

## Final Evaluation Report

We ask all grant recipients to complete a project evaluation that helps us to gauge the success of your project. This must be sent in **MS Word and not PDF 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 – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

**Please DO NOT fill in and submit this form until the project has been completed.**

Complete the form in English. Note that the information may be edited before posting on our website.

Please email this report to [jane@rufford.org](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Your Details	
<b>Full Name</b>	Julia Paulucci
<b>Project Title</b>	Impact of anthropic and environmental variables on ecology and conservation of carnivores in the recently created Ansenuza National Park, Argentina.
<b>Application ID</b>	37871-1
<b>Date of this Report</b>	October, 2025

**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
<p>Identify anthropic factors that determine the structure of carnivore assemblage, in areas with different human impacts and protection levels.</p>		<p>≈50%</p>		<p>Fieldwork and the initial analyses are completed.</p> <p>In total, 63 sites were surveyed. Camera traps were installed across both protected and unprotected areas and in different types of environments, including grassland, shrubland, saline shrubland, open forests, and closed forests.</p> <p>For the survey I used camera traps purchased with Rufford support, complemented with 15 additional camera traps borrowed from the institute. The cameras were rotated among sites in order to complete sampling at the 63 stations.</p> <p>Preliminary observations between protected and unprotected areas do not suggest strong differences so far: one of the protected areas was recently created and the other still has limited management implementation.</p> <p>I placed the camera trap stations/sites to cover a degree of anthropic situations (protected and non-protected areas, different distance to human settlements, different livestock load, deforestation). Moreover, I</p>

				<p>detected sites with more presence of hunters and domestic dogs that will be included in the analyses. I will conduct generalized linear models to identify which of these factors affect carnivore assemblage.</p>
<p>Evaluate species richness, diversity, and activity patterns of carnivores using camera-trap data.</p>		≈60%		<p>Successful camera trap deployment resulted in photographic records of target species and in records of the time of the day when they are active. All photographs obtained from the camera traps were classified and the species were identified.</p> <p>Analyses of different diversity index are currently ongoing. The analysis of activity patterns has already been completed for six species.</p>
<p>Create a georeferenced database of key carnivore records</p>			100%	<p>Database structured and georeferenced of species with the most conservation value.</p>
<p>Provide science-based recommendations for management planning in Ansenuza National Park.</p>		≈40%		<p>Initial findings were communicated to Ansenuza National Park and Ministry of Environment of Córdoba, by technical report; full technical recommendations will be shared after data analysis and modelling.</p>
<p>Collaborations and share results with local authorities, NGOs, and conservation networks.</p>		≈50%		<p>Successful collaboration was established with Aves Argentinas, Ansenuza National Park, and the Ministry of Environment of Córdoba. I worked with technicians and authorities from Ansenuza National Park directly to contribute baseline information on mammal biodiversity that can support the management of this recently created protected</p>

			<p>area. The collaboration with Aves Argentinas was pivotal for the development of the project in the region, helping promote the project locally, supporting some unexpected field expenses, and facilitating contact with local actors.</p> <p>We continue collaborating with this institution on new projects for mammal's conservation in the region.</p>
Examine the impact of human activities on species interactions and temporal patterns.		Yes	<p>This objective will be part of a bigger objective at regional level, when I complete the information of all the study sites, the data of Ansenzuza NP will be highly valuable to comparative analysis.</p>

**2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.**

**A. Baseline assessment of mammal and carnivore diversity in Ansenzuza.**

This project was the most extensive and systematic camera-trap surveys conducted in the northern area of Ansenzuza National Park and buffers areas. Covering over 140,000 hectares, it documented 18 native mammal species—including eight carnivores, two of which (*Leopardus colocolo* and *Chrysocyon brachyurus*) are nationally Vulnerable and provincially Endangered. The scale and focus of this survey provide spatially detailed information that strengthens previous biodiversity studies in the region. The results will directly use in the Ansenzuza National Park management plan.

**B. Identification of human and exotic species influence on native fauna.**

The study documented the presence of nine exotic species (seven domestic and two wild, *Sus scrofa* and *Lepus europaeus*), as well as direct evidence of hunting activities. These findings reveal the extent of human pressure on local wildlife and emphasize the need to integrate species management and community engagement strategies into protected areas operations.

**C. Generation of an ecological dataset with long-term value.**

Although focused on carnivores, the camera-trap methodology provided detailed information on the terrestrial medium and large mammal community,

including relative abundance, activity patterns, and habitat use across different environments and protection levels. This extensive dataset will serve for future spatial and temporal analyses of species prey of carnivores, exotic species, among others, allowing comparison across years and contributing to regional-scale studies on the conservation of Chaco mammals.

### **3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.**

The project faced major challenges due to the national political and economic situation in Argentina. Severe budget cuts and the lack of regulation for importing scientific equipment caused significant delays in the purchase and replacement of camera traps. These restrictions, together with the general defunding of conservation and research programs, affected the planned fieldwork schedule. To overcome these difficulties, the team optimized available resources, strengthened collaborations with national parks and NGOs, and relied on equipment temporarily provided by partner institutions, allowing the project to continue and complete the sampling objectives despite these constraints.

In the field, the challenges were from the need to obtain prior authorization from multiple landowners. In some cases, access was denied due to mistrust, which was fully respected. However, most landowners showed great disposition to collaborate. These difficulties were overcome through local networking with partner institutions already working in the area and through community connections, where residents themselves recommended and facilitated new contacts, allowing the fieldwork to proceed successfully.

