



GALÁPAGOS Endemics Cruise

“The natural history of these islands is eminently curious, and well deserves our attention.” (Charles Darwin 1845)



Swallow-tailed Gulls mating on “Bird Island”, a.k.a. Genovesa

November 18 – 27, 2011

On board the *Reina Silvia*

Tour Leader: Sam Woods with the help of
Galápagos National Park guide **Edison Franklin Ramirez Uribe**

*Thanks to tour participant Chris Sloan for allowing us to use his photos for this report
ALL photos were taken on this tour*

INTRODUCTION

The Galápagos Islands lie in the Pacific Ocean, 600 miles (965km) off the coast of Ecuador, but are a world away from anywhere. This trip holds wide appeal: for the avid world lister it is a must for the thirty or so endemic bird species that can only be found there, for wildlife photographers and nature lovers it offers some unrivaled close-ups with birds, mammals, and reptiles like almost nowhere else, and for biologists and those interested in natural history, the link back to Darwin's landmark expedition there is inescapable and absorbing. And that is just above the water. Below water a myriad of tropical marine life awaits too. We experienced all of this, time and again, on our eight day cruise of the islands. We managed to "clean up" on all of the possible endemic birds due to a specially-arranged itinerary that allowed us to visit all of the six islands that need to be visited in order to see them all. We landed on nine different islands in total during the cruise, arriving first at the airport on Baltra, before moving to North Seymour Island, just to the north of there. A full day was spent on the island of Santa Cruz exploring both the finch-filled highlands, and the coastal zone that holds the Charles Darwin Research Station and the last remaining Galápagos Giant Tortoise from Pinta Island, the famous, (and tragic), Lonesome George. We then moved east to check out some of the oldest islands in the archipelago: Española and San Cristóbal that offered an endemic mockingbird each, and plenty more besides. From there we sailed west, and spent a great day on one of the southernmost islands, Floreana,

another island offering more endemics and steeped in history, (being the site of the first major settlements of westerners on the Galápagos). After sun set on Floreana, (and following a barbecue feast on the beach while watching the sun sink down below the horizon), we set sail west for the largest island in the archipelago: Isabela. We spent two days there, covering both the north and south of this seahorse-shaped island, in one of the most volcanically active parts of the archipelago. After walking the lava fields on Isabela, and swimming with Flightless



*Cormorants, penguins, and many, many turtles, we had the longest crossing of all, but it was well worth it. Our final full day was spent on the island of Genovesa, the gem of the archipelago, where millions of seabirds are crammed onto this low flat island that stands just 249feet (76m) high, and covers an area of only 5.5 square miles (14km²). After this treasured day spent walking among **Red-footed Boobies**, weaving our way past tetchy Nazca Boobies, and watching tropicbirds hanging on the wind over the cliff edges, while masses of storm-petrels fluttered nervously around the rocky sides, we finally had to head south again towards Baltra for departure. We had time on our final day for a short stop on the tiny islet of Mosquera, for some final farewells with the ever friendly, (and ever approachable) Galápagos Sea Lions before we headed back to Ecuador's capital Quito, set in the heart of the Andes.*

Through visiting all of these islands we managed to see each and every endemic, including all 14 species of “Darwin’s” Finches, including the mega-rare Mangrove Finch, and all the four endemic species of mockingbirds in the archipelago, which included another critically endangered species, the Floreana Mockingbird which we encountered on the tiny islet of Champion. In between bagging endemics and breeding endemics such as Galápagos Rail and Galápagos Petrel, we enjoyed extreme close-ups with Swallow-tailed and Lava Gulls, were able to watch frigatebirds displaying at arm’s length, and enjoy the largest bird in the Galápagos , the Waved Albatross drifting effortlessly by, from the comfort of our luxurious boat. Aside from the birds, the reptiles were a big hit too, for the Galápagos has also been referred to as the “Land of Reptiles”, with one particular beach on Floreana littered with red-dappled Marine Iguanas being a clear highlight, as were the enormous and very approachable Galápagos Giant Tortoises on Santa Cruz. The group was also keen to see the marine life of the Galápagos too, and so snorkeling sessions were undertaken on most days and brought us masses of colorful tropical fish, from Moorish Idols to Technicolor damselfish and fluorescent parrotfish, in addition to allowing us to swim with sharks, turtles, rays, sea lions, penguins, and even Flightless Cormorants in the process!



*This shocking pink **American Flamingo** brought a dramatic splash of color to the volcanic landscape of the Punta Moreno lava fields on Isabela*

All in all, we enjoyed a great cruise on a very comfortable vessel, with a great local guide, that led us to yield a healthy bird list, sample a good selection of the marine life of the islands, and allowed us to take in some truly great experiences such as a barbecue with the orange glow of a Galápagos sunset as a backdrop!

It was certainly a trip none of us will forget in a hurry...

ITINERARY

- Nov. 18: Arrival in Quito/night Quito
Nov. 19: Fly to BALTRA, board our ship. PM NORTH SEYMOUR/night on board
Nov. 20: SANTA CRUZ: Highlands, Darwin Center & Puerto Ayora/night on board
Nov. 21: AM ESPAÑOLA: Gardner Bay; PM SAN CRISTÓBAL /night on board
Nov. 22: FLOREANA: Champion Islet, Devil's Crown, & Asilo de la Paz/night on board
Nov. 23: ISABELA: Punta Moreno & Elizabeth Bay/night on board
Nov. 24: ISABELA: Playa Tortuga Negra & Punta Vicente Roca/night on board
Nov. 25: GENOVESA: Prince Phillip's Steps & Darwin Bay/night on board
Nov. 26: MOSQUERA & BALTRA. Fly to Quito/night Quito
Nov. 27: DEPARTURE from Quito

DAILY LOG

November 19 Quito to BALTRA & NORTH SEYMOUR

A morning flight took us out of Ecuador's capital Quito, and brought us some impressive aerial views of some Andean volcanoes, on the way to the tiny island of Baltra in the center of the Galápagos archipelago. Before we had even left the airport on **Baltra**, Galápagos endemics were found, and kick started our bird list, as several species of "Darwin's" Finches were seen hopping around the terminal. There we quickly made out our first **Small and Medium Ground-Finches** feeding together beside the airport.



Soon enough we met with our excellent local guide Franklin, a *Galapageño* who lives on the most-populated of the islands, Santa Cruz. We were then whisked away on a local bus to the dock where we boarded our comfortable and luxurious ship for the trip, the **Reina Silvia**. We enjoyed our first, of many, tasty lunches on board, and also took in a flurry of **Elliot's Storm-Petrels** that were feeding around the boat as we made the short crossing to the tiny island of **North Seymour**

(0.7mi²/1.9km²), to the north of Baltra. These petrels would become a very familiar fixture throughout the cruise, as they characteristically follow boats, and are the most numerous of the three regular species of storm-petrel in the islands. Curiously though, despite its abundance, and resident status in the Galápagos, a nest of this species has yet to be found in the islands!

In the afternoon we took a gentle stroll around **North Seymour** and enjoyed more than a gentle introduction to the wildlife of the Galápagos. This low island formed from uplifted submarine lava is covered in Incense Trees (also known as *Palo Santo forest*), which provide a safe breeding place for frigatebirds and boobies. Before we got to the frigatebird colony itself though we had to side step past some nests of **Swallow-tailed Gulls**, arguably the most beautiful gull on the planet (attractive with its forked tail, broad white flashes in its wings, bright scarlet eye ring, and jet black hood, *even* to non gull-aficionados). We also got our first looks at the rarest gull in the world (in terms of numbers-just 800 or so birds *total*), **Lava Gull**, that were



frequently encountered along the rocky coastline of Seymour. Walking the trail the bordered the rocky shoreline we picked up some shorebirds like **Wandering Tattlers** (photo *page 4*) that



looked perfectly at home on these slippery rocks with waves regularly crashing over them. On the beach alongside **Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers**, and **Sanderlings** worked the coastline. For those who did not believe how tame and approachable the wildlife of

the Galápagos Islands could be we were soon to be convinced. Even the resident **Yellow Warblers** (photo *above*) were remarkably tame, and we enjoyed a few of these spritely birds feeding within inches of us.

