

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Juan Sebastian Ayala
Project Title	Building capacity for community-based conservation of the Eastern Pacific Leatherback in Colombia
Application ID	29025-1
Grant Amount	£5,500
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Date of this Report	25 April 2021

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
Evaluate leatherback nesting activities				We evaluated the beaches of Bahía Solano and Jurubirá in search of leatherback nesting records, and we found no records of this species. However, we found records of olive ridley on the beaches of Bahía Solano. Importantly, this goal had some complications due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and social distancing.
Provide technical training to local community for better monitoring and conservation of endangered marine turtle species				We trained more than 40 members of local communities in Bahía Solano, Nuquí, and Jurubirá in monitoring and conservation of endangered marine turtle species. Now they have the knowledge and tools to monitor sea turtle nesting beaches.
promote ecotourism programs				We establish the foundations for the marine turtle volunteer programme in Bahía Solano. The local community also offers guided tours for the sighting of turtle nesting and the release of hatchlings. We also created a virtual store to provide local products and representative t-shirts of the region. As a complementary aspect, we developed a campaign on social networks that consists of videos alluding to the region and its diversity, the nesting process of sea turtles, and the release of hatchlings.

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

Because of COVID-19, we had problems with the change of air tickets, with travel permits to the monitoring sites, and the number of times we wanted to go to the field. However, we established constant communication with the local community through virtual media and carried out the main proposed activities. Additionally, we contribute to creating the virtual store, the volunteer programme, and tourism plans for the sighting of those who can attract visitors to the area when the contingency of the pandemic is over. In the same way, we travel to the field following the

recommendations of the regional and national authorities and carry out the planned activities.

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

- We trained more than 40 members of local communities in Bahía Solano, Nuquí, and Jurubirá in monitoring and conservation of endangered marine turtle species. Now they have the knowledge and tools for monitoring sea turtle nesting beaches and are interested in continuing with these processes. Some fishermen in the area told us that there are other species of sea turtles of interest and that they are associated with the coral reefs of the Utría National Natural Park. The fishermen also stated that they would like to contribute to the rescue and release of sea turtles that tend to get caught in their fishing gear (bycatch).
- We awaken the interest of local communities in sea turtle conservation efforts. This aspect is important because these species have suffered consumption pressures, both for their eggs and the meat of adults. However, local communities now perceive sea turtles as essential species for conservation, which can attract sustainable sources of income such as tourism.
- We developed a campaign on social networks to raise awareness of conservation towards sea turtles with little known images of the nesting process and the conservation processes in the areas visited. This result helps to improve the knowledge of people outside these biodiverse territories and can increase tourism in these sectors by supporting the local economy.

4. What do you consider to be the most significant achievement of this work?

The most outstanding achievement of this project is to link local communities to the conservation of sea turtles. They are the key actors in conservation. If they are interested, scientists can carry out joint actions that contribute to preserving endangered species and improving the living conditions of local communities, which in most cases lack sustainable economic alternatives.

5. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefited from the project.

Local communities participated in workshops and training related to sea turtle conservation. Now they have better technical knowledge, which they can use in tourism plans related to sea turtles.

Through the virtual store, they will be able to sell products related to the region, and they will be able to count on a volunteer programme to work for the protection of sea turtles. Similarly, with the campaign on social networks, the local community became known, and this can attract tourists interested in plans to see sea turtles.

6. Are there any plans to continue this work?

The idea is to continue the work with the current local communities and to be able to link new members such as fishers. In this way, we will in-water monitor to evaluate sea turtle populations such as hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) in the region and continue monitoring the work of nesting beaches of olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*).

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

The results of this project will be shared with the scientific community at the international symposium on sea turtles that will be held in Colombia in early 2022. Additionally, we already share part of the results in a campaign on social networks aimed at the general public.

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

We used this grant between February 2020 and April 2021. We had significant changes compared to the planned 10-month execution period. These changes by pandemic events caused new activities that the supervisors approved for this grant.

9. 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	Comments
Supplies	£1250	£1150	-£100	We took £100 for changes
Travel (flights and terrestrial)	£2100	£1150	-£950	We took £650 for changes and 300 for administrative costs
Lodging and meals	£1350	£800	-£550	We took £300 for changes and £ 250 for administrative costs
Capacity training at local communities	£600	£600		
Printing manuals and materials	£200	£200		
Administrative costs		£550	+£550	CIMAD charges 12% for regular grants. For this grant, CIMAD set 10%
Changes for COVID-19 (approved)		£1050	+£1050	
Total	5500	5500		

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

We want to continue promoting the monitoring of nesting beaches by local communities and involve fishers in conservation efforts to train them in techniques for the rescue and release of sea turtles' victims of bycatch. Similarly, we want to monitor coral reefs to evaluate sea turtles in foraging grounds.

11. 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?

Yes. As part of the social media campaign, we used The Rufford Foundation logo to produce the videos (3).

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CNBVnptDbQW/>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CNYkRIAj1Um/>

https://www.instagram.com/p/CNagxQXj_Ro/

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

Juan Sebastian Ayala - Project Leader: In charge of supervising all project activities, coordinating the logistics of field activities, giving theoretical and practical training on the conservation and management of sea turtles, analyze data and produced the project reports.

Mauro Andres Valencia - He was in charge of the photography, recorded each activity in the field trips with the local communities through photographs, videos, audios, and interviews.

Later, he was in charge of the post-production of three audiovisual pieces with the material collected in Bahía Solano for dissemination on social networks. He also developed the website (www.juantortugas.com) to coordinate volunteering and the online shop.

13. Any other comments?

Despite changes in logistics and project activities due to COVID-19, the project was carried out and engaged local communities in linking a project to conserve sea turtles while simultaneously promote sustainable economic activities.