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.

Your Details	
Full Name	Isis Agostina Dánae Ibáñez
Project Title	Basis for conserving the Santa Fe frog (*Leptodactylus laticeps*) in the South American Great Chaco.
Application ID	42919-1
Date of this Report	29 January 2026

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
Acquire a deeper understanding of over-harvesting conflicts in Argentina.			X	We conducted 200 semi-structured interviews with *Criollo* and Indigenous communities. The interviews provided valuable information on local knowledge, perceptions, and uses of *Leptodactylus laticeps* (LL), which guided the planning of public engagement campaign (PEC) activities.
Perform public engagement campaigns (PEC) to change people's attitudes towards LL and increase conservation support within *Criollo* and indigenous communities.			X	We conducted 91 pre-public engagement campaign interviews in schools of *Criollo* and Indigenous communities. Post-campaign interviews were completed for 50 participants, while the remaining interviews are planned for future activities. We created multimedia content and printed materials featuring key characteristics and threats of LL, and information about the citizen science program. A total of 1500 printed materials, including posters, flyers and brochures were distributed. We held ten workshops in schools reaching 215 students. Initial contact with local leaders and teachers and collaborative planning of activities with them, was a key factor in the successful implementation of the interviews and

				the workshops.
Engage people from the local community (i.e., young volunteers, schoolteachers and park rangers) in the project.			X	We held two three-day training courses for park rangers, farmers, indigenous leaders, and schoolteachers with a total of 67 participants. Fifteen new volunteers and collaborators joined the project. The support of local leaders was essential for contacting community members and encouraging their participation.
Identify the remnant population of LL in Argentina and determine the current distribution through extensive fieldwork and ecological niche modelling. Within the context of these analyses, to assess the severity and extent of habitat loss as a threat to LL.		X		We compiled 93 historical records of LL from herpetological collections in Argentina, Paraguay, and Bolivia; collected habitat data for 58 individuals in the Argentinean Dry Chaco through field surveys; and obtained 67 citizen science records. We deployed 36 automatic recorders across sites with different levels of deforestation to detect LL and assess habitat loss through passive acoustic monitoring. The recorders will operate until March 2026. Delays in acquiring recorders and obtaining deployment permits across study sites represented a significant limitation. Species–habitat association analyses are complete. Species records are being processed to generate a map of the current distribution in Argentina. Ecological niche modelling, species–landscape associations, and habitat loss assessments are ongoing and will be completed in the next phase of the project.

Compile the obtained information to develop a preliminary action plan aimed at conserving LL in Argentina, focusing on mitigating anthropogenic effects on remnant populations			X	Novel data collected through fieldwork on the species' distribution, reproductive biology, habitat, and threats provide the first scientific evidence and a robust foundation for conservation actions to protect LL population in Argentina. These data will enable the development of a conservation action plan for LL in the next phase of the project.
Establish the first conservation project focused on an amphibian species in the South American Great Chaco region.			X	The project is successfully established in the South American Great Chaco, achieving its objectives with strong recognition in Argentina, and beginning to increase visibility in Paraguay and Bolivia.

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

a) *Field-based current distribution map of LL in Argentina.*

We compiled a comprehensive and up-to-date database of LL records in the Argentinean Dry Chaco, resulting in the first current distribution map of the species based on fieldwork, including nocturnal active surveys, passive acoustic monitoring, and citizen science. These efforts represent a crucial first step for ecological niche modelling, habitat and landscape analyses, conservation status assessments, population trend monitoring, and detecting future changes in the species' distribution.

b) *Novel scientific data on LL*

This project allowed us to gather novel information on a species that had not been previously studied in detail, providing new insights into its biology, natural history, and current threats.

c) Active network of collaborators and volunteers

The project has established a strong network of members of local communities, including Indigenous and *Criollo* leaders, farmers, landowners, park rangers, schoolteachers, herpetologists, and staff from protected areas and provincial institutions. Continuous communication and collaborative work within this network have enabled ongoing project activities, including species monitoring at study sites,

collection of new species records and meteorological data, workshops and educational activities, and field studies across Indigenous and *Criollo* territories and protected areas. The strong local support ensures the project's continuity and the advancement of its conservation objectives in the coming phases.

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

Unforeseen administrative delays in importing recorders and obtaining site permits postponed the deployment of passive acoustic monitoring (PAM) in 2024. To overcome these challenges, we strategically reorganized the project objectives to optimize fieldwork periods. Given that each reproductive season represents a critical window for data collection, we nonetheless conducted field surveys and habitat assessments across the species' entire distribution in Argentina in November–December 2024 and initiated PAM in September–December 2025.

On the other hand, the number of recorders posed a challenge, as we identified more key sites in collaboration with local communities, including Indigenous territories and protected areas, than could be covered with the recorders initially available. To address this, I actively engaged in fundraising and successfully secured additional funding from IDEA WILD, which, together with Rufford funds, enabled the acquisition of additional recorders to include sites that are socially and biologically significant. Furthermore, to maximize their use and given that they are monitored by local community members, we extended recorder operation until March to cover the species' reproductive phenology throughout the reproductive season (September–March).

