

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Diego Ricardo Méndez Mojica
Project Title	Movement ecology and conservation of the King Vulture (<i>Sarcoramphus papa</i>) in the Andes of central Bolivia
Application ID	24763-1
Grant Amount	£5,000
Email Address	diemndez@gmail.com
Date of this Report	29 December 2019

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
Tag and track King Vultures via telemetry techniques				I could not achieve this objective; I am still trying to trap and tag king vultures with GPS transmitters.
Explore and characterize the important areas for the conservation of King Vultures				Although I have not trapped and tagged king vultures yet, I could survey the study area and record the species.
Assess sustainable alternatives for the coexistence between people and vultures				We drafted a preliminary vulture/condor management strategy in collaboration with local people.

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

My project depended on trapping and tagging king vultures with GPS transmitters. So far, I was not able to do this, and I am still trying. Trapping these vultures was difficult because: 1) they have proven extra wary of traps, 2) they are naturally rare in the study area, 3) during the study period, there was plenty of carcasses in the study area so that scavengers naturally preferred the carcasses that were not associated to traps, 4) inestimable events like domestic dogs bursting in the trapping site when the vultures were feeding and scaring them away.

A situation that unavoidably affected the progression of my project was that Bolivia went through a highly conflictive and violent period of socio-political unrest between October and November 2019 that prevented to do any kind of field work for approximately 30 days.

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

As a preliminary result, I was able to survey the study area and characterise it as an important area for the conservation of king vultures, specifically as a feeding area of approximately 484 km². During the 20-month study period I recorded 17 events of scavengers feeding on naturally occurring carcasses. The environmental and ecological characteristics of the study area allow the availability of carcasses – mainly of domestic ungulates – at sites that are still safe for vultures to land and feed.

Following this categorisation, a preliminary strategy for the management of vultures and condors in the study area is being drafted in collaboration with the local people. This strategy includes straightforward suggestions for the management of domestic dogs that may aggressively compete with vultures and condors at

carcasses, as well as suggestions for cattle management. This suggestions focus on: 1) a better care of dogs through well planned feeding, and 2) prevent and avoid that cattle give birth in remote areas where newborn livestock (cows, sheep, goats) is more vulnerable, so that livestock loss is reduced and the perception that it is usually attacked and/or predated by vultures and condors is clarified. Vultures and condors may actually attack newborn or weak livestock, however these are rare events and it is important to understand that this happens either because this livestock was predestined to die due to its status or because the lack of correct management or protection.

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

The participation of local people was crucial to: 1) select and locate the best trapping locations, 2) survey the study area in search of king vultures, 3) discuss and evaluate the factors that affect the coexistence of vultures and people as the basis for a first draft of a vulture management strategy. Besides the highly productive knowledge exchange and fraternisation that is usually related to field work, there is no tangible benefit for local people for now. Once we finish the vulture management strategy that will be complemented with the essential telemetry data, local people will be better informed and prepared to coexist with vultures and condors, and likely to use them as strategic touristic resources.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. This project is part of a long-term conservation initiative. I aim to consolidate my raptor research programme as a tool to make my country a safe place for vultures. I will invariably accomplish my goal of trapping and tracking king vultures and will use the obtained data as originally stated in the project proposal.

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

So far, I have presented the preliminary results of my project once, at the XI Neotropical Ornithological Congress in Costa Rica, held between 28 July and 1 August 2019 with a poster entitled *Distribution and movements of King Vultures (Sarcoramphus papa) in central Bolivia*. I will continue publishing the results that are obtained from this project, both as conference presentations and scientific/popular papers.

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

The grant was used over a period of 20 months; this is 8 months longer than expected.

8. Budget: 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. It is important that you retain the management accounts and all paid invoices relating to the project for at least 2 years as these may be required for inspection at our discretion.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Field supplies	31	31		
Fuel	62	62		
Food	1194	1194		
Perishable supplies	208	208		
Laboratory tests	36		-36	To be purchased.
Equipment				
GPS/GSM Transmitter (80 g) – (Movetech Telemetry) / unit / x4	2647	2800	+153	
Teflon ribbon / ft / x33 ft.	111		-111	This item was provided by my supervisor, José Sarasola; I used the difference to cover the cost of the transmitters.
Marking kit – (Maquia Ambiental) / unit / x1	424	424		
Wing tags – (Maquia Ambiental) / unit / x8	46		-46	Opposite to the transmitters, this item is not indispensable; I used the difference to cover the cost of the transmitters.
Wire mesh (23'x23') / noose carpet trap / unit / x1	223	223		
Fishing line / noose carpet trap / 300 yd. /40 lb / x1	19	19		
Total	5,000	4961	-39	Once I trap the King Vultures, I will use this amount for its original purpose.

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

The most important step is to succeed in trapping and tracking king vultures. Then, I will continue elaborating the vulture management strategy with local people until

we have an official document. As I mentioned lines above, I will continue with my project and vulture conservation initiative until I meet all my objectives in this regard.

10. 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. I included the logo in the poster I presented at the XI Neotropical Ornithological Congress. I will acknowledge the support of the Rufford Foundation in every presentation or publication that is produced based on the results of this project.

11. Please provide a full list of all the members of your team and briefly what was their role in the project.

David Mendoza – He is the park ranger who assisted me in the field while working at ANMI “El Palmar” protected area.

Fabricio Claure – Biologist. He was my field assistant throughout the project.

Virgilio Ortega – Local communal leader. He was the main contact person and collaborator during field work.

Mauro Núñez – Local peasant. Assisted during most of the field work.

Eliana Cabrera – Occasional field assistant.

Wendy Buezo – Occasional field assistant.

12. Any other comments?

As I said in my annual report, I will persevere until I accomplish all the proposed objectives in the best way possible, to honour my original project proposal, for the good of my research and specially to succeed conserving vultures. At your request, I will readily inform or clarify on any aspect of the project. I am deeply thankful for having been awarded a grant, for having received your trust to carry out my project and I hope I can apply for a grant of The Rufford Foundation in the future.