We then walked into the Palo Santo forest, and admired the drama of a frigatebird colony up close. Although the **Great Frigatebirds** had largely stopped breeding by this stage of the season (and so the spectacular male birds had departed), there were still a number of scruffy juveniles in the colony, easily identified from their Magnificent cousins by their distinctive *rust-colored heads*, (juvenile Magnificent Frigatebirds possess an *all white head*). We got to see them side-by-side and therefore got to appreciate these striking differences firsthand, at very close quarters. However, it was not the juveniles that the group showed most interest in, but the male **Magnificent Frigatebirds** (photo *page 5*) that were still in



the throws of breeding display, puffing up their bright scarlet gular sacs to impress passing females and ward off any intrusive rival males in the area. Like everything in the Galápagos this of course happened right in front of us, rendering our binoculars futile in the process! The Incense Trees also played host to our first **Dark-billed Cuckoo** in the middle of the frigatebird colony. Arguably the most famous Galápagos resident, **Blue-footed Booby** (photo *above*), also nest on North Seymour, and we also took in the sight of these comical birds as they blocked our



path through the colony. Although not an endemic, or even a *breeding endemic* to the islands, over half of the world's population breeds in the Galápagos, and there is nowhere better to view these awkward and amusing. Our final attraction, from this great opening afternoon, were several **Land Iguanas**, (photo *left by Chris Sloan*) which were the only wild ones found

during the cruise. This endemic reptile has an interesting history on the islands. The Seymour population was introduced from the island of Baltra in the 1930s and has since flourished there.

However, the existence of an army base on Baltra led to the extinction of Land Iguanas that have since been re-introduced to Baltra from the population on North Seymour. Finally, *and not for the last time*, we enjoyed a deep orange sun as it dropped below the horizon off the islands that provided a fitting end to our first thrilling afternoon on these “Enchanted Islands”, (as they were referred to by the first visiting sailors).

November 20 **SANTA CRUZ**

This was a key day for the cruise as we had a full day scheduled on the most populous island of Santa Cruz. We started our day by driving up into the finch-filled highlands of central Santa Cruz (around **Media Luna** and **Los Gemelos**), and ended the day in the coastal lowlands of the south, by visiting the **Charles Darwin Research Station** in the largest town in the Galápagos, **Puerto Ayora**, (population of more than 9000 people). The highlands of Santa Cruz reach up to a maximum height of around 2835ft/860m, although we only needed to drive and hike up to



around 1970ft /600m in order to search for our targets in the area. The highlands of Santa Cruz revealed some very different scenes and habitats to those normally associated with the Galápagos. We traveled up into the *humid zone* of the highlands, where the dry arid coastal zone gives way to several distinct habitat types: cloudforest vegetation dominated by large *Scalesia* trees (and thus termed the

Scalesia Zone), was experienced as we drove higher, which then changed to a denser, shorter shrub layer higher up, referred to as the *Miconia Zone* after the dominant species in the area, *Miconia robinsoniana*. Our first port of call though was the *Miconia Zone*, the realm of the reclusive **Galápagos Rail**. Here we experienced a moister climate, far removed from the dry, sun-baked coastal zone. As this was to be our only shot at this scarce and oft-difficult endemic we made this our priority for the morning. The dense *Miconia* shrubs provide good cover for them, and indeed were too good for them in our initial searches that revealed no rails, by neither sight nor sound. However, on our way back down (from enjoying great views of the Media Luna, or “Half Moon” crater) we eventually begun hearing a few different individuals, and rather belatedly one of these rails came out in to the shorter grass and afforded us several good views, much to my obvious relief. This was arguably going to be the toughest of the endemics and so it was good to get it “under the belt” so early on. While we searched for the rail we also added some other new endemics, which included more finches, with our first **Small Tree-Finches** and

Green Warbler-Finch (*page 7*), (the warbler finches were very recently split into two species: *Gray* and *Green Warbler Finches*), a surprise fly over **Short-eared Owl**, and also a super-confiding **Galápagos Flycatcher** (photo *below*).



With the rail “dealt with” we could now retreat lower down into the taller trees of the *Scalesia Zone*. This zone especially is a boon for finches, and held some key target species for us. Arguably, the toughest of the finches in this area is the **Large Tree-Finch**, (photo *Page 10*) although on this day it was not the case. The largest of the tree-dwelling species was soon heard on our arrival at a large belt of trees, and was soon tracked down and seen very well as it helpfully foraged low. So much for this being the trickiest! The species however, that did give us the run around was the **Vegetarian Finch**. We checked for this species at **Los Gemelos**, where we got great looks at the central, and dramatic geological feature in the area, the twin craters, and also found our first **Woodpecker Finches**, along with masses of **Small Tree-Finches**, and **Small and Medium Ground-Finches**. *But, no Vegetarian Finch as we’d hoped*. So we dropped in at a local farm, where the pastures played host to the enormous bodies of wild (**Santa Cruz**) **Galápagos Giant Tortoises** that grazed the grasses (photo *next page*), and cooled themselves in the mud wallows, while a **Black-necked Stilt** and **Semipalmated Plover** pecked in the mud around them. The edges of the muddy pool were bordered with taller grasses and sedge, home to **Paint-billed Crakes** that after a time wandered into the open for all of us to see well. Lastly, with lunch beckoning after our action-packed morning, we checked an old farm building, where two **Barn Owls** were found sleeping as hoped (photo *next page*). This endemic subspecies has often been touted as a species in its own right.

These **Barn Owls** were seen day-roosting, during a big day for us in the highlands of Santa Cruz. This day produced many birds we only saw on this one day alone, like Galápagos Rail, and these owls along with the endemic race of *Short-eared Owl*, in addition to plenty of endemic finches, with *nine* species recorded on this single day.



Our day on Santa Cruz yielded our only looks at wild **(Santa Cruz) Galápagos Giant Tortoises**. Several of these beasts shared a muddy wallow with several species of shorebird and a Paint-billed Crake...





After lunch at a local highland restaurant, that boasted a **Woodpecker Finch** on its bananas, we went off in search of Vegetarian Finch once more. While searching we found another **Woodpecker Finch**, although one with a difference. This time we got to see what it is most famous for: *tool-using*. It is one of the few tool-using species of birds on Earth, and we got to see this individual poking a stick into crevices in the moss and trunk in order to eke out its insect prey. Finally, just as we were close to moving on, Franklin gestured excitedly to a bird on the wire overhead: *finally*, a male **Vegetarian Finch**!

This was our final target bird from the highlands, and so we headed down to the **Charles Darwin Research Station**, on the outskirts of Puerto Ayora, on the southern coast of Santa Cruz. This breeding facility



holds the last known individual Galápagos Giant Tortoise from the island of Pinta, famously now known as **Lonesome George**, who we got to see up close as he lumbered in the shade, and we also added another endemic finch, with several **Common Cactus-Finches** seen first foraging on the *Giant Prickly Pear Cacti* (as they should be), and later hopping around the café counter looking for a handout, with several **Galápagos Mockingbirds** (photo *page 10*) in tow. A late identification, (from photos), of a **Large Ground-Finch** that night on board ship brought the “Darwin” finch tally for the day to **nine species!** After some obligatory souvenir shopping in Puerto Ayora we met once more at the boat dock and returned to the *Reina Silvia*, where late in the night we set sail for our next island: *Española* ...



November 21 **ESPAÑOLA & SAN CRISTÓBAL**

On this day we centered our visits on the youngest, eastern, islands in the archipelago. First, we visited the southernmost island of Española, and then spent several hours on the easternmost island of San Cristóbal, both of which promised an endemic mockingbird each. During the night we had set off from Puerto Ayora, on Santa Cruz, and awoke docked just off the idyllic setting of **Gardner Bay** in eastern **Española**. A few early birds were up on deck before breakfast to take in this scene: a white sandy beach littered with the bodies of sleeping **Galápagos Sea Lions** (photo *page 13*). Our morning on Española was scheduled in no small part due to two passerines that can be found easily on the island: an endemic mockingbird, appropriately called **Española Mockingbird**, and an endemic passerine, **Large Cactus-Finch**. Both of these species are famed for their tameness, and, as if to prove this, they both flew in and landed on the deck of our ship, as if impatient for us to get off the ship and on their beach! A shoal of **Concentric Pufferfish** gathered around the stern of the ship too, making for quite a scene to wake up to, and



quite the Galápagos welcome! Once everyone was up, and we had all breakfasted, we jumped into our Zodiac and took the short ride to the beach. As expected, a welcoming party of **Española Mockingbirds** (photo *page 11*) were waiting on the beach, and came hopping up to us on arrival. In their wake too came our other main target bird, **Large Cactus-Finch** (photo *left*) also vying for title of tamest bird of the trip. The Palo Verde (*Parkinsonia*) scrub behind the beach also hosted our first **Gray Warbler-Finches** of the trip, that were almost greeted with disdain after the more conspicuous and photogenic welcomes of the mockingbirds, finches, and sea lions! Beneath the scrubby fringe to the beach, striking, red-headed, female **Española Lava Lizards** emerged to catch the warmth from the first rays of morning sun, (photo *next page*). While the group dispersed

to get up close to the bathing Sea Lions, take part in their first snorkeling session of the trip, or merely enjoy walking with the clean white sands between their toes, our first **Galápagos Hawks** glided overhead, as **Blue-footed Boobies** plunge-dived into the sea offshore. A scattering of shorebirds along the tide line included an approachable **American Oystercatcher**, the odd **Wandering Tattler**, and several **Ruddy Turnstones**.

