Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Maria Candelaria Neyra
Project Title	Developing effective conservation tools for Pampas Meadowlark in Argentina
Application ID	43906-1
Date of this Report	4/6/2025

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
Increase the nesting success of Pampas Meadowlark by creating safe breeding sites, and by protecting active nests.			Yes	Nests without predation exclosures were predated within 1–3 days of being located. Some defended nests were destroyed by cattle in areas where livestock was present. In these cases, nest-defence damage was likely due to trampling or curiosity-driven behaviours, such as scratching or sniffing.
Identify and protect key breeding sites of Pampas Meadowlark in the region.		yes		We successfully identified new breeding sites. However, in some of these areas, we have not yet been able to identify the landowners, as no residents were present during our visits. Several properties in the region appear to be uninhabited or abandoned, which presents a challenge for engagement and conservation efforts. We plan to continue revisiting these sites to establish contact with landowners or managers. Additionally, we are collaborating with local contacts who are assisting us in this search. The document with recommended management actions for landowners has not yet been finalised, partly due to the difficulty in locating some of the landowners.

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

a) Predation exclosures were installed at four breeding sites. These areas were fenced, effectively excluding cattle of 1,683 acres from October to December. In places where cattle briefly entered, temporary electric fencing was installed to minimise disturbance. As a result, we tested and refined practical techniques for nest protection, generating valuable insights that can inform broader conservation initiatives for the species.

b) We found 105 nests and equipped with predation exclosures 97 them. The nests with predation exclosures achieved a reproductive success rate of 74%, significantly higher than those without exclosures (12.5%).

c) We identified new and revisited previously known breeding sites that were used by the species between October and December. This information enables us to prioritise these areas for future conservation actions and to design grassland management strategies.

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

An unforeseen challenge was the change in management at the company that owns *La Josefina* ranch, one of the key sites for our fieldwork. The new company manager initiated a review of current land-use practices and proposed changes to the management of grassland areas, critical habitats for the Pampas Meadowlark. This has introduced uncertainty regarding the long-term conservation of these important breeding sites.

Although the situation remains unresolved, the landowner has expressed continued support for our work and is open to allowing our activities to continue. We are maintaining open communication with both the ranch manager and the new company leadership, and are offering technical guidance on sustainable grassland management practices that support agricultural productivity while prioritising the preservation of Pampas Meadowlark habitat.

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

As part of their kindergarten graduation trip, 80 people—including students, parents, and teachers from a school in the nearby city of Pigüé—visited the Pampas Meadowlark breeding colony at *La Josefina* Ranch. This visit offered students a unique opportunity to learn about grassland ecosystems and Pampas Meadowlark conservation firsthand.

In addition, we brought educational activities directly to the nearest rural school, engaging students who live in the region.

Local photographers and birdwatchers also collaborated with the project by learning to identify the species and documenting fieldwork through high-quality images. These

photographs were used in outreach materials and on social media to help raise awareness about the Pampas Meadowlark and its conservation.

Volunteers from both the local area and other parts of the country participated in field activities, supporting nest monitoring and habitat management. These efforts not only advanced the project's conservation goals but also fostered community engagement and a greater appreciation for native grasslands and their biodiversity.

The participation of the local community is a key aspect of the project that we aim to continue developing, with a particular focus on reaching more schools throughout the region.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, we plan to continue and expand our work. We obtained promising results in increasing nesting success, and it is essential to continue these efforts to support the long-term growth of the Pampas Meadowlark population. We also aim to expand the impact of our fieldwork to cover a broader area and reach more breeding sites.

Additionally, we plan to continue addressing the unresolved challenges under Objective 2, particularly the identification of landowners in key grassland areas and ensuring that our conservation message reaches them.

We also intend to explore new techniques, such as telemetry, to study the movements and spatial ecology of the Pampas Meadowlark. This will help us better understand how the species uses its habitat and allow us to identify priority areas for conservation. By improving our knowledge of their movements, we aim to develop more effective conservation strategies and strengthen collaboration with landowners and local stakeholders.

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

We plan to share the results of our work through platforms that reach diverse audiences, including the scientific community and the general public interested in conservation. To raise awareness at the international level, we have submitted an article to *BirdLife – The Magazine*, a popular science publication. In parallel, we are preparing a scientific paper to publish our findings in a peer-reviewed journal. Additionally, we will continue to use social media to communicate our results in an accessible manner.

We are also actively participating in both local and international conferences to share our findings with the conservation community. In July, we will be attending the Association of Field Ornithologists meeting in Utah, USA.

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

Our next steps include publishing a scientific paper on the reproductive biology of the Pampas Meadowlark and the effectiveness of nest defence strategies. We also plan

to continue our fieldwork and develop a new environmental education project aimed at engaging local students and raising awareness about the importance of the Pampas Meadowlark and its grassland habitat.

Another key objective is to support the reassessment of the Pampas Meadowlark's conservation status, ensuring that recent data on its population decline are incorporated into both national and international evaluations.

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, we used the Rufford Foundation logo in materials related to the dissemination of the project's results. The logo was included in lectures and presentations delivered during talks and congresses, as well as on posters and in a concept note developed for stakeholder engagement.

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

Maria Candelaria Neyra: Project Coordinator, responsible for overseeing the implementation of project activities and fieldwork, including hiring technicians and ensuring the execution of all planned actions.

Gerónimo Peralta Martinez: Veterinarian and La Josefina Ranch Manager, responsible for livestock management within the grasslands, ensuring the preservation of this critical ecosystem for the Pampas Meadowlark.

Lucía Martin: Biologist and Project Technician, in charge of coordinating fieldwork and data collection.

Gabriel Celedon: Anthropology student and Project Technician, with extensive experience in bird fieldwork, supporting data collection and community engagement.

Manu Santiago: Conservation student and Project Technician, assisting with bird monitoring and conservation activities.

Mercedes Cibaleiro: Biology undergraduate student, contributing to field data collection and outreach activities.

10. Any other comments?

We are observing that the species can reproduce successfully when given appropriate conditions. However, it is crucial to continue this work to gain a better understanding of how Pampas Meadowlarks select their breeding sites. We need to expand the geographic scale of our efforts and reassess the species' conservation status. Productive land-use pressures in the region are substantial and on the rise. Every

year presents new and greater challenges, highlighting the urgency of scaling up conservation actions.

We are grateful for your support and are actively seeking long-term commitments to ensure the continued protection of this species and its grassland habitat.

ANNEX – Financial Report

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