

June 15, 2016

Re: Forest Thrush of Guadeloupe Vulnerable to Extinction.

To Whom It May Concern.

The members and global partners of BirdsCaribbean, the largest biodiversity conservation organization within the Caribbean region, have noted with deep concern the small population numbers and serious threats to the survival of the Forest Thrush (*Turdus Iherminieri*) in the Eastern Caribbean.

The global population of the Forest Thrush is limited to just small sections of only four islands of the Caribbean's Lesser Antilles, namely Montserrat, Dominica, Guadeloupe, and St Lucia. Unfortunately, in recent history this charismatic Caribbean endemic has been a relative rarity on all of these islands. Furthermore, senior conservationists and publications have noted its significant declines throughout its range in recent years .

Because of volcanic activity this Thrush's population on Montserrat has declined dramatically. On St. Lucia it is particularly rare, and almost unknown. Guadeloupe is, therefore, a remaining stronghold that requires protection. Forest Thrushes are still poorly understood ecologically, and it is reasonable to believe that there are unique differences in Guadeloupe's population that makes it unique. These are large, colourful, very vocal and slow moving birds - making them attractive targets for hunting. What we do know is that they are among a group of birds that are important dispersers of the seeds of forest trees and contribute to the health and rehabilitation of forest areas.

Given the history of the unnecessary extirpation of so many species of the Lesser Antilles were small island sizes, the legacy of human-induced habitat loss, we believe that it is imperative that we confront the threats to rare and endangered native species when and where we can. For this reason, we hope that you share our concern that the ongoing and unregulated hunting of threatened native species, such as Guadeloupe's Forest Thrush, must be carefully scrutinized, and all reasonable steps taken to prevent human-hunting becoming an important cause of endangerment and extinction.

We urge the Ministry of Ecology to act so that hunting within the French overseas territories in the Caribbean will not further threaten the survival of any Caribbean endemic species listed as threatened by international conservation authorities, such as the IUCN. We strongly recommend placing the Forest Thrush on the country's list of protected species as a priority. From our experiences we anticipate that once local hunters understand the uniqueness of this species, is

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ecological values, and the threats that it faces they will be supportive of regulations designed to ensure this species will be around for future generations to enjoy.

BirdsCaribbean is already discussing a special session for our next international biennial meeting to review the status and conservation of the Forest Thrush in collaboration with the Présidente de l'Association pour la Sauvegarde et la réhabilitation de la Faune des Antilles (L'ASFA). We would welcome any representation from the Ministry of Ecology in the planning and execution of such an event.

Please let us know if we can provide further details and resource persons related to Forest Thrushes. We hope that this communication will be receive the urgent attention that it requires. Do not hesitate to contact us at any time.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leo Douglas', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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