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

Local communities and institutions were actively involved throughout the project. Regular communication was maintained with staff from *Parque Nacional Ansenúza*, the *Ministerio de Ambiente de Córdoba*, and NGOs. I realized a training and update workshop to share preliminary results and strengthen collaboration. In rural areas, I visited a rural school to promote awareness about native mammals and local biodiversity. Building trust with landowners also facilitated field access and knowledge exchange. The project remains in close contact with local institutions and actors, and I was invited to contribute to the development of the *Ansenúza National Park Management Plan*, ensuring that the results directly inform conservation decisions in the region.

The field campaigns required the participation of several people, including two technicians from our institution, park rangers, and colleagues who assisted with field logistics during camera trap installation and maintenance. In addition, the project

involved three volunteer students from the National University of Córdoba, as well as early-career biologists and park rangers, mainly during the process of classifying the large number of camera trap images obtained. Participants received training on species identification and on the use of different software tools used to manage and classify camera trap photographs. Initially, the classification process followed the traditional workflow, using manual programs to add metadata and organize the images. More recently, the project incorporated artificial intelligence tools, which significantly improved the efficiency of the annotation process. I organized workshops to train students and collaborators in the use of these emerging tools. As a result, volunteers not only contributed to the project but also gained practical skills in species identification and in the use of modern tools for camera trap data processing.

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

The intention is to continue research in the chaco region of Argentina, include the region of Ansenusa, through a future postdoctoral project, deepening the study of human impact and carnivore ecology. In addition, repeating the camera-trap surveys in the same sites in a few years will be key to allow temporal comparisons, which would provide valuable information on population trends and habitat changes.

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

Results have already been shared locally through an update workshop with *Parque Nacional Ansenusa, Ministerio de Ambiente de Córdoba, Natura Argentina, Aves Argentinas* and other regional actors, and through technical reports. From now on, results will continue to be shared through collaboration with local institutions, scientific publications, and any new opportunities or conservation initiatives that arise in the region. The information of my entire project is shared through *CeIBA – Proyecto Carnívoros Chaqueños* webpage (<https://ceiba.org.ar/proyectos/proyecto-carnivoros-chaquenos/>) and the social media channels of the IDEA-CONICET institute.

Links shared on Instagram (also published on facebook with the same information):

- Instagram of IDEA (CONICET/UNC)  
[www.instagram.com/reel/CwIOrc6Nfsr/?igsh=MWh4MmJtOTJwajRz](https://www.instagram.com/reel/CwIOrc6Nfsr/?igsh=MWh4MmJtOTJwajRz)
- Instagram of IDEA (CONICET/UNC)  
[www.instagram.com/p/CvvFI4LPpM4/?img\\_index=2&igsh=MTJuNXp2eWlwZXBrNQ==](https://www.instagram.com/p/CvvFI4LPpM4/?img_index=2&igsh=MTJuNXp2eWlwZXBrNQ==)
- Instagram of Aves Argentinas,  
[www.instagram.com/reel/CvqXFLhuY4K/?igsh=ZG81YTZ6dnMyYTcz](https://www.instagram.com/reel/CvqXFLhuY4K/?igsh=ZG81YTZ6dnMyYTcz)
- Instagram of Ansenusa National Park  
[www.instagram.com/p/CzZmW4WRWFz/?igsh=NTVsa3NsdGRnbWd0](https://www.instagram.com/p/CzZmW4WRWFz/?igsh=NTVsa3NsdGRnbWd0)

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

The next steps include completing the statistical analyses of habitat use, occupancy, and human influence on carnivore communities, and preparing scientific publications based on these results. It will also be essential to integrate these findings into management and conservation planning at both local and regional scales.

**8. 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. The Rufford Foundation logo was included on the CelBA – Proyecto Carnívoros Chaqueños website (<https://ceiba.org.ar/proyectos/proyecto-carnivoros-chaquenos/>), in all technical reports submitted to protected area authorities, and in presentations at scientific meetings and workshops. The Foundation is also acknowledged in every public talk and outreach activity related to the project, ensuring its visibility and recognition across both scientific and conservation audiences.

**9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.**

- Biologist and M.Sc. in Wildlife Management Julia Paulucci – Project leader and PhD researcher. Responsible for project design, coordination, fieldwork management and supervision, data management, analysis, reporting and coordination with institutions.
- Dr. Verónica Quiroga and Dr. Agustín Paviolo – researchers and supervisors of PhD. Provided scientific guidance, methodological advice, data interpretation, and conservation applications.
- Gabriel Boaglio – Field technician and research collaborator. Assisted with field planning, logistics, camera-trap installation and coordination with local stakeholders.
- Pablo Contreras – Field technician. Supported camera-trap installation and logistic.
- Carolina Miras, José Sánchez, Antonela De Luca, Quimey Gómez, Ana Gaia Pérez Pelli, Sofía Lóndero, Florencia Frola, Natalia Ferreyra, Gisela Bruhn, Lucas López, Federico Rosas, Fernando Camargo, Iara Moreno Leal, Ariadna Walczack – Field biologists, veterinarians, park rangers. Volunteers in fieldwork. Participated in camera-trap installation and/or photo classification.

**10. Any other comments?**

The support from The Rufford Foundation was essential to carry out this work under very challenging political and economic conditions in Argentina. Beyond generating valuable scientific data, the project helped strengthen local conservation networks and establish a solid baseline for future research in the Chaco region. The collaboration with Parque Nacional Ansenúza and other institutions ensures that the project's outcomes will continue to guide management and conservation efforts in the coming years.

**ANNEX – Financial Report**  
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