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

Local communities received capacity-building training in amphibian monitoring techniques and meteorological data collection, which enabled their hiring as field technicians and Indigenous interpreters for ongoing project activities. Along with additional employment generated through vehicle rentals and lodging, the project created local jobs and provided tangible benefits to family economies.

People were also actively involved in educational activities, including knowledge exchange about local fauna and ecosystems. Additionally, studies in Indigenous territories and small *Criollo* farms provide valuable insights into LL and other local fauna, enhancing the ecological and cultural significance of these areas and supporting conservation efforts in the context of deforestation in the region. These territories preserve the most important forest remnants of this unique biome, which sustain endemic amphibian populations and essential water resources for their reproduction. Local communities have long worked to protect their lands and prevent deforestation, and our studies aim to add substantial conservation value to these efforts.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Given that my doctoral research closely aligns with the objectives of the Kururu Pytã Project, activities and studies in the Argentinean Dry Chaco will continue. In the short term, two new field campaigns are planned this year to continue studies on habitat loss and passive acoustic monitoring. Educational activities and workshops will also continue throughout the year.

Finally, now that the project is well established in Argentina, we have begun building local partnerships to expand our work to Bolivia and Paraguay. To this end, we have initiated contact and held meetings with regional herpetologists and conservation NGOs, including Arturo Muñoz (Bolivian Amphibian Initiative; www.bolivianamphibian.org) and Pier Cacciali (GUYRA; www.guyra.org.py).

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

The first scientific paper resulting from this project, titled "*Cave Chronicles: Unveiling the Reproductive Biology and the Tadpole of* Leptodactylus laticeps, a Vulnerable and Endemic Species of the Dry Chaco" is scheduled for publication in February–March 2026 in the journal "*Ichthyology and Herpetology*". In addition, I am preparing another scientific paper to inform the results about habitat selection/occupancy. We estimate that the data generated through this project will result in three additional scientific publications.

The results were presented at the Latin American Congress of Herpetology (Costa Rica, February 2026) and will be shared through technical reports with provincial and national institutions, protected areas and local communities. Project outcomes will continue to be disseminated through outreach activities, local newspapers, our website (www.coana.com.ar), and social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, X, LinkedIn).

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

a. Identify and delimit the priority areas of LL on which *in situ* conservation actions will be focused in Argentina.

b. Share the novel data generated with specialists for the reassessment of the conservation status of LL in Argentina during the upcoming amphibian and reptile reassessment (carried out by the Argentine Herpetological Association).

c. As I already mentioned, extend the project activities to Paraguay and Bolivia to cover the entire distribution of the species and replicate the experience at a regional level.

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?

The Rufford Foundation (RF) received publicity through the presentation at the symposium "Conservation Actions by the IUCN Amphibian Specialist Group in

Argentina" (Argentine Congress on Biodiversity Conservation, May 2025) and through the presentation at the Latin American Congress of Herpetology (Costa Rica, February 2026). During the congress, we had the opportunity to meet in person with regional herpetologists from the conservation NGOs Bolivian Amphibian Initiative and GUYRA.

The project was also shared through posts on our website and social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, X and LinkedIn) Examples of these posts can be found at: https://bit.ly/4uLZ4kC, https://bit.ly/49wW4QR, https://bit.ly/4tu3QC9, https://bit.ly/49Os3ft. The RF logo was included in all materials produced for educational activities and workshops. We acknowledged the support of the RF in the forthcoming scientific paper in the "*Ichthyology and Herpetology*" scientific journal, as well as in technical reports submitted to provincial and national institutions and natural protected areas.

Finally, the RF will receive publicity through future scientific papers and technical reports will include acknowledgments of their support. We have not yet had the opportunity to share the project through radio, TV and magazine, however, we are currently working on developing these outreach activities.

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

Dr. Gabriela Agostini. Adjunct researcher. IEGEBA (UBA-CONICET). Director of the COANA Initiative. Dr. Agostini is the supervisor of my doctoral thesis, which encompasses Kururu Pytã Project. Given her extensive experience developing amphibian conservation projects in Argentina, she provides technical and scientific assistance throughout all the instances of the project's implementation and fundraising.

Dr. Julián Lescano. Adjunct researcher. IDEA (UNC-CONICET). Dr. Lescano has been working extensively in the Argentinean Great Chaco, studying amphibian communities. His expertise in the territory contributes as an assistant in planning and conducting fieldwork and analysing data.

Dr. Camila Deutsch. Postdoctoral fellow. IEGEBA (UBA-CONICET). Dr. Deutsch is the leader of the Giant of the Pampas Project, which received funding from the Rufford Foundation. The project has evolved into an international collaboration, uniting efforts from biologists and conservationists in Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina to conserve the Ornate Horned Frog (*Ceratophrys ornata*). With extensive experience establishing conservation projects, Camila is the primary assistant in project planning.

