiñas. Start thinking in a cooperative conservation effort between Chile and Argentina will be also crucial for the conservation of the huiña cat.

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?

The RSGF logo was used when designing a pamphlet and a poster with general information about ecology, conservation and special facts of this feline. It was also used during informative presentations that we carried out. In these presentations we focused our attention in students, park rangers and general community. We gave presentations in high schools and in two nearby cities because of the “Native Forest Day”. Additionally, RSGF was also mentioned every time that the ongoing project came through.

11. Any other comments?

I would like to thanks RSGF on behalf of all the wild huiñas trying to survive and our team!