

Final Evaluation Report

We ask all grant recipients to complete a project evaluation that helps us to gauge the success of your project. This must be sent in **MS Word and not PDF 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 – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please DO NOT fill in and submit this form until the project has been completed.

Complete the form in English. Note that the information may be edited before posting on our website.

Please email this report to jane@rufford.org.

Your Details	
Full Name	Alberto González Martín
Project Title	Identifying key food species and priority areas for the conservation of the threatened Military Macaw (<i>Ara militaris</i>) in Argentina.
Application ID	38181-1
Date of this Report	26/08/2024

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
Information about which plant species are used by the Military Macaw for feeding.		X		The project identified key plant species that the Military Macaw relies on for feeding in the northern province of Salta: <i>Cedrela saltensis</i> , <i>C. angustifolia</i> , <i>Cedrela sp.</i> , <i>Enterolobium sp.</i> This information is crucial for understanding the macaw's dietary needs and planning effective conservation strategies. Although it is an easily identifiable species, foraging observations are complicated due to the difficulty of access and the steep terrain of the areas where it lives. Likewise, the seasonal movements of the species according to food availability and the fact that it is a small population make it difficult to observe foraging events. There is still much information to gather in this sense, and we plan to continue to do so.
Data on the relative selection of those species, represented by the number of feeding events, number of individuals feeding on the plant, etc.		X		While we collected valuable data on the number of feeding events and individuals feeding on specific plants, the amount of data was less than anticipated. Adjustments in fieldwork strategies and methodology were made to maximize data collection. Even though information on this mean has

				been less than expected, we are planning to continue sampling in order to obtain more data.
Information about the structure and composition of the foraging patches.			X	Thanks to the identification of key species on the foraging patch. This allows us to comprehensively understand and identify critical habitats essential for their feeding. Guides the planning and management of protected areas, ensuring the availability of food resources at the right time. In addition, these data are fundamental for ecological restoration programs, focusing on planting suitable species and improving connectivity between patches.
Awareness of the importance of conservation among the local people.			X	The project succeeded in raising awareness about the importance of conserving the Military Macaw and its habitat. Educational workshops and community engagement activities were well-received, fostering a positive attitude towards conservation among the local population. Most of the participants expressed interest in the project and assured their intention to participate in future activities.

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

a). The project successfully identified key plant species that the Military Macaw uses for feeding in the northern province of Salta. This crucial information will guide the development of targeted conservation strategies, including habitat management and protection measures that focus on preserving these essential food sources. Additionally, a detailed report summarizing the findings is being prepared for the delivery to the different decision-makers in the conservation of the Military Macaw, providing valuable insights for habitat management and protection.

b). The data collected on the Military Macaw's foraging patterns and habitat use will be instrumental in informing future conservation plans and legislative protection efforts. This project laid the groundwork for more effective forest management, habitat restoration initiatives in the Piedmont Forest and supports the future creation of the Carapari Natural Reserve.

c). The educational activities significantly raised awareness among local communities about the importance of conserving the Military Macaw and its habitat. We developed and distributed educational materials, including flyers, posters, and interactive games, reaching schools (school 4541 of Acambuco, Salta and 8178 of Capiazuti-Aguaray, Salta), park ranger stations in the Acambuco Provincial Reserve, municipality of General Enrique Mosconi, Salta, etc. This allows for an enormous reach, ensuring that information reaches local communities and a wide variety of essential stakeholders, also including approximately 200 children and young adults who participated in the activities. These materials are designed to foster a sense of stewardship and encourage future involvement in conservation efforts. We also conducted workshops that provided participants with essential knowledge about the species and its preservation, resulting in a strong community commitment to future collaboration. At the end of each activity, participants were assessed as having acquired essential knowledge about the importance of the conservation of the species, and a positive attitude towards its preservation. Also, most of the participants showed interest on future collaboration on the project.

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

Due to political and economic instability in Argentina (specifically the significant devaluation of the Argentine peso estimated at 285,98% between July 2023 and July 2024) and the high inflation rate, the financial aspects of the project were heavily impacted. This caused a significant increase in the project's operating costs, such as transportation, inputs and field materials. This not only increased the planned expenditures, but also complicated financial planning and the ability to execute all scheduled activities as planned. In addition, the constant fluctuation in prices forced us to continually readjust the budget, directly affecting the implementation of several key initiatives. The affected aspects of the project were mainly educational activities and fieldwork, the latter being also conditioned by challenging climatic conditions. Specifically, two of the originally planned talks were cancelled, and sampling had to be conducted every two months instead of monthly. To tackle this, we slightly redistributed the funding to ensure that the core objectives of the project were met. This included focusing more on fieldwork and data collection by maximizing the number of sampling hours, while reducing the number of campaigns. To mitigate this, we also adjusted our fieldwork strategies, such as redistributing transects and refining observation methods, to maximize data collection within the available resources and time.

