

## 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](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Thank you for your help.

**Josh Cole, Grants Director**

Grant Recipient Details	
<b>Your name</b>	Cintia Eleonora Celsi
<b>Project title</b>	Arroyo Los Gauchos Nature Reserve. Enhancing the conservation of Pampean Coastal Ecosystems in the context of a new Protected Area.
<b>RSG reference</b>	9430-2
<b>Reporting period</b>	February 2012 – February 2013
<b>Amount of grant</b>	£5885
<b>Your email address</b>	<a href="mailto:cintiacelsi@gmail.com">cintiacelsi@gmail.com</a>
<b>Date of this report</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> March 2013

**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
Increase the research on ecology and dynamics of the Pampean dune system.			X	Shore bird assemblages were monitored. Dynamics of dune-grassland bird populations was explored. Vegetation survey was continued. Site-species list data base was enriched. A new locally endemic plant was registered.
Activities with local schools to stimulate education on coastal issues.			X	Expositions for schoolchildren were performed. Education materials were distributed. A new activity-book about coastal dunes was edited.
Continuity of social activities to promote conservation of the beach dune ecosystem			X	Neighbours of Marisol village were informed about the Arroyo los Gauchos Nature Reserve. Expositions at local museums were performed. Field activities with local park-rangers were carried out.
Interaction with authorities		X		Reports with recommendations about coastal dune conservation, and new information produced during field surveys will be presented to provincial authorities. Two update reports and a final report are still being elaborated.
Approach to local landowners to work on conservation issues		X		One private field was visited and investigated. A first approach was made but further interaction with private land owners is needed.

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

Difficulty of identifying and contacting the owners of private lands adjacent to the coastal zone, because most of them do not live in the fields. Through the municipal office, we managed to contact one private land owner, and we could survey one private field next to the Arroyo los Gauchos Nature Reserve.

We expected to settle a forum for exchange of experiences and information via e-mail with Marisol's neighbours, but most of the residents in this town do not have regular access to internet. Instead, we put more effort to organise meetings and personal talks.

Field guide of wild birds from Coronel Dorrego. It was expected to produce a printed edition, but the costs were much higher than expected for the quality that we were interested in (also considering

that it would be a non-profit material). Instead, we re-assigned the amount to produce 1000 copies of the Activity-book for children. Information on wild birds was made available in our web page as a first step.

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

Research advances. We increased research on two avian groups of well recognised conservation priority: shorebirds and grassland birds. Shorebird assemblages were monitored along the year; 120 km were surveyed along the beach. Migratory species like *Calidris canutus*, *C. alba* and *Sterna* spp. were identified. Activity patterns and temporal dynamics of shorebird assemblages were registered. Regarding grassland birds, we explored nesting sites in 60 km<sup>2</sup> within the dune system. We collected data on *Cistothorus platensis*, *Sturnella* sp., *Spartonoica maluroides* and other grassland birds. Vegetation studies revealed the presence of *Poa schizantha* in the dunes at Coronel Dorrego. This gramine is a rarity within the group, and is locally endemic; therefore, its value for conservation is undoubtedly high. This record was informed to two prestigious botanical institutions in Argentina: Herbarium of the Universidad Nacional del Sur and Instituto de Botánica Darwinion. All this new set of information contributes to increase the knowledge on ecological aspects of the pampean beach-dune system, especially in an area of high conservation interest. Reports on Arroyo los Gauchos Nature Reserve biodiversity monitoring will be presented to the Direction of Protected Areas, together with management recommendations and further guidelines for the conservation of the area.

Dissemination. We achieved wider dissemination about conservation of pampean coastal dunes and the importance of the Arroyo los Gauchos area, among general as well as specialised public. We organised meetings and expositions for resident and tourist people, we made a presentation for Young Leaders on Marine Sciences, we wrote articles for publication in journals related to the topic, notes on newspapers and internet were published and we offered expositions at regional museums, among others. It all adds up to promote awareness on the conservation of the Pampas dune ecosystems.

Education. We could give continuity to our education programme at the rural schools surrounding the Arroyo los Gauchos Nature Reserve. Schoolchildren and teachers received education materials and we made activities together, related to dune ecology and coastal biodiversity. Teachers received information and were motivated to include coastal issues in the annual curriculum and they performed their own field activities with children at the coastal zone. Promoting education about the conservation of coastal pampean ecosystems is a key part of a long term strategy of coastal dune conservation.

A new activity book for children regarding dune ecology was edited. It is called "Dunes and beaches. Wave-proof ecosystems!". It will be distributed for free in schools along the pampean coast, and uploaded in our web page for free download.

