

Project Update: December 2006

News and updates.

We had a really wonderful start in the third year of our project. We carried out several activities integrating education, research, and interaction with governments and other marine conservation projects, and we produced concrete outcomes.

Research: We defined criteria for successful marine conservation strategies in Argentina, integrating biological, socio-cultural, political and economical factors, based on international guidelines and on our experience in protected areas planning. In addition, we continued our fieldwork on cetaceans and prepared a GIS identifying priority sites for conservation in Golfo San Jorge based on dolphin distribution. As outcomes, we produced three scientific communications, recently presented at the National Marine Science Congress: "MPAs in Argentina: Strategies for a successful planning and implementation", "Northern Golfo San Jorge: New contributions to its the knowledge and appraisal" and "Risso's dolphin in northern and central Patagonia: visitant or inhabitant?"

Education: we offered talks at the Schools N° 42 and 736 in Puerto Madryn, we carried out an educational trip to the Protected Area Península Valdés with students of the local University, and lectured a course on marine conservation to tour guides. We published seven articles on marine conservation in local and national newspapers. Finally, we assisted in the preparation of the study plan for a new career at the Universidad Nacional de La Patagonia: Tourism based in Nature.

Interaction with other conservation initiatives and governments. We are participating in the first network for the integrated management of the Patagonian coast. This network, initially promoted by Fundación Patagonia Natural (FPN), involves planners and conservationists from the Patagonian coastal locations. In addition, we were part of several meetings with the Sea & Sky project, FPN, Wildlife Conservation Society and Centro Nacional Patagónico to create a coalition to work and share knowledge on marine protected areas.

Reaching the dream: The most important achievement:

We would like to share an outstanding collective achievement: On the 21 September at Comodoro Rivadavia, the Government of Chubut and the Administration of National Parks signed an agreement to create the **first National Marine Park** in Argentina in Northern Golfo San Jorge! Our wonderful, exceptional area, will be finally protected and recognized. The permanent strategy of community and government awareness carried out by our project since 2003 in Comodoro Rivadavia, through emotive newspaper articles, talks and reports submitted to key politicians, were vital in the good local acceptance. Now, a hard cooperative work to plan the area, and to achieve agreements with the fishing and oil industry will be necessary. We will continue in this track, thinking strategies, creating awareness and inspiring change, a real and effective change.