

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Small Grants Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. The Final Report must be sent in **word format** and not PDF format or any other 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. Please be as honest as you can in answering the questions – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please complete the form in English and be as clear and concise as you can. Please note that the information may be edited for clarity. We will ask for further information if required. If you have any other materials produced by the project, particularly a few relevant photographs, please send these to us separately.

Please submit your final report to jane@rufford.org.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details	
Your name	Rodrigo Villalobos Aguirre
Project title	Conservation and Evaluation of Andean Cat (<i>Leopardus jacobita</i>) population in Lauca National Park, Northern Chile
RSG reference	9001-1
Reporting period	Final report
Amount of grant	£5884
Your email address	rodvillalobo@hotmail.com
Date of this report	October 2011

1. Please 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
Evaluation of Andean cat population		YES		Due to the low number of photo-captures and only one recapture identified, we were not able to estimate the population following the proposed methodologies. For this reason, other valid estimator to estimate the abundance was used, the minimum number of individuals known alive (MNKA: Krebs, 1966). With this estimator, we arrived to the amount of seven individuals of Andean cats in the study area, two of which were cubs.
To train and educate local park rangers in carnivore ecology and field monitoring.			YES	Three of the five park rangers that are working inside the Lauca National Park were trained. We did a 17 km trekking on one day surrounding the Cotacotani lagoons, looking for signs indicative of the presence of carnivores, mainly focused on <i>Leopardus jacobita</i> and the main factors influencing its presence.
To achieve understanding and comprehension about Andean cat conservation in the local community and other involved actors.			YES	We gave talks in 12 Andean schools of the area, involving a total number of 311 students and 22 professors/directors. We distributed informative poster and brochures with information of the Andean Cat and other altiplanic animals to every child, professor and classroom. In two of the visited schools, we painted murals with the direct involvement of the students and professors, inspired on local biodiversity, focusing on the Andean Cat.

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

In general, the project worked well but the extreme weather conditions throughout the year and the high altitude of the area (14000 to 17000 ft asl) did made it difficult to work. Summer weather, including storms, heavy rain and lightning from December to March impacted the work and made it even dangerous at times. In the winter the low temperatures (-20 to -30 degree Celsius) also made the field work harsh.

One type of unexpected difficulty was the issue of land ownership. The Lauca National Park (owned of the Chile government) has problems with the Aymara communities in the study area. For this reason, we were not able to install the road signs, instead we placed educative posters with Andean cat photo at all the park installations

Other big problem was the distance of the study area. Because we did not live close to the study site, we had to fly over 2,000km to get the study area, then we had to travel more km by truck across a hard topography.

3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

- We generated new sites of presence of Andean cat and we identified seven different individuals. In addition, we confirmed the significance of this area as a reproduction site based on two photos of cubs of different age.
- For the first time in Chile we trained Aymaras park rangers in Lauca National Park on methods to study carnivores, mainly Andean cat.
- We generated conservation activities in most of the study site and surrounding areas, involving a total number of 311 students and 22 professors/directors. We painted two murals with children in the most important schools of the region

4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project (if relevant).

In general, the communities benefited from the educational campaign of the Andean cat. We performed technical talks to high courses tourism students at the school, and in all of the schools visited, inspired the children about the importance of biodiversity. Furthermore, the two murals have served as a tourism attraction in the village.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, hopefully this work will be continued, either by me or my partners in the project. My future plan is to keep studying carnivores and its conservation in this area, associated also with the PhD that I will be starting next year.

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

We have already shared the new data with others specialist researchers' members of the Andean Cat Alliance. In addition, we also gave a final report to Forest National Corporation (CONAF) who is responsible for national parks in Chile. We also will to publish this work in specialized magazines and scientific journals.

7. Timescale: Over what period was the RSG used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?

RSG was used during the period that we had estimated, the 1-year duration was fully accomplished.

8. Budget: Please provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used.

Item	Budgeted Amount (£)	Actual Amount (£)	Difference (£)	Comments
Airfare Santiago-Arica-Santiago	625	1063	-438	9 tickets in total, between September 2010 and June 2011. The actual rates of the tickets airline was raised during this year, therefore we underestimated this as well as the field assistants
Meals	123	379	-256	We underestimated the field assistants and their food
Lodging	350	531	-181	In hostels of Arica and Putre. The rest of the time we used refuges inside the Lauca National Park.
Equipment (Camera traps)	1582	1847	-265	15 camera traps in total. We had to buy other cameras to improve the field logistic.
Lures	84	137	-53	Bobcat urine and different wildcat lures.
Other items (Materials and transport)	150	290	-140	Materials for the murals painting, and different transports
Leaflets for education campaign	920	513	+407	1000 units (we printed more units because the print of the leaflets was cheaper than we expected)
Posters for education campaign	1250	448	+802	1000 units (we printed more units because the print of the posters was cheaper than we expected)
Metallic road signs	800	128	+672	We didn't have the permission to install the road signs inside the area of the park, so we printed 100 units of posters with informative material
Stipend for the designer of educational material	0	564	-564	Due to the fact that the posters cost cheaper than we expected, we used the remnant of the budget to contact a professional designer to make the design of the posters and leaflets.
Total	5884	5900	-16	

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

There are many next steps to follow, since this is just a first approach to Andean cat in Chile. The most important at this stage is to extend this work and find new places for Andean cat research, this because our study site is only a tiny part of the region. Although we did find new sites and our research was based on previously known sites, we believe that more studies are needed in order to identify seasonal fluctuations on Andean cat populations. Furthermore, we believe that our educational campaign must be continued to reach deep in the thought of Aymara children and adults, based on a conservation of the natural heritage of the Aymara people. To achieve these next steps, we think it is important to do a longer term research, such as a PhD study, which we are planning to start next year.

10. Did you use the RSGF logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the RSGF receive any publicity during the course of your work?

We used the RSGF logo in the leaflets and in the two kinds of posters we made to local people.

11. Any other comments?

Firstly, I would like to give my sincere acknowledgements for RSGF to support our project. In Chile it is very difficult to work with species unknown to the general public, such as Andean cat because there are very few funds available. This experience was very valuable for us because we did a new training for new people to work with this species in the future. We hope we are just in the beginning, and that this research is one of many to come in the future.