



Owls in agroecosystems: how can they help in conserving biodiversity?

**In association with Anahi Formoso,
PhD (IPEEC CONICET)**

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I arrived in this cold and dry land with a mission: Find new solutions to protect owls. But as the days have gone and my understanding of the reality of this environment has grown, I've discovered that it's not just about that. It's about people. About how, over time, our life has become distant from other species. Our respect for them doesn't seem to exist.

Not just here, not just about owls. Around the world. At the same time, for me, thinking about solutions that don't include humans no longer makes sense. So how do we move forward? Changing this paradigm is the great challenge of our conservationists generation

First, it is necessary to invest more in research, using the structure and human capital that already exists here. Doing this together with environmental education actions, with campaigns in schools, is essential. This can enable activities such as participatory monitoring of owls, with residents sharing photos and records of where the birds live

This is also the time to talk about the ecosystem services performed by owls, promoting the population's understanding of the importance and role they have in the environment, promoting rodent population control and, among many other benefits, reducing losses in agricultural crops. That's a powerful message to convince the local population.

Encouraging agroecological production, as already exists here on some properties, is another solution. In the short term, the owls are threatened with poisoning to death, and in the long term, the rodents acquire resistance to these chemicals. Biological control of owls is another key message.

Lastly, and most importantly, we need money to do all of this. The province of Chubut is a tourist region, precisely because of its biodiversity. Thousands of people come here to admire the whales, sea lions, flamingos, and the unique landscapes of the region. Raising funds through a minimum entry fee for tourists, as is already the case in many parts of the world, has the potential to raise a lot of money. Well applied, this can change paradigms through effective actions, for owls and for people. Together.

These are some of the ideas of a young conservationist who has had intense days of work here. Who believes in a more sustainable future, and in harmonious life between species.



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