At the latest count, the Catalina Island fox population has topped out at 784 for the end of 2008. Conservancy Senior Wildlife Biologist, Julie King and Wildlife Biologist Calvin Duncan concluded Island-wide trapping just before Christmas and have been spending much of January crunching the numbers. Julie and her team were thrilled with the results, considering that only about 100 foxes remained on Catalina following the 1999 population crash due to distemper virus.

"The foxes will be starting their breeding season in the next few weeks, so you will probably starting seeing more pairs of foxes rather than singles on the roads during February and March," Julie said.

Carlos de la Rosa, Chief Conservation and Education Officer said that this has been one of the most successful species restorations in the United States.

"For a small Conservancy to bring a species back from the brink of extinction to a stabilized, growing population in less than 10 years is no small feat," Carlos said. "It took great leadership, collaboration and a sustained effort to get this accomplished.

"All of the Conservancy workers, from the leadership, to the outstanding team of wildlife biologists and the support teams in the Conservancy’s Facilities, Development and Communications departments, and residents who were careful with their speed on the Island roads, should feel very proud of this great accomplishment," he added.

So far, the Conservancy has received $62,000 in donations for 2009, and still needs $150,000 to support ongoing fox recovery efforts during 2009. That is about $200 per fox to save a Federally Endangered Species, and one that is unique to Catalina.

To make a tax-deductable donation to help the foxes, write to Catalina Island Conservancy, P.O. Box 2739, Avalon, CA 90704, or visit www.catalinaconservancy.org and click on “Donations.”