After a wonderful morning we returned to our ship and set sail once more, this time eastwards towards **San Cristóbal**. During the journey we enjoyed both a tasty lunch and some close ups of **Waved Albatrosses** that cruised very close to the boat, along with our first **Galápagos Petrels**, and numerous **Galápagos Shearwaters**, (always the most numerous and abundant of the specialty seabirds in the islands), as well as a single **Sooty Shearwater** that passed by briefly. We were making this four-hour diversion for the chance at our third (*of four*) possible endemic mockingbird of the trip, this one confined to the



island of San Cristóbal, and therefore rightly-named the **San Cristóbal Mockingbird**, (photo *previous page*). We dropped anchor just off the largest town on the island, Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, in the early afternoon and made our way ashore. A couple of pick up trucks were waiting to take us into the hills above town, where we hoped to find our quarry. The sun was hot and the birds were none too active in this early part of the afternoon but eventually we found an area of scrub where we heard a number of mockingbirds calling from deep within the brush, and after a few tantalizing glimpses we finally got some great looks at our third endemic “mocker” of the trip.



Some final souvenir shopping was enjoyed around town before we returned to the *Reina Silvia* for our night voyage westwards to the island of **Floreana**...



One very familiar animal on the islands, **Galápagos Sea Lion**, feasting on another very common species, **Sally Lightfoot Crab** (photo by *Chris Sloan*)

November 22 FLOREANA

The entire day was spent in and around the island of **Floreana**, on the southern edge of the archipelago. A number of Galápagos birds have tiny populations, confined to certain areas of single islands, which are under threat from both natural pressures (the harsh climatic conditions brought about by severe climate events like *El Niño*), and human-induced pressures such as



introduced pests. Our first stop of the day was all about going after one of the rarest birds in the islands. This has undergone wild fluctuations in its population, varying from a low of around thirty birds in 2007 to just over two hundred

individuals at other times. Historically, the Floreana Mockingbird was found on the main island of Floreana, and also occurred on the tiny islets of Champion and Gardner-by-Floreana. They have now long been extinct from Floreana itself, with their tiny population persisting now on Gardner and Champion only. It was on the edge of **Champion Islet** that we awoke that morning. No tourists are permitted to *land* on this tiny island, and so our captain anchored as close as he could safely. Docked just off of a tiny headland just after dawn, before we had even had breakfast we had observed the critically endangered **Floreana Mockingbird** on several occasions as up to four different individuals were noted foraging among the Prickly Pear cacti *opuntia sp.* along the shores of the islet. The remainder of our morning was spent cruising by boat around the dramatic geological formation of **Devil's Crown**. Here we got extreme close-ups of the numerous **Galápagos Shearwaters** dipping low over the boat (photo *above*), and several **Red-billed Tropicbirds** that sailed spectacularly above our Zodiac, and then we dropped into the rich tropical waters that surround Devil's Crown to snorkel alongside. This submerged crater offered us a great first site for a group snorkel in the islands, and is frequently touted as one of the top sites for this in the whole archipelago. Most people would probably agree who partook in the snorkeling as we enjoyed a myriad of marine life that included **King Angelfish**, **sergeant-majors**, various **surgeonfish** and **damsel**fish, **Blue-chinned Parrotfish**, and **Streamer Hogfish**. However, the underwater headlines were stolen by schools of harmless **White-tipped Reef-Shark**, **Golden Cowrays**, and a swim by from several striking **Eagle Rays**. All of this was good enough, but coupled with the fact that every time we raised our heads above water

Galápagos Shearwaters and **Swallow-tailed Gulls** would swoop low overhead, it made for a truly magical setting for our first proper group snorkeling session.

After lunch on board, we sailed around to the southern part of Floreana, a journey that brought us a pod of **Common Bottlenose Dolphins** (photo *below*) that were much appreciated by all. Our journey to the south was to allow us to visit **Asilo de la Paz**, home to another endemic finch species that is confined to the highlands of Floreana. However, before we boarded our bus for the hills, we combed the shoreline on the edge of town for reptiles. It did not take long for us to walk into a conspicuous colony of Marine Iguanas. We had seen **Marine Iguanas** repeatedly on our cruise, although these ones were very special indeed, for on Floreana (*as on Española too*) they are patterned with striking red and green markings making them arguably the most photogenic forms of the species. We then boarded our bus, and worked our way through agricultural lands, and moved higher into the *Scalesia Zone* of Floreana. There we visited the sites of the first major settlements by westerners on the Galápagos around **Asilo de la Paz**, (where our guide Franklin gave an absorbing rendition of the tales of skullduggery and betrayal that surrounded this first period of settlement), a trip that also revealed repeated views of Floreana's endemic finch, the **Medium Ground-Finch** (photo *next page*). As we walked the farms surrounding this site, we bumped into a very confiding **Paint-billed Crane** that froze in the middle of an open path for us to enjoy to the full (photo, *page 16*). Our day came to a dramatic close on Floreana when we returned to the coastal zone, where the *Reina Silvia* crew had come ashore to make us a barbecue right on the beach while the sun set spectacularly before us! A great end to another brilliant day, on the trail of some of the strange species that only the Galápagos can offer.



Medium Tree-Finch is endemic to the island of *Floreana*...



This **Paint-billed Crake** was seen on Floreana, with another seen on Santa Cruz



Marina Iguana is common and widespread in Galápagos, but vary widely through the archipelago: *giant* ones occur on *Española*, *tiny* ones on *Genovesa*, and striking forms, like this, occur on *Floreana* and *Española* that flush red when breeding...



This dormant volcano was a backdrop to our birding at **Asilo de la Paz** on **Floreana** that yielded the endemic **Medium Tree-Finch**, as well as a very confiding **Paint-billed Crake**



November 23 **Southern ISABELA**

And so began our first of two days on the largest (4588km²/1770mi²), and “tallest” (Volcan Wolf reaches 5600ft/1707m), island in the archipelago, **Isabela**. This is also one of the youngest and most geologically active volcanic regions in the Galápagos. Our morning walk left us in no doubt of this, as we walked within the strange lava fields of **Punta Moreno** in the south of this large, seahorse-shaped island. The dried black, crinkled lava crunched underfoot, and at first gives the impression of a lifeless zone. However, this is far from the truth. Here and there colorful,



tangerine-colored **Lava Cacti** poked up a short distance from the lava crust (photo *left*), while the taller, sparsely-distributed, **Candelabra Cacti** dotted the landscape too. Small pools littered the landscape also, providing a haven for waterbirds and plant life, while the coastal zone boasts mangroves and rich tidal pools. Not long after “landing” on the lava we noticed a swallow-like bird circling overhead,

which turned out to be a male **Galápagos Martin** (the more distinctive female was seen later too), which came as a relief, being an easily missable species on the islands. We admired the sight of **Volcan Cerro Azul** looming in the distance, and made our way to the pools that dot these barren-looking lava fields, that act as oases for wildlife. **Spot-winged Dragonflies** sallied around the fringes of these isolated havens. We found this out pretty quickly as a party of **Least Sandpipers** fed inconspicuously along the edge of one pool, **Black-necked Stilt** waded conspicuously in another, a shock **Sora** flew from one side of a pool to the other (a Galápagos rarity), and a female **Blue-winged Teal** dabbled next to a small flock of **White-cheeked Pintail**. However, the real highlight here was a small flock of **American Flamingos** bringing shocking pink coloration to an otherwise dull-colored landscape. We watched these for some time as they waded and foraged close to us, before we searched the rocky shore, where we visited a shallow tidal pool that held resting **Pacific Green Turtles**, a school of **White-tipped Reef-Shark**, and several **Eagle Rays**, all clearly visible from *above* water! We then returned to our Zodiac and took a short ride along the rocky coastline. This allowed us to get extreme close ups of two of the island’s star residents: **Galápagos Penguin** (photo *next page*), and the extraordinary **Flightless Cormorant** (photo *page 20*). Where *all* other cormorant species have able wings, the Flightless Cormorant has short, stubby, helpless-looking wings that are incapable of flight.

