



## The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

### Final Report

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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. 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. 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**

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<b>Your name</b>	Fernando Arbeláez
<b>Project title</b>	Initial actions towards the conservation of three species of endangered River turtles in the Colombian Amazonia. Community-based nests monitoring and educational pilot programmes
<b>RSG reference</b>	16.12.07
<b>Reporting period</b>	April 2008 – November 2008
<b>Amount of grant</b>	£4700
<b>Your email address</b>	<a href="mailto:ferarbe@gmail.com">ferarbe@gmail.com</a> ; <a href="mailto:info@fundacionbiodiversa.org">info@fundacionbiodiversa.org</a>
<b>Date of this report</b>	15/12/2008

**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
To reduce pressure on the turtles populations due to nest and female predation by humans in the Santa Sofia Indigenous Reserve area and to estimate the number of nesting females and causes of nest destruction.			X	The presence of monitors on the conservation beach avoided most nests and almost all nesting females from being extracted by fishermen. The current state of nesting females on the beach and biological aspects of the eggs (hatching period, survival rate, etc.) were also estimated.
To create long- lasting awareness by the local inhabitants towards the conservation of river turtles through education programs with active and committed participation.		X		The education program held in Nuevo Jardin had a high local impact. This community, in particular the young people group, together with the Curuinsi Huasi Indigenous association, assumed the role of leaders and example of turtle conservation actors in the area, which had a positive influence on some of the neighbour communities. However, it is important to note that a regional level, there

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

The initiative was socialised with the neighbour communities. The greater difficulty was to find communities in the Indigenous Reserve that were reluctant to the initiative of preserving the turtles during the reproductive period on the protected beach. Being a pilot initiative in the area, fishermen from neighbour and far communities still visited the beach to extract the eggs, despite trying to convince them otherwise, for which several nests were lost. We tried to overcome such difficulties by taking the socialisation campaign to another level by promoting the initiative in regional radio and television with interviews with the conservation actors. A meeting was also held to socialise partial results of the program with several communities and environmental authorities from Peru and

Colombia. For some, awareness will take longer than for others, but the positive influence of the communities that are becoming conservation leaders in the area will probably soon have also an effect on the reluctant communities.

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

- During the whole season, 32 nests from two of the three species were registered. This is a revealing figure of the critical state of turtle populations, given that, according to local informants,

in previous years a single fisherman could extract up to 12 nests in just one night. It is also of high concern that no *P. expansa* nests were found.

- The awareness-rising towards turtle conservation program held in the Nuevo Jardin community had locally a very clear impact. One rewarding indicator of this was the result of a control tour carried out by Corpoamazonia and the Colombian coastguards to confiscate turtles and eggs during the peak nesting season, in which Nuevo Jardin was one of the few communities of the whole region that had no infractions. Three other neighbour communities, two from Colombia and two from Peru showed also high concern for turtle conservation and agreed to participate in the continuation of the program. We also drew the attention to environmental authorities from both countries about the need of their support for local actions towards turtle conservation.
- The experiences learnt from the environmental education and the nests monitoring pilot programs allowed to evaluate and plan the best approach for the continuation of the initiative and to improve the activities that will be replicated.

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

The Curuinsi Huasi indigenous association coordinated and carried out the nests monitoring with great responsibility and commitment towards turtle conservation. This will allow them to use their experiences and gained knowledge to train other local conservation groups in these activities. The environmental education program made emphasis on a group of six young people from Nuevo Jardin in order to generate involvement and appropriation of the program. This group, besides participating actively in the nests monitoring, learned to operate audio-visual equipment, carried out interviews, helped organising the activities and wrote the story for a turtle conservation stage play performed at the community. Several activities were held with children of the community to raise awareness towards turtle conservation through art and play. The main activity was a turtle conservation-oriented stage play written by the young people group, based on traditional stories and myths they gathered from the interviews and meetings with elder people, performed by the children, and in which many people participated, mainly women, in the stage and costumes setting. In addition to a live presentation of the play, it was filmed and edited on a video that was later given to the young people group. This community and Curuinsi Huasi association are without doubt becoming leaders and example of turtle conservation in the area.

