

Project Update: January 2024

From 10 to 23 December 2023, we performed our third field campaign regarding the project "Expanding our Chaco eagle outreach, research and conservation campaign towards new areas in the Dry Chaco ecoregion". The outreach campaign (first field campaign) done between August and September 2023 and the additional visits to fields and schools in October/November 2023 is resulting in more people paying attention to their surroundings and helping us with fieldwork. Since the beginning of the project in August 2023, we have had about 30 Chaco eagle independent sightings, 12 adult individuals and 18 immatures. Our strategy during the third field campaign has been to follow those sightings featuring adults, hoping that we could identify reproductive territories and/or active nests.

We traversed around 5000 km, covering the departments of Alberdi, Moreno, Avellaneda, Sarmiento, Guasayán and Ojo de Agua. The departments of Banda and Jiménez (previously explored during the second field campaign) were discarded for the moment, since we were not allowed to enter the fields and thus we could not waste time and money there until the issue is solved. We walked the forests in the ranches, interviewed rural workers and stakeholders and organised a couple of field meetings with employees to train them on Chaco eagle identification and nest searching. The good news is, we can confirm that five resident Chaco eagle pairs have been identified in their territories in Santiago del Estero province; this third campaign discovered a new one in Guasayán department, while re-confirming the others. We also found two old Chaco eagle nests, easily identifiable due to the thick sticks on top of them, which were not used this year. However, we were unable to find any active nest of this endangered species so far. Additionally, some of the Chaco eagle pairs were seen flying together, a behaviour that does not match that of breeding individuals (i.e., at least one of them should be at the nest). We are seriously thinking that our hypothesis driven during last field campaign (i.e., the fact that some pairs may not be breeding due to the climatic changes), might actually be true for some pairs. Also, the active nest identified (thanks to the outreach in Santiago del Estero province) just on the border with Santa Fe province failed, in an agricultural area which is suffering a strong fumigation to plant soy, corn and bean.

We have also installed rescue ramps at water reservoirs in the Chaco eagle identified territories. For the moment, we have placed 10 ramps and given 12 more to landowners to install themselves. The fact that we are finding drowned wildlife at water reservoirs reinforces our idea that this mortality source is important in the area, these ramps being adequate mitigation measures.

We again thank The Rufford Foundation for the opportunity to carry out this important project in Santiago del Estero province, northern Argentina. The next field campaign will focus on finding more territories and/or nests, and on installing more rescue ramps to avoid Chaco eagle (and other wildlife) drownings.



Jorge Llugdar





Galaxy A34 5G



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