Like much of the wildlife in this archipelago, the **Galápagos Penguin** is a little strange... it is the *only* penguin that occurs in the northern hemisphere, and the *only* species in the tropics



The strange lava fields at **Punta Moreno of Isabela** (photo below by *Chris Sloan*)



Like much of the wildlife in the Galápagos the **Marine Iguana** is a little different from the norm:
It is the *only* marine lizard in the world (photo below by *Chris Sloan*)



Flightless Cormorant: an endemic species, and the only member of the family that is *flightless*



Although the species may appear awkward and clumsy on land, *like the Galápagos Penguins too*, when observed underwater however, their true calling can be seen, as they are powerful and proficient swimmers. We found this out when snorkeling later that morning and were courted by one special cormorant that even allowed Ian to place his hands just centimeters from it!

Using the Zodiac to drift up to these birds as they loafed on the rocks between fishing trips we were also able to observe large numbers of **Marine Iguanas** coating the rocks around Punta Moreno. These Isabela iguanas being of particular interest, as they are the giants of the species, reaching their greatest size on this island. What they lacked in color compared to their Floreana forms, they more than made up for in size, outweighing them substantially, and noticeably. We even got to see several of these beasts weaving their way through the water, as they swam from one rock to the next (photo *page 20*). It was then time to brave the chilly waters (some of the coolest waters in the Galápagos are to be found along the western side of Isabela as they are fed by the cold Equatorial or Cromwell undercurrent), and don our snorkels once more, that enabled us to swim in very close proximity to **Pacific Green Turtles**, and the aforementioned **Flightless Cormorants**, along with a huge variety of tropical fish.



During another lunch on board we worked our way a little further north along the western side of Isabela, coming to a stop by **Elizabeth Bay**, the site for our afternoon Zodiac ride. There the coastline is swamped with large Black and Red Mangroves, which we weaved our way through during the afternoon. Taking an afternoon Zodiac ride,

we started off in dramatic fashion getting up close to a **Blue-footed Booby** colony that was perhaps a little too close for comfort as one of the boobies decided to relieve itself in the direction of our boat, to the amusement of some, but perhaps not all, as some, (including me), were unfortunately placed at the time! Several **Dark-billed Cuckoos** popped up in the mangroves themselves, as did several **Galápagos Mockingbirds**, while out in the bay we were treated to a close fly by of a **Galápagos Petrel**, a bird that only breeds in this archipelago. We came across several **Lava Herons** clamped to the large emergent mangrove roots that provided them with convenient fishing posts. Kathleen's sharp eyes also picked out a **Hoary Bat** roosting, and hanging, rather inconspicuously, above our boat. **Galápagos Penguins** were also a regular feature during the afternoon as they came in to fish within the still waters surrounding the mangroves. Indeed they were an integral part of the close to our afternoon, under another peachy sunset, with a penguin silhouetted in the scene, which made for some staggeringly beautiful photo opportunities (photo *above*)...

November 24 Northern ISABELA

Once again we fell asleep in one place and awoke in another. During the wee hours of the morning we set sail from Elizabeth Bay and headed north to a significant, dark sandy beach on the northwestern coast of Isabela, **Playa Tortuga Negra**. This is the last stronghold for a critically endangered bird, the Mangrove Finch, currently said to number *fewer than one hundred birds*. Our plan was to get on to the beach early when they would be at their most active. However, we arrived thirty minutes after daybreak, which meant we spent some time cutting through rafts of *phalaropes* resting the sea that took off as our boat closed in on them. Literally thousands of **Red-necked Phalaropes** "littered" the sea, which held lesser numbers of **Red (Gray) Phalaropes** among them too. Once we were in sight of the distinctive, dark sands of Tortuga Negra we took the short Zodiac ride to shore. The backside of the beach is lined with tall Black and Red Mangroves, where we soon heard our quarry singing continually, and also found a possible nest of the species, located high in the mangroves. Not long after, we sighted the bird itself, a **Mangrove Finch**, singing from high on a dead snag, which brought everyone good views of this extremely rarely seen finch. Sadly we did not get one come low down enough for decent photos (unlike all the other finches encountered), but we counted ourselves very lucky to be one of few people to have seen this species at all in recent years, with the national park severely restricting access to this beach in recent times.

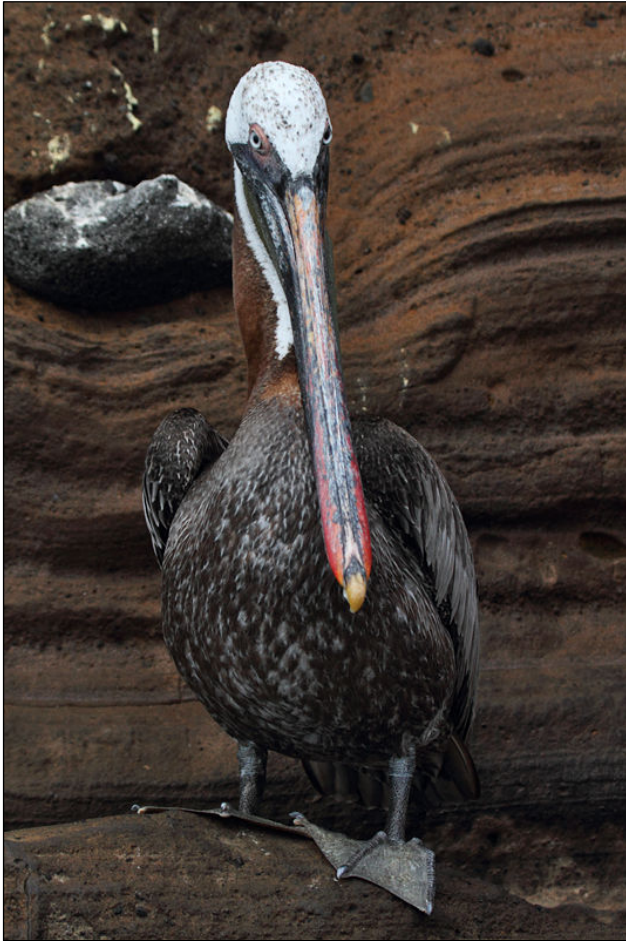
Once the finch had been seen, we returned to the ship, had breakfast, and continued journeying north to the "mouth of the seahorse", **Punta Vicente Roca**, in northern Isabela. However, before we reached there we had a date with *whales*. Our captain *Rafael* seemed confident we could find

some along the northwestern edge of Isabela, and he was right. Shortly after he brought the boat to a halt as we were surrounded by up to ten different **Bryde's Whales** as they surfaced, blowing water high in the air as they did so. Vicente Roca was to be the most impressive snorkeling session of the trip. En route to the area we began seeing our first **Sunfish**, (photo *right*), wagging its shark-like dorsal fin in a distinctive,



very *un-shark-like* fashion, and we continued to see them regularly while riding the Zodiac to the snorkeling site. However, what made the greatest impression here were the *other* marine animals roaming the waters. An unusually high concentration of **Pacific Green Turtles** occurs at this site, and we got to see this firsthand, and up close. Our local guide Franklin dared us not to get out of the chilly waters before we had seen twenty turtles *each*, and it was soon evident why: turtles were *everywhere*. At one time we enjoyed a single field of view with at least seven turtles within it. It was easy to rack up twenty turtles in a short snorkel in the area! On top of that penguins were in the water, and a number of us experienced swimming with turtles while a **Galápagos Penguin** scythed gracefully through the water below us. Unsurprisingly, this

snorkeling session ranked highly among the trip highlights for many. We also took a short boat ride along the coast to shoot more **Flightless Cormorants**, **Brown Pelicans** (photo *left*), **Brown Noddy**, **Wandering Tattlers**, and **Galápagos Penguins** on the rocky cliffs (photo *below*), while several **Galápagos Hawks** surveyed the scene from high on the rocks above. Of course the backdrop to all the birds in these scenes were rocks littered with vivid red **Sally Lightfoot Crabs**, an *ever-present* along the rocky shores of the Galápagos.



