

# Chapter 3

## Interactions Among Exotics: Guava and Its Associated Fauna in the Highlands of San Cristobal

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### Introduction

Introduced species pose a severe threat to terrestrial habitats in Galapagos, a world's heritage archipelago. Alien plants are found primarily on the agricultural and urban areas of the four inhabited islands, and invasions into the protected area are particularly problematic in the humid highland zones (Snell et al. 2002; Guézou et al. 2010; Itow 2004). Currently, 866 introduced plant species are reported in Galapagos, surpassing the number of native and endemic species together (552) (Guézou et al. 2010; Tye 2000, 2002). Of these introduced species, approximately 30 are considered invasive (Hamann 1991; Itow 2004).

Invasive plant species can cause profound changes in nutrient cycles and in the community structure of native plants and animals, rapidly spreading over vast areas (Snell et al. 2002; Walsh et al. 2007; Weidenhamer and Callaway 2010). However, although invasive plants may share some common characteristics and effects, variation exists in the way ecosystems are affected by different species (Weidenhamer and Callaway 2010). To better understand the biological and social impacts of invaders, we must know how each species alters ecosystem function and how it interacts with native and introduced animals that are affected by and affect the spreading of invasives.

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