

## Final Evaluation Report

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Your Details	
Full Name	Mariana Lucía Bocelli
Project Title	Urban forests as a support for biodiversity in the Southern Andes
Application ID	40990-1
Date of this Report	06 March 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
Comprehend the value of urban forest as a support of biodiversity.		X		Animal surveys were delayed due to the late arrival of equipment from international suppliers. This objective is still in progress.
Assess the knowledge, perceptions and attitudes of inhabitants of urban and suburban areas about the services provided by urban forests, especially as biodiversity support and as a buffer to the surrounding natural areas.			X	
Generate messages and activities to improve people's awareness of native biodiversity and their roles, and enhance their involvement in conservation practice in their everyday's lives.			X	

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

a). We designed an ongoing citizen science initiative, where we managed to successfully engage local residents in identifying and reporting key sensitive species and their nests. Additionally, we established platforms for public outreach: Instagram (@beap\_arg), a webpage (<https://beapargentina.wixsite.com/beap/bosques-urbanos-1>, in Spanish).

b). We are currently working on a scientific publication on the interview data (knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes towards urban forests).

c). While we did not fully achieve Objective 1, we made substantial progress, particularly in conducting pilot tests (e.g., daily seasonal bird counts) and training observation skills (e.g., nest searches). We also focused on the Magellanic woodpecker (*Campephilus magellanicus*), one of the flagship species of the project, and secured all necessary permits to conduct fieldwork on private properties.

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

Argentina has been experiencing a political, institutional and economic crisis, significantly hindering the progress of academic and research projects nationwide. These challenges have particularly impacted Objective 1, as it requires equipment from abroad, requiring paperwork that must be processed by offices operating inefficiently due to staff shortages.

Initially, we struggled to find an institution capable of administering the Rufford funds without converting them to Argentine pesos, which would have led to rapid devaluation (for example, in January 2024, the country experienced a 20.6% inflation rate in one month - source: [indec.gob.ar](https://www.indec.gob.ar)). This devaluation would have impacted the planned research activities, as most of the budget was allocated to purchasing imported equipment. In March 2024, we finally secured an institution to manage the funds without converting them to Argentine pesos, though it charged an overhead fee.

Finally, we encountered bureaucratic obstacles that delayed the purchase and importation of the necessary equipment, further postponing data collection.

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

Through the citizen science initiative, we actively involved the local community in conservation efforts. Residents are progressively gaining a better understanding of the biodiversity in their urban forests and are encouraged to engage in everyday conservation practices.

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

Yes, objective 1 is currently ongoing and is expected to be fully achieved within a year. Additionally, I plan to collaborate with colleagues studying specific vertebrate groups (e.g., owls, woodpeckers, wild cats, marsupials) to conduct joint research and strengthen our capabilities and findings. The citizen science initiative is still in its early stages, and I intend to enhance activities and encourage parallel initiatives led by citizens in their neighbourhoods, schools, clubs, etc., so these efforts do not rely

solely on my involvement. I anticipate these activities will become key developments within the next two years..

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

It is a priority for us to share our findings through platforms accessible to the general public, such as social media (@beap\_arg on Instagram), our webpage (<https://beapargentina.wixsite.com/beap/inicio>) and neighbourhood groups. Once Objective 1 is completed, we plan to develop management guidelines in collaboration with local landowners, city managers, and National Park administrators through workshops.

I have also organised classroom activities for different age groups and have made a preliminary approach with two schools and their teachers to test my initial content. We plan to strengthen our collaboration this year and improve the materials and content to share with students. This material can then be expanded to other schools in the study area.

Additionally, publishing our research in international peer-reviewed scientific journals is essential within our scientific framework. We are currently preparing a publication based on the interview data and plan to publish findings from Objective 1.

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

1. 2025: Publish results from interviews in international peer-reviewed scientific journals.
2. 2025-2026: Complete Objective 1 and analyse data.
3. 2027: Develop management guidelines and publish results from Objective 1 in international peer-reviewed scientific journals.
4. 2025-2027: Conclude an educational program that local teachers can widely adopt, focused on urban wildlife and how to coexist with animals in our 'green cities'.
5. 2025-2027: Maintain public engagement platforms and continue outreach activities. Strengthen these efforts to the point where they can occasionally operate without my supervision or presence.

#### **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, all project-related materials feature The Rufford Foundation logo (see our webpage: <https://beapargentina.wixsite.com/beap/bosques-urbanos-1>). Future scientific publications will explicitly acknowledge The Rufford Foundation's support.

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

1. M. Lucía Bocelli – Project Leader: Responsible for data collection, social media management and webpage creation.

2. PhD Valeria Ojeda – Advisor: Collaborated in writing the methodology, assisted in pilot field tests and site selection for equipment placement, provided key support in purchasing equipment and handling bureaucratic challenges, and contributed to social media and webpage creation and content.

3. PhD María Laura Suarez – Co-advisor: Collaborated in writing the methodology, assisted in site selection, and contributed to social media and webpage content.

### **10. Any other comments?**

The Rufford grant has meant significant progress for my early doctoral career, and I plan to apply for the second-level grant to continue researching urban wildlife as well as working with the people living in northern Patagonia to increase their awareness and improve their knowledge, appreciation, and habits of caring for the natural environment.