Our longest crossing of the trip now beckoned, to the magical island of Genovesa, (one of the hidden gems in the archipelago), and so we set sail in the afternoon. This allowed us to traverse good oceanic waters in daylight, and get a good number of seabirds in the process. **Galápagos Petrels** were out in force, with double digits (more than *fifty* birds) of these striking seabirds seen through the afternoon, our best day tally of the tour. **Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrels** were also very conspicuous in these waters and were almost continually on view, along with just a few **Band-rumped Storm-Petrels**, which due to their more nocturnal foraging habits are the most difficult of the

three regular storm-petrel species to find on this cruise. Of course all of these were outnumbered by the usual masses of **Galápagos Shearwaters** that were constantly on view. We had been hoping for more *cetaceans*, although the afternoon wore on and this was looking increasingly unlikely. Then, just as the sun began to fade, a blow came up on the horizon, which Chris quickly identified from its distinctive angled blow, and so I quickly ran around the boat screaming "**Sperm Whale!**" for fear that the failing light would prevent all of us from getting it in time. I returned to the bridge with a larger gathering of people and, as we did, the low-humped back of the Sperm Whale again became visible above the water, and then its huge tail fluke appeared right



on cue, to cheers all round, as it dropped into the depths of the Pacific Ocean. A fantastic way to finish another killer day on the Galápagos!

One of the specialty seabirds on the cruise: **Galápagos Petrel**...
Over fifty of these petrels were seen in a single afternoon off the coast of Isabela



Our very comfortable boat for the cruise: the luxurious **Reina Silvia**...



November 25 **GENOVESA**

Our final, full day in the archipelago would take us to the most remote island of all, the low flat island of **Genovesa**. Although Genovesa is not as diverse as some of the others it makes up for this in terms of quantity. On an island with an area of just 5.5mi²/14km², millions of seabirds come to breed, leading to its other name, "*Bird Island*". Indeed, the world's largest colony of **Red-footed Boobies** is found within the *Palo Santo* trees on Genovesa. Unlike its ground-nesting relatives, the *Blue-footed* and *Nazca Boobies*, the Red-footed is one of only two booby species (along with *Abbott's Boobies*) that nest in trees. We approached the island from the south, where the crescent shape of the island, formed from a volcanic caldera where the wall has long since collapsed, was all too evident. Before we had docked we saw good numbers of the pelagic Red-footed Booby leaving the island to fish far out to sea. We also encountered good numbers of **Band-rumped Storm-Petrels** a short time after dawn, a breeder on Genovesa that is hard to actually see on the island as they forage at night.

Before we landed on the island, and went off in hot pursuit of our final few endemic birds of the trip (we still needed two final finches to complete the set of endemic birds for the tour), we took a short Zodiac ride alongside the steep, black cliffs that border Genovesa. The black rocks played host to a number of **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** fishing from the base of these towering cliffs (no wonder the old English name for this island was "Tower"), and also found a small cluster of **Blue-footed Boobies**, here vastly outnumbered by the tree-nesting red-footed



Boobies. A few **Red Sun Stars** were also exposed by the low tide, and much appreciated for their vibrant colors. However, what we were really here for was a mammal, as this is the very best place in the Galápagos to find **Galápagos Fur Seals** (photo *left*). Although they have healthy numbers in the islands they are actually only likely to be encountered around northern Isabela and Genovesa as they are far less visible than their cousins the Galápagos Sea Lions, as fur seals typically forage at night and there are very few accessible colonies. We got to enjoy these thickly-maned seals as they lumbered on the rocks and the males fought each other for pole position on the rocky ledges. Not too far away, sea lions rested too, and allowed for quick comparison with their markedly different pelages (coats), and facial structure.

After our "seal ride" we hiked up to the top of **Prince Phillip's Steps**, one of only two landing sites on Genovesa, so named after the visit of the English monarch to this site in 1965. A steep, but short, climb up was soon forgotten as we were greeted by the site of *Palo Santo* trees covered in nesting **Red-footed Boobies** that, of course, in typical Galápagos fashion, allowed *extremely* close approach. Meanwhile, on the ground, **Nazca Boobies** complained openly as we tried to sneak past their nests that were often unhelpfully located *mid-path* (photos, *page 28*). We were also on the look out for finches and it

did not take long for the first of our new finches to show themselves: **Sharp-beaked Ground-Finches**, which turned out to be very conspicuous and common in this area. The other target finch, which had already given us the run around on Santa Cruz, was a little less forthcoming. While we went on the hunt for our final endemic, we enjoyed several **Galápagos Doves** feeding within inches of us (photo *right*), and we also saw another **Gray Warbler-Finch**, that, like the one seen previously on Española, was again poorly received by the group by virtue of all the other more colorful action going on all around them! We also noted the tiny **Marine Iguanas** on the island, for Genovesa has the smallest forms of the species in the archipelago, in sharp contrast to the giants we had seen on Isabela just the day before. Reaching the cliffs themselves, there was a hive of activity. **Red-billed Tropicbirds** regularly hung in the wind and dropped into their nesting sites, while hundreds, if not thousands, of **Wedge-**



rumped Storm-Petrels (photo *below*), fussed excitedly around the cliff edge, where their nests were located. Sadly though, we could not locate their main predator on the island, the dark endemic race of *Short-eared Owl*, (that we had at least seen earlier on Santa Cruz). While we watched the melee of seabirds, and weaved our way through the nesting boobies, Franklin and I checked the finches foraging on the rocks...first there were several **Large Cactus-Finches**, and then Franklin hit the jackpot with a monstrous **Large Ground-Finch**, (photo *page 28*). The head and beak of this bird are so enormous that they literally appear too big for its body, as can be seen in the accompanying photos...



Late in the morning we went for one last group snorkeling session, which stood out for the numerous **Moorish Idols** that were found swimming around the cliff edge and for dozens of **parrotfish** roaming the kelp beds and open waters. After lunch back on board we had one more visit to Genovesa, this

time to the other main landing site on the island, the aptly-named **Darwin Bay**. It was formed from a submerged volcanic caldera, the side of which has since collapsed leaving this crescent-shaped bay. As this was to be our last, *full-on* photo session on the islands, and as the island of Genovesa thus far had filled more space on memory cards than any other island, most people opted to spend the afternoon on land, filling yet more card space. They were not to be

disappointed. The scenes in Darwin Bay are legendary amongst birders and photographers: masses of **Red-footed Boobies** nested in the shoulder-high mangroves around the bay, and were regularly seen bringing in branches to “decorate” their nests with to much comical effect, (photo *right*). We did not just get to see these boobies in various amusing poses, but we also managed to get close up studies of the two very different color morphs, with brown morph and white morphs nesting side-by-side in this area, and often seen quibbling with each other. Aside from that the **Swallow-tailed Gulls** just dared us to take shots of them in flight, (photo *below*), as they soared overhead and got ready for their nighttime feeding action,



(it is the only gull that largely forages at night). As the afternoon wore on, the **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** emerged to fish from a shallow, tidal pool in full view of all of us looking down at them. Dotted in between the nesting swallow-tails and boobies were rusty-headed **Great Frigatebirds** looking a little forlorn with their well-worn juvenile plumage reaching its less tidy stage. Lastly, the world’s rarest gull, the endemic **Lava Gull**, (photo *next page*) were seen in good numbers

along the beach, preening and bathing in a shallow lagoon on the edge of the bay, bathed in the beautiful late afternoon light. Finally, and rather reluctantly, we had to board the Zodiac and leave this island paradise behind, our heads full of memorable images that left us in no doubt as to why Genovesa earned its other name, “*Bird Island*”.

The **Large Ground-Finch** possesses a massive head that appears out of proportion to the rest of its body. The group had to wait for the penultimate day of the cruise, and for our visit to the island of Genovesa before we *all* caught up with this distinctive endemic...



Lava Gull: Endemic to the Galápagos, and considered the rarest gull in the world, numbering just 800 or so birds. Our best views came on “Bird Island”, *a.k.a. Genovesa*...



November 26 **MOSQUERA**

There was precious little time before our late morning flights out from these “Enchanted Islands” to fit much in, so we visited the tiny, tiny islet of **Mosquera**, not too far from the airport on Baltra. Although we were not looking for anything in particular here, as we had now amassed *all* the possible endemic birds (and almost everything else) that we could see on the Galápagos, we could not resist one more island hop before returning to mainland Ecuador, and the Andean city of Quito. Another typical Galápagos scene awaited us...with the usual “pile” of **Galápagos Sea Lions** welcoming us on to the beach. This was like a sea lion nursery though, as a number of new born pups were in evidence, many of which were seen suckling from their mothers. Shorebirds scurried among the rocks, holding **Sanderling, Semipalmated Plover, Black-bellied Plover, Sanderling, Whimbrel, Wandering Tattler, and Ruddy Turnstone** among them, and I personally got to spend an age with a **Lava Heron** frozen still as it fished quietly and inconspicuously just a few meters away on the black rocks that bordered the coast of this tiny island. Yik Shih and some of the group shared some final, intimate, moments with the local sea lions, before reluctantly we all boarded our Zodiac for the penultimate time and rode back to the boat to pack our bags.