Education and communication team

BSc. Marina Compagnucci. Ms. Public Science Communication (UBA). Argentina National Space Activities Commission (CONAE). Marina is a biologist and social media communicator. With extensive experience in training and educating people and broad expertise in environmental communication science environmental, Marina assists in the planning and implementing the public engagement campaign.

BSc. Luján Blanco. Bachelor's degree in Institutional and Spatial Relations in Public Communication of Science and Technology. Ms. Public Science Communication (UBA). Luján has extensive experience in science communication, planning and working with multidisciplinary teams. She plays a key role in establishing direct contact with schoolteachers and community leaders and designing and implementing education and outreach activities alongside them.

BSc. Sabrina Arriola. Bachelor's degree in Image and Sound Design (UBA). Ms. Public Science Communication (UBA). Sabrina is a designer with expertise in creating websites, audiovisual materials, and graphics. She is the team's community manager. She develops social media and design flyers, brochures, and posters for the project.

Tatiana Gerzenstein. Communication and Social Media specialist. Residing in Chaco Province, Tatiana contributes to the project through the creation and editing of audiovisual materials, as well as by providing guidance on digital communication strategies in Argentinean Dry Chaco.

Local collaborators and volunteers

National, Provincial and Private Natural Protected Areas. (National Park El Impenetrable, Fuerte Esperanza Provincial Natural Park, Loro Hablador Provincial Natural Park, Natural Reserve Formosa and Natural Private Reserve "Los Tapires"). The protected areas and their staff actively guide and collaborate in fieldwork, granting access to their territories to search for species records and suitable habitats, and providing logistical support and facilities during field activities.

Provincial institutions (Chaco Province Forest Department, Secretary of Environment and Biodiversity of the Province of Chaco and Livestock Program of the Northwestern Chaco, National Institute of Agricultural Technology Ingeniero Juárez – Formosa)**.** These institutions support the project by providing logistical assistance, facilitating contact with local producers, and providing guidance on reginal environmental conditions, habitats, and landscape features.

Natay Collet. Photographer and park ranger at Loro Hablador Provincial Natural Park. Residing in Chaco Province, Natay brings extensive experience working with Indigenous and *Criollo* communities in the region. She facilitates initial communication with Indigenous communities, introducing the project team, and supporting the development of community workshops and interviews. She is also currently assisting with ongoing passive acoustic monitoring studies.

Mauro Aquino. Local leader, photographer and park ranger at Fuerte Esperanza Provincial Natural Park. Residing in Chaco Province, Mauro facilitates contact with local families and schools, promotes the project locally, and participates in fieldwork activities, including monitoring the activity of the Santa Fe frog and collecting new records of the species.

Daniela Cabrera and Andrés Vidal. Local leaders and park rangers at the Formosa

Natural Reserve. Residing within the protected area, they made significant contributions to the project by monitoring frog activity, collecting meteorological data, and assisting with ongoing passive acoustic monitoring studies in Formosa.

Daniel Pérez. Local leader and staff member at the Private Natural Reserve "Los Tapires" in Formosa. With his extensive knowledge of the area and local communities, Daniel collaborates by facilitating contact with small farmers and landowners surrounding the reserve, introducing the project team to them, and assisting with fieldwork and logistics in the area.

Pepe Teves, Victor Marcia, Maximiliano Salvatierra, Rosita Giménez and Daniel Jaime. Small Farmers/Landowners. They collaborate with the project by assisting with fieldwork, monitoring species activity and providing meteorological data.

Natalia López, Cinthia Verón, and Violeta Sosa. Criollo and Indigenous schoolteachers. They assist by facilitating contact with school families, planning and conducting educational activities and workshops in schools.

Joaquin Arias and Fernando Pérez. Local leaders, landowners, and photographers. Residing in Salta Province, they facilitate contact with local families and small farmers and participate in fieldwork activities, including monitoring the activity of the Santa Fe frog and collecting new records of the species.

Marisa Pizzi. Local leader and activist. Agricultural engineer. University of Buenos Aires. For over 20 years, Marisa has been working in the Chaco Province. She was a local activist who supported farmers and indigenous communities in land management and rights defense. Her assistance as a local leader is fundamental in establishing contacts with other leaders and collaborators and in introducing our team.

Paulino Diaz and Julio Zanuttini. Local leaders. Director and teacher of a Wichí–Spanish bilingual school. With their extensive knowledge in community-based activities, they assisted with interviews in schools, educational activities, and facilitating contact with communities in Chaco.

Finally, this project is part of the research activities conducted by the COANA initiative, which has been working for more than 10 years on topics related to amphibian conservation in Argentina and counting with an extensive volunteer network who assist the team in the field.

10. Any other comments?

We have attached an additional document with images from the September–December 2025 fieldwork period.

ANNEX – Financial Report

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