

Further Project Update: May 2011

Market study

We tracked orchid sales in the largest market in Oaxaca City for a year. We found that during culturally significant holidays such as Easter and Christmas, orchid sales spiked tremendously. While we were tracking sales in the city, we also kept track of plants blooming in the field and saw that these major holidays coincide with the two major peak blooming seasons for orchids. Another factor playing a role on market sales is the cultural value of these species. People use these plants to decorate churches and home altars, and specific orchid species are used for these celebrations. Communities also depend on the harvest of these plants during these times of the year. These results are important for conservation initiatives in the area since orchid harvest and trade are not taken place at random in Oaxaca. There is a cultural and economic drive behind these activities that should be taken into consideration when implementing these programs.

Demography study

We started demography studies for orchid species are being heavily harvested in order to gather detailed information on orchid population biology to be used to inform conservation planning with the objective of insuring the long-term viability of species. In 2010, we set up the project and collected the first set of data. In 2011, we went back to the field and revisited all the populations that we started tracking in 2010 to see what had happen in the year period. We will continue doing that for 2 more years and will be able to analyse these data and figure out what is happening with these orchid populations in the wild.



Left: Community member showing one of her orchid plants. Right: *Laelia* sp-A culturally important orchid harvested at Christmas time.