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

Local communities participated in workshops and talks that highlighted the importance of conserving the Military Macaw and its habitat. These activities increased their knowledge and understanding of local biodiversity. The educational activities, including age-oriented games and participatory talks, were received very positively. Participants expressed great interest in learning about the conservation of the Military Macaw through engaging and interactive methods. In school activities, students showed significant enthusiasm for studying nature and conserving endangered species. To increase the benefit they obtain from these activities, we emphasized on their potential academic pathways in science and biology, showcasing possible careers for their future and steps to continue preserving this species.

In addition to this, we successfully involved local people in fieldwork and conservation activities, providing them with hands-on experience and a sense of ownership in the conservation process. This engagement has built strong community support for ongoing and future conservation efforts. Through this project we managed to make essential contacts with departments of municipalities, local organizations and individuals dedicated to the protection of the environment. We established partnerships between local communities, conservation organizations, and government agencies, fostering a collaborative approach to conservation that benefits all stakeholders involved. These contacts will allow us to carry out future activities much better informed and adapted. This comprehensive approach has not only enhanced local capacity for conservation but has also inspired a new generation of conservationists dedicated to protecting the Military Macaw and its habitat. The enthusiastic participation and educational impact, demonstrates the project's potential for long-term success and sustainability, reinforcing the need for continued funding and support.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, there are plans to continue this work in the following years by expanding the study to cover more extensive areas and seasons, gather more information on key plant species used for feeding by the Military Macaw and continue to promote the awareness of the local population towards the conservation of this endangered species. The partnerships and community support established during this project will be crucial for future research and conservation efforts. Additional funding and resources will be sought to build on the initial findings and further protect the Military Macaw and its habitat.

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

The results will be shared through scientific publications, reports to conservation organizations, and presentations at conferences. Additionally, we will use our social media and local community meetings to disseminate the findings. Educational materials developed during the project will continue to be used to inform and engage the public.

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

We are planning on conducting long-term studies to gather additional data on the Military Macaw's feeding ecology and habitat requirements. We also plan to carry out studies on the reproduction of the species and its potential distribution. In addition, we also plan to advocate for the establishment of a protected area and improved legislative measures to safeguard critical habitats identified during the project. We would also like to continue to expand educational and engagement activities to further involve local communities in conservation efforts.

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, The Rufford Foundation logo was used on all educational materials (flyers and posters) and presentations produced during the project. The Foundation received publicity through our social media posts, community workshops, and local media coverage of the project's activities and outcomes. During activities and workshops, we acknowledged The Rufford Foundation's support, and we featured the logo in visual aids. This extensive use ensured that the Foundation's contribution was widely recognized and appreciated by a broad audience.

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

Nancy Gabriela Dominguez, an undergraduate student of Biological Sciences at the National University of Jujuy, played a crucial role in raising awareness and educating the public. Her volunteer work in environmental education and biodiversity protection was invaluable in fostering community engagement and support for the project.

Gloria Julieta Ramos, a park ranger at Acambuco Provincial Reserve and a forestry engineer, made significant contributions through her expertise in tree identification. Her expertise and logistical support were essential for accurately assessing and managing the macaw's habitat.

Adalberto Izarrualde, also a park ranger at Acambuco Provincial Reserve, brought extensive experience in fieldwork and bird identification. His skills were vital in conducting accurate surveys and monitoring the Military Macaw populations.

Beltrán Garay Diomedes, another park ranger at Acambuco Provincial Reserve. His previous experience in counting and surveying parrot populations greatly aided in understanding and tracking the species' distribution and reproductive success.

Bidoldo Ortiz, also a park ranger at Acambuco Provincial Reserve, contributed significantly with his expertise in counting and surveying parrot populations. His work was crucial in providing precise data for our conservation strategies.

Also, thanks to the selfless participation of many volunteers (some of them members of the local communities), field and educational activities could be carried out. These include: Fabricio Cuellar, Laura Susana García, Érika Anahí Chiri, Soledad Palomas and David González.

The success of this project owes much to the dedicated contributions of all these individuals whose expertise and commitment were essential in achieving our goals. Together, their collective efforts have greatly advanced our understanding of the Military Macaw and have been vital in the conservation of this species.

10. Any other comments?

The project has set a solid foundation for future conservation efforts for the Military Macaw in Argentina. The involvement of local communities and the partnerships formed during this project have been invaluable and will continue to support conservation initiatives. Despite the challenges faced, such as money devaluation and environmental threats, the project achieved significant milestones. These accomplishments have not only contributed to the immediate protection of the Military Macaw but also laid the groundwork for sustainable, long-term preservation strategies. The momentum generated by this project promises ongoing benefits, ensuring that the Military Macaw, along with its critical habitat, receives the attention and care necessary for its survival.