



La Plata, 6 March 2026

During December 2025, planning was finalised for the first fieldwork to Catamarca Province, specifically targeting a region where we had not previously conducted surveys. The primary objective was to assess the area and evaluate local ecological knowledge of the species, thereby confirming its presence, identifying new localities, and contributing to the delimitation of its geographical distribution.

Furthermore, outreach materials featuring The Rufford Foundation branding were designed and produced. These will be distributed during the fieldwork in order to enhance the project's institutional visibility in the region.

Progress

Citizen Science Outreach Materials

Comparative images of the different armadillo species inhabiting the region were printed and laminated to be used as reference material during interviews with local residents. In addition, 400 informational leaflets and 200 stickers were printed as outreach materials for the fieldwork (Figure 1).

Several posts were also published on Instagram in order to increase the visibility of new survey area. We additionally shared new records received through our social media channels and published an announcement informing the community about the support provided by The Rufford Foundation, tagging @ruffordgrants to formally acknowledge their collaboration.

Figura . Materials for Citizen Science.



Fieldwork

Institutional Collaboration

During December 2025, as part of the planning process, we established contact with Valeria Marcolli from the Directorate of Forest Resources, Soils and Biodiversity of Catamarca. We discussed the objectives of the project, and she expressed the institution's interest in supporting the initiative, committing to facilitate a future meeting with the province's wildlife inspectors in order to organise an open talk once the project has progressed further in the region.

The Directorate also expressed its willingness to collaborate with our work as the project develops.

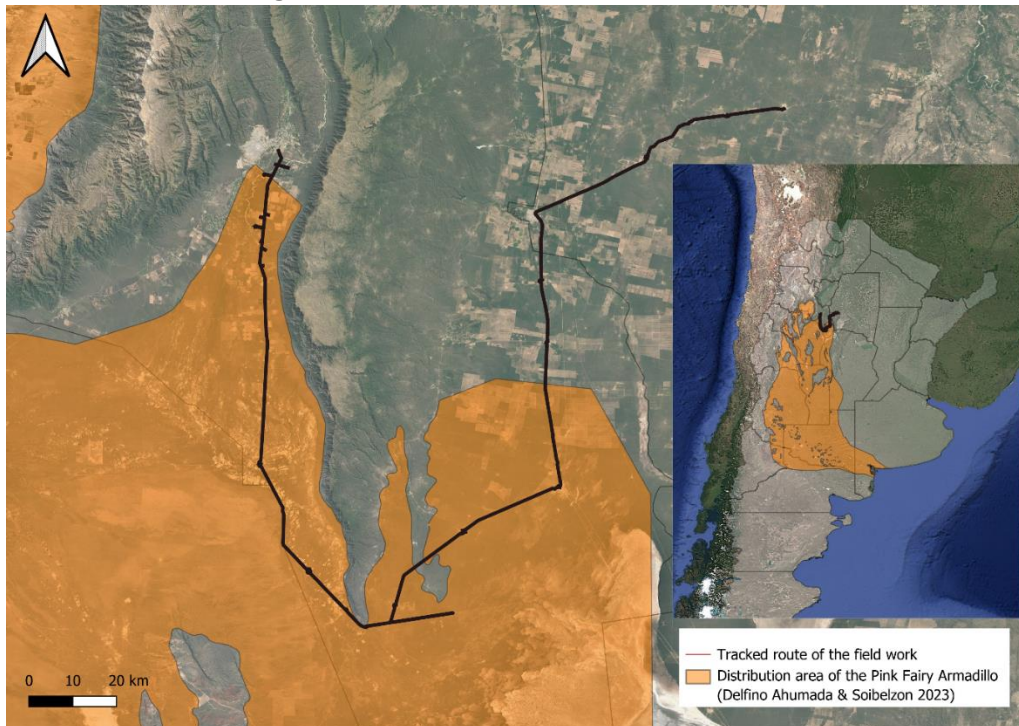
Fieldwork Development and Preliminary Results

The first fieldwork was carried out in January 2026 (Figure 2) and mainly covered the south-eastern region of Catamarca Province. In total, approximately 1,120 km were travelled. The trip proved to be very productive, allowing us to record new sightings, identify new localities of occurrence, and preliminarily establish the north-eastern distribution limit of the species.

