

This is the fourth update from the project “An integral approach to the conservation of the endangered Chaco eagle in semiarid habitats of Argentina” (Rufford 1st Booster Grant 44634-B). During these months, we have carried out two different visits to Santiago del Estero province (end of March, and end of June), where we have concentrated on Chaco eagle conservation, including illegal persecution events, power line surveys and the investigation of the effects of the open-to-air water canal. We have also met numerous rural workers and landowners, as well as organized a handful of talks at schools and local councils. Our milestones also include social media publications, and legal efforts, to protect Chaco eagle and other wildlife in the Gran Chaco ecoregion.

CHACO EAGLE SURVEYS OF CAUSES OF MORTALITY

First, and thanks to the in-person interviews with landowners and field workers, we confirmed two new cases of direct persecution of Chaco eagles in northern Santiago del Estero province; we organized two meetings with local producers and a talk at an elementary school (both in the area) to address possible conflicts, and to convince locals to protect this endangered species. These activities gathered in total more than 100 people from the local communities.

We also performed the first surveys ever done in Santiago del Estero province at power line pylons, to assess the risk of mortality for birds of prey. We confirmed an electrocution event of a Black-chested buzzard-eagle (*Geranoaetus melanoleucus*) in eastern Santiago del Estero province, at a power line pylon entirely made of concrete, and with the cables above the crossarms (a design that has been declared risky, given our research). These are the most common design in the area, with more than 100 pylons of this material surveyed in less than 30 km of power line. This data has been successfully submitted to the Dirección de Bosques y Fauna of Santiago del Estero province. We hope to have an answer from them soon.

Last but not least, we performed two different surveys at Canal de la Patria open-to-air water canal (March and June). We confirmed the drowning of over 60 individuals of more than 15 wildlife species (birds, mammals, and reptiles), as well as 17 individuals of livestock (cows, goats, sheep). This includes endangered species such as the Giant anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*), the Chaco tortoise (*Chelonoidis chilensis*), the Argentine boa (*Boa constrictor occidentalis*) and the Southern three-banded armadillo (*Tolypeutes matacus*). The area is inhabited by other endangered species such as the Chaco eagle, and the Chacoan peccary (*Catagonus wagneri*), and has anecdotal records of the Giant armadillo (*Priodontes maximus*), and the Jaguar (*Panthera onca*). The total number of drownings documented in this irrigation canal has increased to over 400 individuals of more than 45 wildlife species. The idea is to continue the monitoring of this mortality source during the following months, with the help of Fundación Vida Silvestre, an Argentinian NGO that has started collaborating with us regarding fieldwork.

CHACO EAGLE (AND OTHER WILDLIFE) LEGAL PROTECTION

At the end of March 2025, we held a meeting in northern Santa Fe province, regarding the Chaco eagle conservation Program signed months ago. We reviewed, with the authorities, what had been done during the last year to ensure the conservation of this endangered species, including the retrofitting of power line pylons.

On 19 June 2025, the Argentinian NGOs Aves Argentinas (AA), Fundación Vida Silvestre (FVS) and Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (FARN), have filed a complaint with the Supreme Court of Argentina and against Santiago del Estero province for the ecocide that is happening at the Canal de la Patria water canal. This impeachment or denounce aims at bringing the authorities to court to respond to the deficient environmental impact study of the construction of the infrastructure, as well as of the mitigation measures proposed. This legal case will undoubtedly compel the authorities of this province to implement effective mitigation measures to reduce (or avoid) wildlife drownings at the Canal de la Patria, including birds such as the endangered Chaco eagle.

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

A scientific publication on the first documentation of a successful reproduction of the Chaco eagle in Santiago del Estero province is to be accepted in the next days. A short communication in another international journal has been accepted days ago, on a replacement clutch of the Chaco eagle. The paper on the impact of outreach talks in research and conservation duties of the Chaco eagle is currently under review.

NEXT STEPS

The next steps of this project will include additional surveys at the Canal de la Patria open-to-air water canal, and at power lines in Santa Fe, and San Luis provinces. We will also give additional talks at schools, as well as hold meetings with producers in the study area.