We finally left, what had become a very comfortable and much loved home over the past eight days, the **Reina Silvia**, once we docked once more on **Baltra**. By the dock we saw our final **Marine Iguanas** and **Lava Gulls** of the tour, before we said our goodbyes to our excellent local guide, *Franklin*, once we were safely checked in at the airport. Our birding was not over though as finches swarmed the restaurant tables, and gave us our final looks at the fascinating “Darwin’s Finches”, as mischievous **Medium and Small Ground Finches** competed for our attentions with several **Galápagos Lava Lizards** bobbing their heads within view of the terminal. In the mid-afternoon we came slowly flying over the Andes and dropped into the dry valley where Ecuador’s capital, Quito, lies. We arrived into an unexpected



scene though, which was in stark contrast to that encountered on the Galápagos before: a heavy hailstorm that, once finished, gave Quito the look as if it had been covered in snow. A rare and beautiful scene in Ecuador's capital.

After a final farewell dinner in the city we mused over the most enjoyable experiences of the trip, which varied widely from person to person. Unsurprisingly, on a tour and cruise of this nature, birds were sometimes overlooked for other wildlife, as this is a tour for endemic-hunters, photographers of all types, and wildlife enthusiasts alike. Among the many highlights that were discussed, these were included:

Galapagos Petrel: *This striking breeding endemic is one of the star seabirds on the islands. A highlight was seeing more than fifty birds in a single afternoon as we sailed around the tip of northern Isabela towards Genovesa. The same afternoon also yielded an impressive Sperm Whale.*

Blue-footed Booby: *One of the undoubted celebrities on the islands, which we needed to sidestep around on our first afternoon while on the island of North Seymour, and seen repeatedly throughout the cruise, both on land and diving in formation over the sea. Just plain comical to watch!*

Red-billed Tropicbird: *Tropicbirds always have a certain allure, and the Galápagos is a great, great place to see them up close. Our best views came on Genovesa, otherwise known as "Bird Island", where birds were seen landing on their cliff-top nests and hanging on the wind above us, in their typically graceful and elegant manner.*

Swimming with penguins: *While snorkeling in the chilly waters of Punta Vicente Roca in northern Isabela, (and while surrounded by many extremely confiding Pacific Green Turtles), some of us were treated to the sight of penguins swimming gracefully through the water beneath us.*

Swimming with a Flightless Cormorant: *On a snorkeling session off of Punta Moreno a cormorant decided to join us, swimming within inches of us, much to everyone's amusement.*

The flamingos of Punta Moreno: *In the younger, western, islands of the Galápagos dull colors predominate, as dark, dried-up lava flows dominate the landscape. However, this initially barren-looking scene is punctuated with oasis-like pools that are a haven for wildlife. There is nothing more contrasting than the vivid pink coloration of flamingos in these pools set against the dark landscape around them.*

Swallow-tailed Gull: *Arguably one of the most beautiful gulls in the world, with its bold black hood, scarlet eye-ring, striking wing pattern, and forked tail, it is one to convert even the most ardent enemy of gulls! Like many birds in the Galápagos it also boasts a strange life history: foraging almost entirely at night.*

Paint-billed Crane: *We had fantastic views with our second sighting on Floreana, when the bird stood on an open path for what seemed like an age.*

Watching a Woodpecker Finch using a tool: *There are very few tool-using birds in the world, but the Woodpecker Finch is one of them. We looked on in wonder as one individual on Santa Cruz probed in mossy crags for insects with the use of a custom-made stick for the job!*

Mangrove Finch: *This is one of the rarest birds in the Galápagos, confined to just a few restricted sites on Isabela, and also recently re-discovered on Fernandina. We were privileged to be able to visit Playa Tortuga Negra this year, which is not always permitted by the park authorities, and subsequently found a singing individual shortly after landing. They are said to number under one hundred birds, total world population, currently, making it one of the rarest birds in the world.*

Large Ground-Finch: *The finches are an attraction to endemic hunters, ornithologists, or indeed anyone with an interest in evolution. Darwin put these islands on the map with his study of the many finches of the Galápagos, and we were lucky to see every single species (all of which are endemic to the islands) during the cruise. This finch was the last species to be seen by the entire*

group, on the island of Genovesa. It is an extraordinary looking finch, which appears like it has an oversized head for its body, making it quite comical and very distinctive. Like most of the birds on this cruise, it also posed in exemplary fashion, one particular confiding individual foraging on an open path in front of us for some time.

“Synchronized” swimming with a Galápagos Sea Lion: On the same snorkeling session where we were surrounded by turtles, and treated to penguins diving beneath us, off the coast of Isabela, Kathleen was shadowed by a curious and friendly sea lion. It followed her, seemed to mimic her moves, and even went nose to nose with her on occasion! A lot of fun to watch.

Sperm Whale: Just when it seemed that the day could offer nothing more, (after 15+ Sunfish, 10+ Bryde's Whales, getting to swim with penguins and dozens of turtles, and Mangrove Finch), and with the sun beginning to sink below the horizon, a magnificent angled blow went up. Chris was quick to recognize this (from his considerable experience on pelagics off of the Outer Banks of North Carolina), as a Sperm Whale. People were scattered around the boat, and so I ran around shouting Sperm Whale, so that most people were up on the bridge when it fluked, exposing its large tail and then went into a deep dive, never to be seen again. The sighting clearly went down well as this was greeted with a loud cheer (just before everyone darted for the bar!)

Common Bottlenose Dolphins: A large pod of these dolphins was found during our crossing between Devil's Crown and the south of mainland Floreana, which included several young dolphins among them.

Swimming with turtles: Our guide Franklin dared us not to come back to the boat before we had each seen twenty turtles on this particular snorkel. On getting into the chilly waters of northern Isabela we soon understood why: turtles were everywhere! On top of that they were within touching distance, and seemed completely unperturbed by our presence, swimming along beside us, or simply resting, rock-like, beneath us.

Marine Iguanas: This strange and unique animal, the only sea-going lizard species on Earth, was described by Darwin as “hideous”, although I think we would all disagree! Especially in relation to the bright red and green forms that occur on Floreana. There we were able to walk across the black volcanic rocks and admire this strikingly patterned form up close. Piles of them on Isabela were also memorable, where the largest of the forms occur, and where we were also treated to views of them swimming on the surface of the sea.

The rock pool in Punta Moreno: A small, shallow tidal pool near the lava fields of Punta Moreno attracted a number of interesting marine animals, including half a dozen or so **White-tipped Reef Sharks**, several **Pacific Green Turtles**, an **Eagle Ray**, and an assortment of tropical fish. The depth of the pool and still waters allowed for extraordinary views of all these species from the comfort of dry land.

Sunfish: Large concentrations of these occur on northern Isabela, and we were treated to multiple sightings around Punta Vicente Roca, when we saw them with their characteristic “lazy” fin, from both the Reina Silvia and also several times from the Zodiac at extremely close range, (there is no other way in the Galápagos it seems!)

Hieroglyphic Hawkfish: Jean and Stephen could not resist one final snorkel in Darwin Bay in Genovesa, where they were very pleased to run into to this striking tropical fish.

Moorish Idol: This stunning tropical fish, (with the distinctive long streamer-like dorsal fin, long snout, and bold black-and-white striped body), was not seen until our final group snorkeling session on the crater island of Genovesa, but were thankfully common there and seen by all.

Tropical Fish: The myriad of angelfish, surgeonfish, parrotfish, wrasse, barberfish, damselfish, sergeant-majors, porgys and others were a big hit, some of which snorkeled for the first time in the Galápagos. What a place to start!

...and our guide Franklin, and the ever-reliable Elvis, (the barmen on board the Reina Silvia), who never failed to greet us with another absorbing Galápagos fact or hot towels after each and every excursion!

The final, top five highlights were:

- 1=Swimming with Penguins
- 1= Watching a Woodpecker Finch using a tool
- 1= Swimming with turtles
- 4= "Synchronized" swimming with a Galápagos Sea Lion
- 4=Sperm Whale

BIRD LIST

The taxonomy of the list follows: Clements, James F., White, Anthony W., and Fitzpatrick, John W. *The Clements Checklist of Birds of the World*. Cornell, 2007.

This list is up to date with all the major changes published by Cornell up until August 2011.