Additionally, we extended the survey towards the south-western region of Santiago del Estero Province in order to assess whether *C. truncatus* could be included within the provincial mammal fauna, as the species is theoretically not known to occur in this province.

We surveyed Provincial Route 6 (Santiago del Estero) from the city of Frías to Villa San Martín. Most of the people interviewed were unfamiliar with the species, which preliminarily suggests the existence of a northern distribution limit in this area. However, one person provided very specific descriptions that suggest the possible presence of the species, indicating that we may be on the right track. We hope that future expeditions will provide more accurate information on this matter.

Figura 2. Tracked route of the Field Work.



New localities recorded in Catamarca

Regarding records obtained from localities previously unknown for the species, we were able to satisfactorily confirm that the species is indeed present in the area, including recent records dating from 2025.

The following localities in Catamarca Province were added: Las Tejas, Las Esquinas, Los Chañaritos, San Martín, Telaritos, Balde de la Punta, Casa de Piedra, Bosquecillo, La Guardia, Esquiú and Recreo. In each of these places we distributed leaflets and stickers among local residents in kiosks, supermarkets, veterinary clinics, schools and community centres. In addition, informal conversations and interviews with many local inhabitants. These activities are essential for making the project known within the community, increasing its visibility, and encouraging people to contribute by sharing their records.

First record after the fieldwork

On 05/02/2026 we received the first record resulting from this fieldwork (Figure 3). Erik, a truck driver from the locality of Casa de Piedra, sent us a photograph of a Pink Fairy Armadillo that he had found in a bucket. When we spoke with him, he was surprised to learn that the species is being studied, as in rural areas it is often associated with beliefs of bad luck when encountered.

For this reason, he shared information about the project with people he knows and asked them about the Pink Fairy Armadillo. Through this contact we received the first record from this area. We advised him to avoid handling the animal and recommended that he simply photograph it and release it immediately. We explained that the location, date and time were sufficient for the record. The individual was successfully released.

Figura 3. Foto de Erik del pichiciego en un balde.



Relevant cultural finding

A significant discovery was that in this region the species is not known as “Pichiciego” (Pink Fairy Armadillo), but rather as the “Rey de los quirquinchos” (King of the Armadillos). This finding has cultural and communication relevance and represents an important consideration for the next fieldwork trip of the project, as outreach materials will need to be adapted to respect local identity and avoid imposing an external name for the species.

Engagement with educational institutions

During this trip, we met and spoke with a teacher from School No. 47 in San Martín and a teacher from School No. 74 “Arturo M. Bass” in the locality of Casa de Piedra. We introduced them to our project and proposed organising a talk or workshop at their schools during our next visit to the area. Both expressed strong interest and offered their support in helping to organise these activities.

Interviews in local media outlets

Since receiving confirmation of support from The Rufford Foundation, I have organised and conducted several interviews with local media outlets in order to increase the visibility of the project, its progress, and the institutional support received.

These interviews helped disseminate the project’s objectives, strengthen engagement with the local community, and publicly acknowledge the support provided by The Rufford Foundation.

Links:

Interview on Catamarca Radio TV – 03/11/2025

<https://www.facebook.com/100063791610699/videos/1380334693482167>

Article in *El Textual* newspaper

https://diariotextual.com/inicio/index.php/2025/11/08/nuevo-registro-de-pichiciego-en-victorica/?fbclid=PAab21jcAN8XOBleHRuA2FibQlxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZA81NjcwNjczNDMzNTI0MjcAAaeqxGP3yx5Q_Bo8djGiYYZ3LfZSfCS3XpoEMBTjZ9aFP9TXXPVuMT_-S0Yfng_aem_C9ulpDO5-fRPncbujA-uEQ&utm_source=Google&utm_medium=paid&utm_campaign=Disp_Octubre

Magazine cover feature in El Ancasti (Catamarca)

<https://www.elancasti.com.ar/revista-express/el-pichiciego-las-huellas-un-mamifero-invisible-n599014>

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APPENDIX (PHOTOS)



