

Project Update: May 2010

In December 2009 we completed the second field research stage in the southern Pampean dunes and beaches. The whole set of sampling plots, transects and point counts registered in the previous winter were replicated in this summer season, so that variations in bird species assemblages and vegetation cover and composition can now be compared among seasons. An analysis of this kind had never been made in Argentinean dunes, so we are really pleased to contribute with novel information to the understanding of our Pampean coastal ecosystems.

We also organized education meetings at rural schools and presentations to local people, with the aim to inform about the value of the coastal zone and our proposal to create a protected area. For young children we prepared games and sheets to draw and colour the animals and plants of the dunes. We also prepared a photographic exhibition at the library of the city of Oriente, showing the Pampean dunes biodiversity.

In October 2009, we organized a working day with the students and teachers of the Basic Secondary School No. 2 of Coronel Dorrego. We guided them with a practical work of field research at the dunes near Marisol village, where they collected their own data on birds and vegetation. It was amazing to see the children so motivated working on the dunes and learning to identify the native plants and animals by their scientific names! Their work was later exposed to the community in the Arts and Science Congress organized by the school.

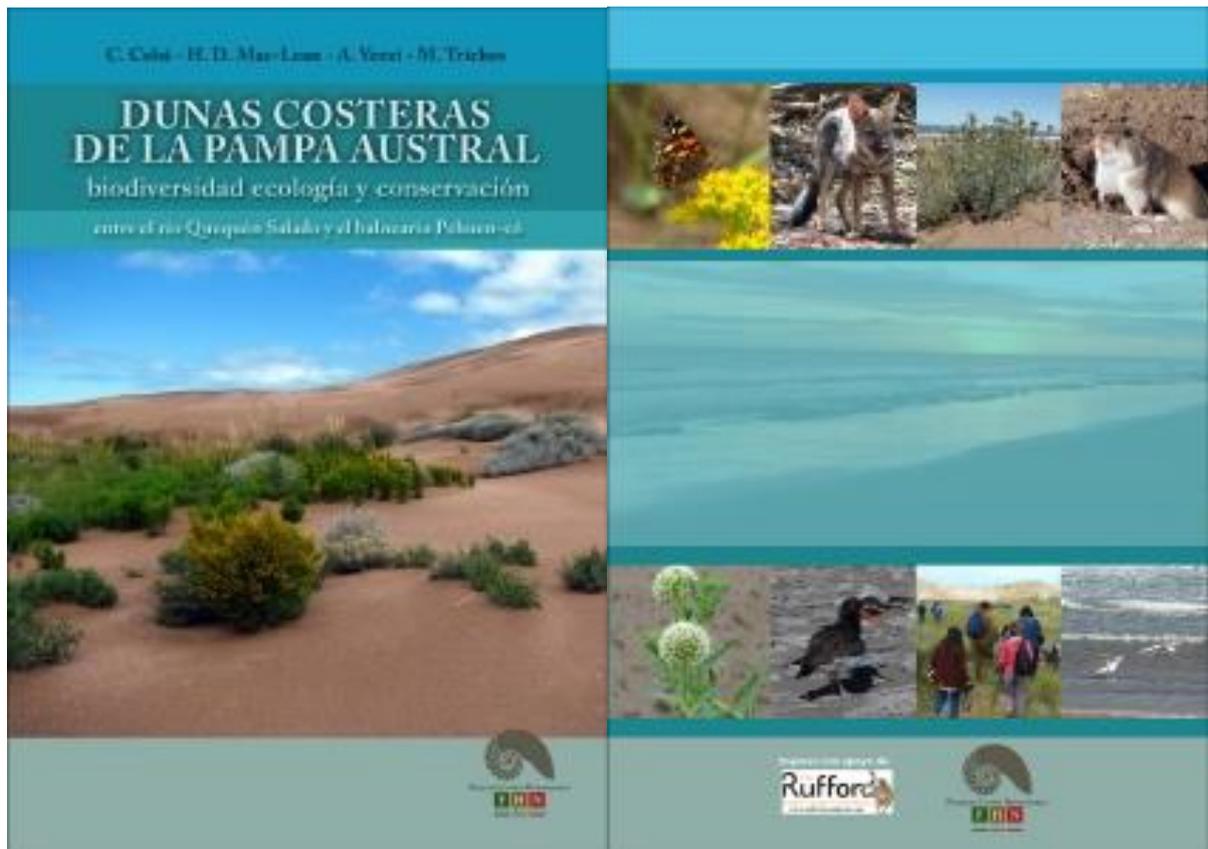
We have especially good news to communicate about the second stage of our project:

New location record for the pinnated bittern (*Bottaurus pinnatus*).

The Pinnated Bittern is a neotropical bird (Family Ardeidae) considered rare and scarcely known. We had the great opportunity to find two specimens of this species at the dunes in Coronel Dorrego, during one of our sampling days. This record represents a new locality for the pinnated bittern and the southernmost report of its presence in the wild. It was also a novelty to find this species in Pampean dune ecosystems, for which there were no previous records. Our finding raises new questions about the ecology of this species and also highlights the potential of the coastal area under consideration, as a refuge for native wildlife. Our work was submitted to the ornithological journal *Cotinga* and is now under revision.

Handbook: "Coastal Dunes in Southern Pampas. Biodiversity, Ecology and Conservation"

We are enormously happy to contribute with this new material to disseminate the values of Pampean dunes. It is the first time that a work specifically focused on the coastal dunes of southern Pampas is edited in Argentina. Our 40-sheet handbook contains 32 full colour pages illustrated with our own photographs and graphics. It encompasses a description of the plant and animal diversity of the coastal dunes between Pehuen-có village and the river Quequén Salado, the current conservation situation of the area and a description of our proposal to create a coastal nature reserve in Coronel Dorrego. It is a non-profit work and 250 units will be distributed in the localities where we have been working this year, to be used as study material and as a general information source. Also, it will soon be available in our web site!



Handbook: Front & back cover.



Left: Registering data at the pampean coastal dunes. Right: Counting birds at the coastal dunes in Coronel Dorrego.