

Reintroduction of the Floreana Mockingbird *Mimus trifasciatus*

Principal Investigator: Luis Ortiz-Catedral
Reporting Period: 1-30 September 2011 and
October to December 2011



A Floreana mockingbird calling in its territory. Gardner Islet.

Photo: L. Ortiz-Catedral



Objective 1. Visit Champion and Gardner Islets to resume catching and ringing of Floreana mockingbirds.

On September 23rd I visited Champion Islet accompanied by volunteers Marleen Baling (Malaysia) and Jo Leddington and Liz Whitwell (New Zealand). We conducted a census for mockingbirds and registered 57 ringed individuals. In addition we captured and ringed five juveniles found scattered throughout the islet. We have continued with the ringing methodology using ionised coloured rings which appear to be more durable and, unlike plastic rings, do not overlap onto each other allowing for easy identification of the birds. We also captured an adult bird, already ringed, and replace the plastic rings with metal ones. While visiting the islet we did not notice further nesting behaviours among the birds. Every sighted individual was carefully observed via a 70-300 mm camera lens or 8 x 40 binoculars for signs of avian pox. Whenever possible photographs of the individuals were taken. No signs of pox lesions or deformities were noticed in the 63 individuals examined (57 ringed plus the six newly ringed juveniles). On September 24th I visited Gardner Islet where I looked for indications of nesting activities but none were found. I captured, weighed, measured and ringed a juvenile mockingbird. Including the latest ringed juvenile, a total of 262 individuals have been ringed on Gardner Islet. Estimating survival continues to be difficult as numerous mockingbirds have lost one or two colour rings and thus cannot be individually identified. However, since July 2011, plastic rings are gradually being replaced with ionised coloured rings. Therefore, in coming months a more accurate survival estimate for this population will be available. I carried out a rapid survey to estimate population size in the plateau area of the islet. A total of 21 ringed and three unringed individuals were noticed. Assuming a conservative estimate of survival of 50%, these sightings yield an estimate of 150 mockingbirds in the plateau.



A ringed Floreana mockingbird on Gardner Islet. Photo: L. Ortiz-Catedral

Objective 2. Participate in training workshops for Naturalist Guides in the Galápagos Islands with talks on the themes: Floreana mockingbird population dynamics, conservation of the mangrove finch on Isabela Island and biological control and ecological restoration in the archipelago.

Between September 1st and 20th I participated with 13 talks (30 min each) to groups varying between 30-35 participants on Santa Cruz and San Cristobal Islands. The talks aroused the interest of the Naturalist Guides, who represent the first source of information for most tourists visiting the Galápagos Islands. During the talks I stressed the importance of multi-institutional projects to advance conservation goals in the archipelago and the need for greater involvement of local conservationists/students in projects administered by the Charles Darwin Foundation.



A ringed Floreana mockingbird during a territorial display on Gardner Islet. Photo: L. Ortiz-Catedral.

Other activities

Starting October 1st through to December 15th I was on holiday. In the month of November, a piece on the Floreana mockingbird project appeared online in *The Guardian* newspaper (link:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/blog/2011/nov/28/floreana-mockingbird-galapagos>) the filming for this newspiece was done in July 2011.

During the month of November I assisted in an application for funds to Mohamed bin Zayed Conservation Trust and budget preparation for GCT. I also participated in the elaboration of the Annual Operations Plan of the Charles Darwin Foundation, to be presented to the Direction of the Galápagos National Park. During December 2011 I started re-entering data collected in the field between January 2011-September 2011 as my computer and hard drive were stolen during a trip in mainland Ecuador. No data were lost but databases need to be updated *de novo*.

Objectives for 1-31st January 2012

1. Visit Champion and Gardner Islets for signs of nesting activity of mockingbirds
2. Prepare 2nd 6-month report of the project for the year 2011.

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Professor Richard Dawkins and Lalla Ward