

# Floreana Mockingbird 2014 Field Season Update



Project title: Conservation of the Floreana Mockingbird

Study species: Floreana Mockingbird (*Mimus trifasciatus*)

Conservation Status: **Critically Endangered**

Location: Champion Islet (90° 23.100' W, 01° 14.240' S); Gardner Islet (90° 26.060' W, 01° 17.865' S), Galapagos Islands, Ecuador

Global Population estimate:  $\approx$  300 - 450

## Hola from the Enchanted Islands!

The 2014 field season of the project “Conservation of the Floreana Mockingbird” is officially underway. From November 25<sup>th</sup> to December 7<sup>th</sup> we have conducted two fieldtrips to Champion and Gardner Islets, the last strongholds of this critically endangered species. The aims of these field trips were to begin the annual counts of individuals; to continue with field training to field rangers on monitoring and bird handling techniques and to collect blood and feather samples of mockingbirds for future genetic analyses.

Here is a summary of our activities:

After 288 man-hours in the field, we collected a total of 41 blood and feather samples of mockingbirds. We also replaced colour rings of 46 individuals. Having colour-ringed individuals is essential to conduct the annual counts of mockingbirds which will inform us how these populations are doing. We also provided basic training on mockingbird handling and data processing to two rangers from the Galapagos National Park and four volunteers from Ecuador, Mexico, New Zealand and the United States. To determine if the mockingbirds started breeding we walked some 26 km of tracks around Champion and Gardner Islets. No nests found yet, but hopefully in the coming weeks we'll spot the first nests/eggs. The mockingbirds were their usual selves, approaching us inquisitively (which comes handy when one wants to read their ring combinations!). They also kept busy foraging on flowers of *Scalesia affinis* and hunting giant centipedes.



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When not in the field we got our creative hats on and prepared some props and costumes for a theater play called "A very special island" which will be acted by kids of the Tomas de Berlanga School in Puerto Ayora. The premiere of this piece is approaching and we'll share a link to a video (possibly on *Vimeo* or *Youtube*) for all to enjoy. This play is about the daily lives of mockingbirds and the importance of keeping Champion and Gardner free of invasive species. These kids are as enthusiastic about acting as they are about conservation in Galapagos!



Besides the visits for data collection, we took Mark Collins (Chairman of GCT) on a day tour around Champion Islet, Punta Cormorant and Post-Office Bay on Floreana Island. Mark saw his first Floreana Mockingbirds in the field from a small boat, and witnessed the stark contrast between this islet and the near shore of Floreana Island. The most striking differences are the absence of mockingbirds and *Opuntia* cactus.



We still have eight weeks of work in Galapagos ahead of us, and look forward to sharing our news with you. Thank you for your ongoing support.

Best wishes.

The 2014 Floreana Mockingbird Team

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