

## *Ecosystem Assessment Mentoring Scheme Final Report*



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*21<sup>st</sup> November 2014*



**Calidris**

Asociación para el estudio y conservación  
de las aves acuáticas en Colombia.

## Summary

These past months have been a great learning experience. Due to the SGA Ecosystem Services Mentoring Scheme I had the opportunity to broaden my understanding of ecosystem services and the need to assess them in order to contribute to better and more informed conservation management, as well as has deepened my knowledge on the ecosystem services assessment tool (TESSA) developed by BirdLife International.

- This report focusses on:
- The activities carried out to accomplish the learning objectives
- How the new skills and capacities will be put into use in future assessments using TESSA
- Financial report on how the mentoring funds were utilised
- Plans to continue the mentoring relationship

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 TESSA

TESSA guides local non-specialists through a selection of relatively accessible methods to identify which ecosystem services might be important at a site, and to evaluate the magnitude of benefits that people obtain from them currently, compared with those expected under alternative land uses.

The toolkit recommends the use of existing data where appropriate and places emphasis on enabling users to collect new field data in a relatively low cost and effort. By using TESSA, could also gain valuable information about alternative land-uses and can incorporate the data collected in the field into regular monitoring programs. It includes methods for assessing global climate regulation, flood protection, water provision, water quality improvement, harvested wild goods, cultivated goods, and nature-based recreation. Also provides guidance on how to pull together the service-by-service data into an overview of ecosystem service change at a site-level.

The tool, guides on assessing the distributional aspects of ecosystem services provided to local, national and global communities, and advises how to disaggregate the values at the local level that were measured to reveal potential inequities in the costs borne and benefits received by individuals.

I have learned a lot about the ecosystem services assessment tool (TESSA) developed by BirdLife

International. TESSA is the ecosystem services assessment method that I am learning with the support and guidance from my mentor, Isadora Angarita-Martínez from BirdLife international. The process has been enriching, through talks via Skype and email exchanges, Isadora explained the background, purpose and logic behind a TESSA assessment. She was always ready to answer my questions and to provide feedback on each step. On September she visited Colombia and guided me through the necessary steps to plan and implement the data collection and analysis.

## 1.2 La Bertha

La Bertha is the community area where we are using TESSA to assess some of the ecosystem services this area provides. La Bertha is a small town of no more than 50 families that economically depend on agriculture activities.

During the past seven years, the community has been working on the development of alternative and sustainable production of rice. 85% of the rice produced in the region of Valle del Cauca comes from La Bertha, making rice production one of the main sources of family income.

In 2008 Calidris and La Bertha's farmers, began working on the "Wings of Rice" initiative, focusing on the promotion of best practices for rice production, while benefiting the biodiversity using and depending on these rice fields. This experience led to the creation of the seal "Bird-friendly Rice" by highlighting the contribution of these crops to the conservation of bird diversity in the region.

In this context, it was important to assess ecosystem services in order to have good more information for future management decisions and allocation of land for different uses in the area. An understanding of the contributions of these services to local economy and social welfare was also needed to incorporate them into future management decisions.

## 1.3 Mentee

Patricia Falk (author of this report) is the Education Coordinator at Asociación Calidris, being responsible for the engagement with local communities. One of our major roles in Calidris is to provide communities with the tools to better understand and manage their surroundings while securing their livelihoods. Although we understand the importance of the provision of ecosystem services in the livelihoods of rural communities, we lack the knowledge and skills to assessing them.

Due to our close relationship as official collaborators (soon to become partner) of BirdLife International, we got to know of the practicalities and advantages of using TESSA. As part of the SGA Mentoring Scheme we conducted a pilot study using TESSA at La Bertha (one of Calidris' long

term sites.

#### **1.4 Mentor**

Isadora Angarita-Martínez is the Ecosystem Services focal point for the BirdLife Americas Secretariat and she is the point of contact for TESSA, she was recently trained on the use of TESSA and is leading ecosystem services assessments together with BirdLife partners in the region. As the future BirdLife partner in Colombia the mentoring relationship with Isadora will be maintained through the projects we developed together with the Americas Secretariat, as Isadora is also the focal point of the growing relationship Calidris-BirdLife.

## ***2. Objectives***

Learning on the requirements, implications and of TESSA by:

1. Implementing a rapid appraisal (participative prioritisation) of ecosystem services together with local authorities and local enterprises.
2. Carrying out an ecosystem services assessment using TESSA in the Colombian context.
3. Understanding how to communicate TESSA results to local communities and decision makers.

By being trained on the use of TESSA, being able to:

4. Lead future ecosystem services assessments using TESSA.

## ***3. Activities conducted as part of the Mentoring Scheme***

Activities are presented by objective.