Species marked ***ENDEMIC*** are **GALÁPAGOS ENDEMIC/BREEDING ENDEMIC**

DUCKS, GEESE, WATERFOWL: ANATIDAE

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*

A female was a surprise find in the lagoons of Punta Moreno, Isabela.

White-cheeked Pintail *Anas bahamensis galapagensis* ***ENDEMIC**
subspecies*

Two groups were seen: A distant group at Asilo de la Paz (Floreana), and a party of 5 birds at Punta Moreno, Isabela.

FLAMINGOS: PHOENICOPTERIDAE

American Flamingo *Pheonicopterus rubber*

*Three of these vividly colored birds were seen feeding in a lagoon within the lava fields of Punta Moreno, in southern Isabela. This strange setting was a truly dramatic scene to see them in, with the bright pink of the birds in stark contrast to the barren and dark surroundings of this volcanic landscape. **One of the highlights of the tour.***

PENGUINS: SPHENISCIDAE

Galapagos Penguin *Spheniscus mendiculus* ***ENDEMIC***

Seen well on both of our days around Isabela, recorded first at Punta Moreno, then later the same day at Elizabeth Bay, and finally at Punta Vicente Roca in the north of the island. Two memorable sightings stand out though: we closed the afternoon on southern Isabela with a pair of penguins silhouetted with a flaming orange sun dropping behind them, at sunset at Elizabeth Bay, and several penguins were seen while snorkeling at Punta Vicente Roca, when they could be seen scything through the water beneath us.

ALBATROSSES: DIOMEDEIDAE

Waved Albatross

Phoebastria irrorata

near ENDEMIC

Just seen on the one day, as we sailed from their nesting island, Española, towards San Cristóbal, when some fifteen or more birds were seen, many of them very close to our boat. Despite putting in an itinerary request to visit their colony at Punta Suarez, this was denied us by the national park unfortunately. In spite of this some great views were had from our boat as they cruised by at close range.

A very small, isolated, breeding population also occurs on Isla de la Plata in southern Ecuador. The rest of the entire world population breeds at Punta Suarez on Española.

SHEARWATERS AND PETRELS: PROCELLARIIDAE

Galapagos Petrel

Pterodroma phaeopygia

ENDEMIC

Recorded on four days of the cruise, with the highest number coming during our afternoon moving eastwards towards Genovesa from northern Isabela, when a minimum of 50 birds were seen in a few hours.

*This species was formerly lumped with **Hawaiian Petrel** *Pterodroma sandwichensis* as **Dark-rumped Petrel**.*

Sooty Shearwater

Puffinus griseus

One flew by on the crossing between Española and San Cristóbal.

Galapagos Shearwater

Puffinus subalaris

ENDEMIC

One of the most numerous and conspicuous of the specialty seabirds in the islands, with thousands seen. Especially numerous and common on the start of our crossing from northern Isabela to Genovesa, where many thousands were seen in a single afternoon.

*This species was formerly lumped with **Audubon's Shearwater** *Puffinus lherminieri*.*

STORM-PETRELS: HYDROBATIDAE

Elliot's Storm-Petrel

Oceanites gracilis galapagoensis

ENDEMIC subspecies

*The most common of the regular storm-petrels on the islands; seen on every day of the cruise. Also known as **White-vented Storm-Petrel**.*

Band-rumped Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma castro*

Seen on two days of the cruise: Four birds in northern Isabela as we moved east from there towards Genovesa, and over twenty five birds were seen the following morning as we approached Genovesa, (an island where they breed). This is the least commonly recorded of the three regular storm-petrel species, as it is largely a nocturnal feeder.

*Also known as **Madeiran Storm-Petrel**.*

Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel

Oceanodroma tethys Tethys

ENDEMIC subspecies

Recorded on three days of the cruise, with the greatest number and best views coming at Prince Phillip's Steps on Genovesa, where a large mass of storm-petrels were flying above their nesting cliffs.

*Also known as **Galápagos Storm-Petrel**.*

TROPICBIRDS: PHAETHONTIDAE

Red-billed Tropicbird

Phaethon aethereus

This elegant seabird was seen on five different days on the cruise: Around the islands of North Seymour, Española, Floreana, Genovesa, and Mosquera. However, the best views, and greatest numbers were obtained on Genovesa, where they were observed at very close range, and regularly dropped on to their nesting cliffs alongside us.

FRIGATEBIRDS: FREGATIDAE

Magnificent Frigatebird

Fregata magnificens

Seen on every day of the cruise. However, the hands down, best experience came with them on North Seymour, where males were in the throws of breeding displays, inflating their vivid scarlet throat sacks to dramatic effect.

Great Frigatebird

Fregata minor ridgwayi

ENDEMIC subspecies

Seen on a number of days of the cruise, with young birds and female birds still hanging around the breeding colonies on North Seymour and Genovesa. At the latter site a male was also seen perched in the breeding colony, where his green-glossed mantle feathers could be seen well (compared to the purple-sheened ones of Magnificent).

BOOBIES AND GANNETS: SULIDAE

Nazca Booby

Sula granti

We visited notable breeding colonies on North Seymour and Genovesa, where we had to side step past some mischievous individuals that were nesting mid-trail. Recorded on every day of the cruise though; at many different sites.

Blue-footed Booby

Sula nebouxii excise

ENDEMIC subspecies

Recorded daily on the cruise, both at nesting colonies (such as on North Seymour and on Isabela), and also plunging into the sea in formation off of some of the islands.

Red-footed Booby

Sula sula

Just recorded on the one day, around Genovesa, which hosts the largest colony of this species in the world. Both white morphs and the more common brown morphs were seen extremely well on the island.

CORMORANTS AND SHAGS: PHALACROCORACIDAE

Flightless Cormorant

Phalacrocorax harrisi

ENDEMIC

Great views of this unique cormorant (it is the ONLY flightless species of cormorant) were had on both of our days in western Isabela, from a boat along the shore at Punta Moreno and Elizabeth Bay, in the south of the island, and also along the shore at Punta Vicente Roca in the north of this, the largest of the Galápagos Islands. However, the most memorable sighting came during a snorkeling session off of the lava fields at Punta Moreno, when a particularly curious individual joined us mid-snorkel, coming to within inches of us, and resting between Ian's raised hands. **One of the tour highlights**, and an undoubted standout moment of the tour.

PELICANS: PELECANIDAE

Brown Pelican

Pelecanus occidentalis urinator

ENDEMIC subspecies

Commonly seen loafing around the rocky coastlines of the Galápagos, and recorded on all days of the cruise.

HERONS, EGRETS, BITTERNs: ARDEIDAE

Great Blue Heron

Ardea herodias cognate

ENDEMIC subspecies

Singles were seen on Baltra, Isabela, and Santa Cruz.

Great Egret

Ardea alba

Seen on three days of the cruise, with one seen on North Seymour, and another seen on Santa Cruz.

Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

Seen on five days of the tour.

Striated Heron

Butorides striata

The mangroves at Elizabeth Bay on southern Isabela were loaded with fishing herons, some of which were Striated and others were the Lava Heron "race" of this species. Some juvenile birds were hard to assign to race too. Another was seen around the port at Puerto Ayora on the island of Santa Cruz.

Striated (Lava) Heron

Butorides striata sundevalli* *ENDEMIC subspecies

A number of birds were seen in the mangroves at Elizabeth Bay (Isabela), and others were seen on Española.

This was formerly considered an endemic species, although has recently been considered merely an endemic subspecies of **Striated Heron**.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

Nyctanassa violacea pauper* *ENDEMIC subspecies

Just recorded on our one day on Genovesa, where they were both numerous and conspicuous.

HAWKS, EAGLES, AND KITES: ACCIPITRIDAE

Galapagos Hawk

Buteo galapagoensis

ENDEMIC

Recorded on three days of the cruise: 2-4 birds were seen cruising low over the idyllic beach at Garner Bay (Española), and recorded twice on Isabela (at Elizabeth Bay and Punta Vicente Roca).

RAILS, GALLINULES, COOTS: RALLIDAE

Galapagos Rail

Laterallus spilonotus

ENDEMIC

Traditionally, one of the trickiest of the endemics to find. And so it proved on this tour, where we struggled to hear one during our initial searches in the highlands of Media Luna (Santa Cruz). However, on the way back down the same track there we finally heard and saw one poorly, and eventually saw a second bird very well shortly before leaving, (ironically at the very first spot we had tried on the way up!)

Sora

Porzana Carolina

A bird that took a flight across a wide lagoon at Punta Moreno was a shock find, as it is a vagrant to the Galápagos. Seen well by a number of the group.