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

Marisol's neighbours, a town adjacent to the Arroyo los Gauchos Nature Reserve, were informed about the benefits of conservation of the dunes and the advantages of the existence of a protected area near the town. They were also informed about alternatives for low impact use of the coast. We

had a meeting with the directors of the neighborhood commission of Marisol to encourage the valorisation of the Nature Reserve.

We worked together with regional schools, where teachers and schoolchildren learned about dunes, coastal biodiversity and the importance of protected areas, and joined our activities. We worked together with the museums of Punta Alta and Monte Hermoso. We made photo expositions and talks that were offered to neighbors and tourists, to raise awareness about coastal dune conservation. In the museum of Monte Hermoso, more than 900 people visited our photo exposition during the Spring day celebrations. More activities, including a tour across the dune system, for general public are under way.

We organised activities together with local park-rangers who received training about the recognition of fauna and flora of the dune system.

Volunteers were invited to participate of our field research campaigns. They received training in species recognition and sampling techniques, and gained experience in field work.

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

Yes. The work will go on to support the conservation of the pampean coastal dunes, especially focusing at Coronel Dorrego's dune system and the management of the Arroyo los Gauchos Nature Reserve.

We are currently increasing our work team with new collaborators. We have already incorporated students from the University Maimonides as new team members, to expand the research on coastal dunes.

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

Our research results will be exposed at the XXXIV Jornadas Argentinas de Botánica (Argentine botanical meeting) and at the next Reunión Argentina de Ornitología (Argentine meeting on ornithology), both during September 2013.

We wrote a new article entitled "Pampean coastal dunes: Perspectives of a key but vulnerable ecosystem", that will be published in the journal "Azara" during March. Research data on dune vegetation were gathered in a paper that was sent for revision to the scientific journal *Ecología Austral*.

We designed factsheets about Plants, Birds and Nature Reserves of the Pampean marine coast, with information produced during our field campaigns and our investigations. This material is available for everyone at [www.fundacionazara.org.ar/Investigacion/Proyectos/Costas.htm](http://www.fundacionazara.org.ar/Investigacion/Proyectos/Costas.htm)

Together with Dr. Federico Kacoliris, dune lizard specialist, we will elaborate a manuscript about sand dune lizard assemblages in the dunes at Coronel Dorrego.

A sample of the endemic gramine *Poa schizantha*, which we found at the dunes in Coronel Dorrego, was given to the Instituto Darwinion for examination.

Interaction with other NGOs. We are working together with Fundación Patagonia Natural to produce new dissemination material regarding Coastal protected areas and the conservation of dune grasslands.

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

The grant was used during a year. That was the expected length of our project.

**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
Activity book for children	1480	1462	18	The original item was a Field Guide on Wild Birds, but the necessary amount was much greater than budgeted, so we elaborated an activity book instead.
Accommodation and diary expenditures	1400	1470	-70	Unexpected price increase.
Education materials	600	600	0	
Vehicle rental	740	440	300	We rented a tractor instead of a van, so price was lower.
Projector and projector screen	740	740	0	
Camping equipment	180	180	0	
Transportation	480	720	-240	Fuel and bus ticket prices increased along the year.
Binoculars	100	100	0	
External hard disk	90	90	0	
Contingencies	75	90	-15	Differences due to unexpected bank taxes.
<b>Total</b>	5885	<b>5892</b>	-7	Difference afforded with personal funds.

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

The process of creation and implementation of protected areas is usually slow. I think it's important to accompany this process from our place, as researchers and conservationists. We can assist governmental authorities by means of recommendations and facilitating fist hand information, in order to contribute to successful decision making. So, next steps should be focused on working together with official agencies to support the implementation process of protected areas like Arroyos los Gauchos, and to strengthen the conservation of natural areas on the Pampean coast.



Meanwhile, a comprehensive assessment of the entire Pampean coastal zone, especially on dune systems should be part of an upcoming challenge. This should include the detection of new priority areas for conservation.

**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?**

Yes. We incorporated the logo in puzzles, posters and other education materials that were distributed in schools. RSGF was mentioned in the Acknowledgements section of our technical manuscripts. The logo is present in our web page. It will also be included in the activity book for children, of which 1000 copies will be distributed in schools.

**11. Any other comments?**

I would like to thank Rufford Small Grants Foundation once more for the support given to our project. These funds were a significant contribution, that allowed us to continue our plan to promote the conservation of the pampean dunes, creating new opportunities to increase awareness of the importance of these ecosystems and maintaining existing conservation proposals through our activities.