

Tutor's evaluation of the PhD studies and of the thesis of Adriana Rico

Adriana Rico was born in 1975 in Bolivia. She has obtained a licentiate in biology (equivalent of our MSc.) in the Mayor de San Andrés University in La Paz, Bolivia, in 2000. During her studies, she was awarded several prizes of excellence by the senator of the republic, honour diplomas etc. In 2000, she has successfully defended her Thesis "Fragmentation effect of seed predation on seeds of different sizes in a tropical forest in Beni - Bolivia". Then she acted as a university teacher in biology in the same university and at the Internacional del Sur High School, also in La Paz.

She entered the PhD studies at the Faculty of Biological Sciences, University of South Bohemia in 2002. The topic of her thesis was "The effect of roads and highways on movements of small forest mammals". She aimed to determine the extent of the barrier effect of roads of different widths on these species, both in terms of blocking their movements across the roads and in terms of genetic differentiation of the populations living at opposite sides of the road. This is an important topic, as linear clearings, like roads, railways or power lines, subdivide wildlife populations in their natural habitat. When roads and highways block movement across them, they may divide the populations adjacent to the roads into smaller isolated subpopulations. The isolation then reduces gene flow and in cases where the separated populations are isolated, an increase in extinction risk is expected, due to a decrease in the genetic diversity of the isolated population. Several studies have been carried out to determine and understand the negative effects of roads, but most of them have focused on medium size to big mammals; only few studies were carried out with small mammals and therefore these were the model animals in this thesis.

I feel that the candidate has successfully performed all experiments needed and managed to extract the most of the data she has obtained. During her studies she has shown an enormous independence in empirical research and an exceptional patience and consistence in data mining. Being a person working mainly in insects, where it is relatively easy to obtain large amounts of good data, I can only envy her abilities to extract sensible results from a restricted amount of data on small mammals.

Adriana Rico also participated in teaching activities, mainly in frame of the practicals in ecology at the Faculty of Agriculture. She has published one paper on the subject of her thesis, one is in press and one is submitted. She has taken part at several international conferences with her own contributions, initially posters, and later also oral presentations. Last, but not least, she was able to raise some financial contributions to her research by successfully applying for external grants.

I can confirm that the candidate has performed the ability to work independently in science and publish her empirical results. As the tutor, I appreciate above all her enthusiasm for scientific work. She has fulfilled all the requirements of the PhD studies. I am unequivocally recommending her thesis for defense and feel she should be awarded the title "PhD".

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