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

Based experiences of this pilot program, a continuation was planned to take it to another level in which: more communities from Peru and Colombia are involved; conformation and capacity-building of local conservation groups are prioritized; the awareness-rising campaign is expanded; and conservation actions from local groups are improved and have an effective and strong support from environmental authorities from Peru and Colombia. The idea is to give to local conservation groups enough tools to be able to plan and carry out coordinated and complementary conservation actions and to look for and obtain support from governmental and non-governmental institutions. By accomplishing this, local communities will realize that conservation is a viable alternative to exploitation of natural resources. By the end of the nesting season, a meeting was held between traditional authorities from four communities and environmental authorities from both countries. In it, the continuation of the program was concerted and a stronger and effective support for future conservation actions from local conservation groups by the environmental authorities was discussed. These conservation actors emphasized the need of taking actions to save the species and committed to participate in the continuation of the program.

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

News and events on the program have been and will continue to be constantly updated on the webpage of Fundacion BioDiversa Colombia ([www.fundacionbiodiversa.org](http://www.fundacionbiodiversa.org)). Interviews with conservation actors were carried out in regional radio and television. The video of the stage play has been given to different conservation organisations that work in the Amazonia so they can use it to promote turtle conservation, such as: Corpoamazonia, Tropenbos-Colombia Foundation, the Initiative for Conservation in Andean Amazon and other small organisations. A video documentary is being prepared to further diffuse the program locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Experiences of this program are meant also to be shared in conservation congresses and meetings.

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

The RSG was used in from April to November 2008. The monitoring pilot program was planned from June to September, but it actually occurred from July to November. This occurred because the nesting season was delayed due to the late appearing of the beaches, and because in September the nesting season ended, but the new-borns only finished hatching in mid-November. The environmental education pilot program was planned for one month (June). However, in order to carry out all the prepared activities, it took actually half a month more, until mid-July.

**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.**

Budget Items	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	RSG spent	Other sources spent <sup>a</sup>	Comments
<b>Personnel</b>	<b>£ 2,318</b>	<b>£ 2,680</b>	<b>-£ 362</b>	<b>£ 1,490</b>	<b>£ 1,190</b>	b
Local guides (monitors)	£ 966	£ 1,190	-£ 224	£ -	£ 1,190	
Professionals	£ 966	£ 1,190	-£ 224	£ 1,190		
Students general expenses	£ 193	£ 150	£ 43	£150		
Volunteers general expenses	£ 193	£ 150	£ 43	£150		
<b>Local travel (to the area and within it)</b>	<b>£ 2,005</b>	<b>£ 1,954</b>	<b>£ 51</b>	<b>£ 1,019</b>	<b>£ 935</b>	
Airfare (Bogotá-Leticia-Bogotá)	£ 942	£ 890	£ 52	£475	£ 415	c
Transport to the areas (transport by river)	£ 58	£ 104	-£ 46	£60	£ 44	d
Boat and engine rental and gas	£ 1,005	£ 960	£ 45	£484	£ 476	e
<b>Food and Lodging</b>	<b>£ 1,373</b>	<b>£ 1,309</b>	<b>£ 64</b>	<b>£ 1,000</b>	<b>£ 309</b>	f
Food and Lodging	£ 870	£ 982	-£ 112	£715	£ 267	
Drinks and snacks for workshops	£ 116	£ 89	£ 27	£47	£ 42	
Snacks for 2 monitors	£ 387	£ 238	£ 149	£238		
<b>Materials and services</b>	<b>£ 1,171</b>	<b>£ 1,267</b>	<b>-£ 96</b>	<b>£ 473</b>	<b>£ 794</b>	

