

## Final Evaluation Report

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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).

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| Your Details               |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Full Name</b>           | IRATI CARABIA SANZ   |
| <b>Project Title</b>       | Ecological restoration of inactive quarries in Pampean grassland relicts |
| <b>Application ID</b>      | 43542-1  |
| <b>Date of this Report</b> | December 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>Generation of native habitat by the restoration of inactive quarries in Tandil county</p> |              |                    | <p>X</p>       | <p>The application of substrate and topsoil to the abandoned quarry surface was a success. It is still being monitored to control the non-colonisation of invasive vegetation and the possible appearance of endemic fauna.</p> <p>Three inactive quarries were restored using different strategies, which were evaluated beforehand according to the ecological context of each one. In two of them, all the stones were removed and soil and topsoil were added, while in the other, only invasive exotic vegetation was removed from the surrounding area because we saw that it was being used by native wildlife. The whole process took a total of 4 months.</p> <p>So far, there has been no colonization by invasive exotic vegetation, but we are monitoring to ensure that this does not occur.</p> |
| <p>Reduction of invasive woody species in the area</p>                                       |              |                    | <p>X</p>       | <p>One hectare of <i>Spartium junceum</i> was successfully removed in and around inactive quarries. The problem is that this species occupies a very large area, but this removal allowed us to observe what happens to the native vegetation and fauna when this species is removed.</p> <p>Four volunteer campaigns were carried out during 2025 to remove this species,</p>  |

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|   |  |  |   | <p>each lasting one week. The physical effort required is considerable, making it unfeasible to extend the campaigns over a longer period of time.</p> <p>What we have been able to observe thanks to the drone flight is that the coverage of native shrubs in the area where the broom has been removed has grown significantly. We will continue to monitor the area to obtain more concrete results.</p>  |
| Improve the relationship of the community with nature |  |  | X | <p>There was considerable participation in volunteer campaigns throughout the year (approximately 50 people participated at different times in the invasive vegetation removal. In the early days of the volunteer campaigns to remove exotic vegetation, short talks were given on identifying native vegetation and wildlife, as well as exotic flora.</p> <p>Several talks were also held in schools (three) and universities (two). This is an area that requires further work.</p> <p>An explanatory poster was put up at the restoration site and we also participated in three national conferences and presented photos explaining the project.</p> |

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

a). Recognition that this technique for restoring abandoned limestone quarries works to increase the area covered by native vegetation and the importance of restoring these impacted sites

b). Awareness among the Tandil community that quarry restoration projects are being carried out and that there is invasive vegetation in their environment.

c). The generation of new knowledge, from an innovative restoration project in the area.

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

The main challenges or difficulties were related to logistics: finding a company willing to remove rocks and transport soil with shovels and lorries; dealing with the municipality of Tandil was also complicated at first. Accessibility to the abandoned quarries was also a difficulty that we had not considered when drafting the project, but ultimately, with the assistance of the contracted machinery company, it was resolved.

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

There was considerable involvement from the Tandil community. Many people were interested in the volunteer campaigns, and school teachers also wanted to bring this issue into the classroom. We gave some talks so that children could learn about the impacts on our mountains and how they can be remedied.

The overall benefit for the community is knowledge and awareness of the problem and possible actions to be taken in their environment. The restoration of impacted areas is also an improvement for the community due to the emergence of local biodiversity and the return to an ecosystem familiar to older people.

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

Yes, as far as possible, we would like to continue working on the restoration of abandoned quarries, applying the same technique, as we have seen that it is successful. There is also a lot of work that can be done with the community, many campaigns and new ideas to implement.

The problem of invasive exotic vegetation is very serious and covers a large area, so the work to be done is long-term.

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

Partial results and the project itself have already been presented at two conferences (Viedma Environment Conference in November 2024 and Corrientes Ecological Restoration Conference 2025). In addition, it has also been presented in several talks at schools, an open talk at the National University of the Centre of the Province of Buenos Aires and an open talk at the University of Zaragoza (Spain) as part of a doctoral stay there.

A scientific paper presenting some of the results has also been written and is currently under review in the Journal of Applied Ecology, and another is being written on the removal of broom as an invasive species in the area.

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

The next important steps would be to repeat this same restoration experiment in larger abandoned quarries and take this project to the municipal and provincial authorities so that it becomes mandatory for mining companies to restore the impacted areas once the extraction work is completed.

Another important step is to continue spreading the word about the success of this project and raise awareness about the problems facing our mountains.

**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 used on all posters created and presented during the year, as well as in talks given at schools and universities. A sign explaining the project was also installed in the study area where the logo is located. It was also included in the acknowledgements section of scientific papers that are in the process of being published.

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

Claudio Miguel Barletta: works at the reserve where the work was carried out, helped us with logistics and organising the activities.

Agustina Cortelezzi: she has extensive experience in conservation and restoration projects in the province. She advised and helped to organise the actions.

Toribio Migliore: he was a great field assistant.

Me, Irati Carabia: I organised and led the actions carried out during this year. I also presented the work in schools, universities and conferences.

**10. Any other comments?**

I am very grateful to have received this funding, which has enabled me to carry out the research necessary to generate new knowledge and also to advance my doctoral thesis. In Argentina's current economic climate and given the underfunding of science, without the financial support of the Rufford Foundation, this would not have been possible.

**Photos**



Clockwise from top left: A machine feeding material into a quarry; invasive alien vegetation removal; volunteers during the campaign. Photos: Irati Carabia Sanz.

**ANNEX – Financial Report**  
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