

## Monitoring Breeding Seabirds in the Gulf of California

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In 2010, when I applied to the Peace Corps, I wasn't particularly interested in serving in Mexico, but that is where environmental specialists were needed so that's where I went. Although prior to serving in Peace Corps I had visited and worked in many other countries, it didn't take long before Mexico became the foreign country I valued the most.

This wasn't just because of the incredible work of Peace Corps Mexico staff to help volunteers become acquainted with Mexico or the dedication, knowledge, and friendliness of my CONANP counterparts in San Blas (Nayarit) and Puerto Vallarta (Jalisco), but it was also because of the amazing biodiversity of Mexico and especially of the islands in the Gulf of California where I was tasked with developing a monitoring plan for breeding seabirds. Isla Isabel in



particular is a jewel in the Gulf. Its large populations of nesting frigate birds, blue-footed boobies, laughing gulls, and many more species of seabirds make this island a conservation priority. In the process of working out a monitoring method that could easily be implemented by my CONANP colleagues, I was fortunate to witness their efforts to protect the other natural resources of the island, in particular, re-establishing denuded coral reefs and recruiting and training local fishers to be environmental stewards. My time in Mexico through Peace Corps remains a memory that I will always cherish. I hope that my counterparts were able to learn as much from me as I was from them.