### **3.1 Objective 1. Implementing a rapid appraisal (participative prioritisation) of ecosystem services together with local authorities and local enterprises.**

- Secondary information and grey literature from the area and similar zones was revised in order to better understand the site and the ecosystem services it provides.
- Maps of the area were gathered that would help to visualise the site and different habitats.
- A first workshop with La Berta's residents and the regional environmental authority (CVC) and a biologist of Calidris was held on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2014. During the workshop the community understood the concept of ecosystem services, the services La Bertha provides were identified and prioritised. Also the trends in provision of the services were discussed and a "future plausible

alternative state<sup>1</sup>” was established. The future plausible alternative state that defined by La Bertha inhabitants was of having only ecological/organic rice production in the area.

-Data gathered at the workshop was analysed and discussed with the mentor to plan de second phase of the assessment (Objective 2).

#### **Objective 1: Learning Achievements**

- *Understanding of the objectives of the TESSA preliminary scoping appraisal*
- *Gained experience conducting a community workshop to present ecosystem services concepts as well as to collect information on provision of ecosystem services at a specific site.*

#### **3.2 Objective 2. Carrying out an ecosystem services assessment using TESSA in the Colombian context.**

-Selection of the field methods to collect information during the field assessment.

- Meetings with village leader and who is also already producing ecological/organic rice. He contributed greatly with information on how that future alternative state “would look like”.

-Training of local girls from the local youth group on collecting data through surveys.

-Collection of data and preliminary analyses.

#### **Objective 2: Learning Achievements**

- *Understanding of the logic behind the selection of methods when using TESSA.*
- *Practical training on the selection of methods to assess services.*
- *Comprehension of the reasoning to design surveys (interviews) considering the information available and target audiences.*

#### **3.3 Objective 3. Understanding how to communicate TESSA results to local communities and decision makers.**

Due to a delayed on the start date of the mentoring scheme, the schedule is a bit back behind. Thus, the next step is to finalise the analyses of the data collected during the field assessment and communicate the results to the local community of La Bertha, and to other relevant stakeholders such as, local and regional authorities.

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<sup>1</sup> Future plausible alternative state: potential future management scheme the site of interest will present. It could be that management continues as today, or it could be that it goes to a more “negative state” such as an open sky mine, or a more “conservative state” such as the establishment of a protected area.

3.4 Objective 4. Lead future ecosystem services assessments using TESSA.

Now that we understand the implications of TESSA, we would like to carry out ecosystem services assessments in other long term Calidris' sites, such one site in the Colombian Pacific Coast where there are three important features for conservation: an area of Mangroves in very good condition (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvCnWFOVSN4>), the most important area in the Colombian Pacific for shorebirds (<http://www.whsrn.org/site-profile/delta-del-rio-iscuande>), and a community committed to conservation of their territory through a signed agreement (<http://calidris.org.co/?p=5037&lang=en>).

### 4. Future Plans

-As mentioned above, assessing ecosystem services at important sites in the Colombian Pacific Coast.

-There have been initial conversations with RARE (<http://www.rare.org>) to collaborate on ecosystem services assessments at their Pride Campaigns for Reciprocal Agreements for Water Sites (<http://www.rare.org/pride#.VG94MYuG9yw>, <http://www.rare.org/stories/reciprocal-water-agreements-watershed-protection#.VG94fluG9yw>) . Specifically to assess ecosystem services previous to a Pride Campaign and right after the campaign as a measurement tool to evaluate the impact of their actions, establishing a monitoring scheme at the sites to periodically assess services and to train RARE staff on the use of TESSA.

-As the Calidris' affiliation with BirdLife to become the Colombian partner is growing, and being Isadora (current mentor) the BirdLife focal point for such relationship, it is planed the mentoring relationship continues further beyond this collaboration. If the assessments in the Colombian Pacific Coast and the plans with RARE materialised, Isadora will support remotely the assessments and therefore contributes to my continued training.

### 5. Financial Report

**Requested budget**

Travel (domestic and international - where applicable)	Subsistence
International travel \$ 400	Food and lodging (mentee and mentor 27 days X \$30) \$ 810
Domestic travel \$300	Implementation of TESSA related costs (workshops, sampling, interviews) \$ 1800

The requested budget was for 3.310,00 USD to cover the costs of implementing TESSA in the

field, including an international ticket for Isadora Angarita-Martínez's travelling to Colombia to assist on the field assessment and contribute to my training. However, only 2.733,00 USD were spent, with a surplus of 577,00 USD (not spent). In the end the international flight ticket was not cover by SGA funds, as due to other projects she had to travel to Colombia on the same dates.

I kindly request the used of the unspent funds (or part of it) to cover the costs related to communicating the results from the assessment to local communities, local and regional authorities as well as local media. If possible, I would also like to use the remnant funds to prepare a short publication with the results from the assessment and the experience.