Video cassettes	£ 48	£ 65	-£ 17	£ -	£ 65	
Video documentary edition	£ 326	£ 327	-£ 1	£ 140	£ 187	
Photographic films and processing	£ 48	£ -	£ 48	£ -	£ -	g
Flashlights and batteries	£ 97	£ 104	-£ 7	£ 104	£ -	
Materials for workshops and monitoring	£ 72	£ 290	-£ 218	£ -	£ 290	
Design and printing of educational material	£ 483	£ 411	£ 72	£ 159	£ 252	h
Medicaid and emergencies	£ 97	£ 70	£ 27	£ 70	£ -	
<b>Equipment</b>	<b>£ 1,285</b>	<b>£ 1,285</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>£ 1,285</b>	
Laptop	£ 483	£ 483	£ -	£ -	£ 483	
GPS	£ 48	£ 48	£ -	£ -	£ 48	
Video camera	£ 387	£ 387	£ -	£ -	£ 387	
Digital and film photo cameras	£ 290	£ 290	£ -	£ -	£ 290	
Microphones for camcorder	£ 77	£ 77	£ -	£ -	£ 77	
<b>Post-project expenses</b>	<b>£ 725</b>	<b>£ 733</b>	<b>-£ 8</b>	<b>£733</b>	<b>£ -</b>	
Administration (FBC)	£ 483	£ 483	£ -	£483	£ -	
Reports production, results dissemination and fund raising for continuation and replication	£ 242	£ 250	-£ 8	£250	£ -	
<b>Total GBP</b>	<b>£ 8,877</b>	<b>£ 9,228</b>	<b>-£ 351</b>	<b>£ 4,715</b>	<b>£ 4,513</b>	

#### Comments:

Calculated exchange rate on 29/02/2008 when money was transferred: 1000 COP = 0.28 GBP The main cause of budgeted vs. actual amount difference was the drop in GBP exchange rate from November 2007, when the application was made (1000 COP = 0.24 GBP on 29/11/2007), to February 2008, when the money was transferred. Particular comments follow: <sup>a</sup> Other sources were: Scott Neotropical Fund, IdeaWild, Fundacion BioDiversa Colombia and own funding. <sup>b</sup> Wages increased in Pounds because of drop in exchange rate. <sup>c</sup> We booked the tickets in advance to get a better price. <sup>d</sup> Transport by boat was more expensive than expected due to high season, and we had to travel to and from Leticia (the main port) quite often for organisation purposes. <sup>e</sup> The Curuinsi Huasi association had bought a boat with engine, thus renting was much cheaper.

<sup>f</sup> The environmental education program was initially planned for one month but it actually took 15 days more. That is why food and lodging for researchers and students costs were increased. During the workshops and monitoring we provided locally made snacks and drinks, which reduced costs. This proved to be cost-effective and allows community members to benefit. <sup>g</sup> We used digital cameras, thus no film processing was needed. <sup>h</sup> This item was underestimated in the original budget. Both the educational activities and the monitoring required several materials that were not taken into account in the application. This has to be considered for the continuation of the program, in particular if the program is replicated in several communities.

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

The meeting held with the communities and the environmental authorities regarding the

continuation of the program showed their interest and their commitment towards turtle conservation. It is crucial now to continue the process in 2009 by giving tools to local conservation groups to be able to plan and carry out organized specific conservation actions and to seek for support by themselves among funding institutions to undertake them. Furthermore, it is fundamental to continue the awareness-rising campaign in order to feed the seed of conservation that was plated in the communities of the area. The momentum is propitious, especially considering the interest of the local inhabitants and the decimated state of the turtle populations.

**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?**

The RSGF logo was placed with a link in the webpage of the project in Fundacion BioDiversa Colombia website as one of the funding institutions:

[http://www.fundacionbiodiversa.org/proyectos\\_tortugas\\_amazonas2008\\_eng.htm](http://www.fundacionbiodiversa.org/proyectos_tortugas_amazonas2008_eng.htm)

Credit was also given in the video of the play that was given to the local communities and institutions and was also uploaded on the Web:

<http://video.google.es/videoplay?docid=6075199196786203964&ei=dStASeGfBoruqALCqKDYDw&q=torichiga>

Further materials are being prepared, such as awareness posters for the communities and a video documentary. In all these materials and other further publications, credit will be given to RSGF as funding institution of the pilot program. Digital copies of these products will be sent as soon as they are available.