Paint-billed Crake

Neocrex erythrops erythrops

Seen well twice on the cruise – beside a muddy wallow (with attendant giant tortoises) in Santa Cruz, and another very showy bird at Asilo de la Paz on Floreana, that "froze" on an open farmland track.

Common Moorhen

Gallinula chloropus

Just seen at two sites on the tour: Finca Mariposa in the highlands of Santa Cruz, and in the lagoons of Punta Moreno (Isabela).

PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS: CHARADRIIDAE

Black-bellied (Gray) Plover

Pluvialis squatarola

One was seen on North Seymour, and another single was seen on our final morning, on Mosquera.

Semipalmated Plover

Charadrius semipalmatus

Four sightings were made: One was on North Seymour, another single was seen in the Santa Cruz highlands, one was seen at Punta Moreno (Isabela), and two were seen on Mosquera.

OYSTERCATCHERS: HAEMATOPODIDAE

American Oystercatcher

Haematopus palliatus galapagensis

***ENDEMIC**

subspecies*

One was seen on the tiny island of North Seymour on our first afternoon, and another photogenic individual was seen on the white sandy beach at Gardner Bay (Española).

STILTS AND AVOCETS: RECURVIROSTRIDAE

Black-necked Stilt

Himantopus mexicanus

Two were seen sharing a muddy wallow with several Santa Cruz Giant Tortoises in the highlands of Santa Cruz, and a single was seen on a small pool at Punta Moreno (Isabela).

SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES: SCOLOPACIDAE

Wandering Tattler

Tringa incana

Arguably the most widespread shorebird in the Galápagos; seen on every single day of our cruise.

Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus

Seen on six days of the cruise.

Ruddy Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

Another frequent shorebird in the Galápagos, recorded on five out of eight days.

Sanderling

Calidris alba

Three sightings came on three islands: North Seymour, Española, and Mosquera.

Least Sandpiper

Calidris minutilla

Just four birds were seen, in a single party, at Punta Moreno, Isabela.

Red-necked Phalarope

Phalaropus lobatus

The most common of the two regular phalarope species in the Galápagos, with literally thousands of birds seen one morning at the north end of the Bolivar Channel, (that runs between western Isabela and eastern Fernandina).

Red Phalarope

Phalaropus fulicarius

Although seriously outnumbered by the above species, also seen in good numbers one morning at the north end of the Bolivar Channel (60+ birds).

*Also known as **Gray Phalarope**.*

GULLS, TERNS, SKIMMERS: LARIDAE

Swallow-tailed Gull

Creagrus furcatus

near ENDEMIC

Arguably the most beautiful gull in the world, with its striking wing pattern, jet black hood, scarlet eyering, and forked tail. Seen on five days of the cruise, with fantastic sightings coming in the breeding colonies on North Seymour and Genovesa. This strange gull largely forages for food at night, and could be seen following the boat on some nights as they foraged at sea while we made nocturnal crossings between islands.

A tiny population also exists on Malpelo Island off the west coast of Colombia.

Lava Gull

Leucophaeus fuliginosus

ENDEMIC

Often referred to as the “rarest gull in the world”, as it has a total population of just 600-800 birds. However, they are not hard to find generally in the Galápagos, where we found them on six out of eight days. On one day a pair of them landed on the boat and sailed with us as we cruised between two sites on Floreana. Extreme close ups were also had on Genovesa, or “bird island”, where a number of individuals came down to bathe late in the afternoon in a tidal pool.

Brown Noddy

Anous stolidus galapagensis* *ENDEMIC subspecies

Seen on all but one day of the cruise: recorded on Baltra, Santa Cruz, Española, Isabela, Floreana, and San Cristóbal.

*Also known as **Common Noddy**.*

PIGEONS AND DOVES: COLUMBIDAE

Galapagos Dove

Zenaida galapagoensis

ENDEMIC

Seen on five of our eight days of the cruise, with our best sightings coming on our first afternoon on North Seymour, and on Genovesa, where they showed to within inches of us!

CUCKOOS: CUCULIDAE

Dark-billed Cuckoo

Coccyzus melacoryphus

Seen on three days, and on three different islands during the cruise: firstly during our first afternoon's birding on North Seymour, then later in the highlands of Santa Cruz, and finally, a number of individuals were seen in the mangroves of Elizabeth Bay on the island of Isabela.

Smooth-billed Ani

Crotophaga ani

An introduced pest species that has devastated some of the resident native species in some areas (e.g. Vermilion Flycatcher on Santa Cruz). Recorded on five days of the cruise: in Santa Cruz, Floreana, San Cristóbal, and Isabela.

BARN-OWLS: TYTONIDAE

Barn Owl

Tyto alba punctatissima

ENDEMIC subspecies

A pair of these owls was seen roosting in a farm building on Santa Cruz.

OWLS: STRIGIDAE

Short-eared Owl

Asio flammeus galapagoensis* *ENDEMIC subspecies

One flew over us several times when searching for Galápagos Rail at Media Luna on Santa Cruz. None, unfortunately, were found at their more regular hangout, the Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel colony on Genovesa.

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS: TYRANNIDAE

Galapagos Flycatcher

Myiarchus magnirostris

ENDEMIC

Recorded on three days of the tour: In the highlands of Santa Cruz, in the hills of San Cristóbal, and also within the highlands of Floreana.

Also known as **Large-billed Flycatcher**.

SWALLOWS: HIRUNDINIDAE

Galapagos Martin

Progne modesta

ENDEMIC

Sometimes one of the toughest endemics to track down. However, this year it was straightforward at Punta Moreno, Isabela, where at least one male and one female were seen hawking insects above the lava fields.

MOCKINGBIRDS AND THRASHERS: MIMIDAE

Galapagos Mockingbird

Mimus parvulus

ENDEMIC

Seen on four days of the tour, on Santa Cruz (Charles Darwin Research Station), Isabela (Elizabeth Bay & Play Tortuga Negra), and Genovesa (Prince Philip's Steps & Darwin Bay). This is the most widespread of the four endemic mockingbirds in the islands.

Floreana Mockingbird

Mimus trifasciatus

ENDEMIC

This is one of the rarest birds in the Galápagos, listed as critically endangered and numbering around 225 birds in recent surveys (2008). This population fluctuates wildly, numbering under 100 individuals in some years. The population is very local, and confined to just two small islands off of mainland Floreana: Gardner-by-Floreana, and Champion Islet. So the total range of the species covers just 2km². Tourist landings on the two small islands which hold its total range are not permitted, and so we took a short cruise around Champion, getting close to the island and up to five different mockingbirds in the process, that foraged among the prickly pear cacti on the islet. Also known as **Charles Mockingbird** (Charles is the old, English name for Floreana).

Española Mockingbird

Mimus macdonaldi

ENDEMIC

Arguably the tamest and most friendly bird in the Galápagos, which of course is saying something! We awoke, docked just off of Gardner Bay on Española shortly after dawn, and were greeted by several of these mockingbirds that landed on the boat itself! We transferred to the beach at Gardner Bay by way of a short Zodiac ride, and were immediately greeted by a friendly party of these mockingbirds bounding along the beach to meet us. They were extremely friendly and jumped on to our bags and discarded clothing, hopping around within a few inches of us at times. A comical and delightful species.

Also known as **Hood Mockingbird** (Hood is the old, English name for Española).

San Cristóbal Mockingbird

Mimus melanotis

ENDEMIC

This was the toughest of the mockingbirds for us to find. In order to find it we took a ride into the hills above Puerto Baquerizo Moreno in San Cristóbal, using what looked like local law enforcement pick ups to do this! Our mid-afternoon search was hampered by extremely hot conditions meaning that for the first part of our search activity was low, and the mockingbirds were silent and inactive. Finally though, as the afternoon wore on and perhaps the slightly cooler conditions, led to us hearing a number of these mockers calling, and eventually (after several brief sightings for only some of the group), two individuals emerged from dense cover and perched in the open to show well.

Also known as **Chatham Mockingbird** (Chatham is the old English name for San Cristóbal).

NEW WORLD WARBLERS: PARULIDAE

Yellow Warbler

Setophaga petechia aureola ***ENDEMIC subspecies***

A friendly and confiding resident of the Galápagos, recorded on every single day, and regularly at extremely close quarters.

BUNTINGS, SPARROW AND ALLIES: EMBERIZIDAE

Green Warbler-Finch

Certhidea olivacea

ENDEMIC

At least two different birds were seen around Media Luna in the highlands of Santa Cruz.

This species was formerly lumped with **Gray Warbler-Finch**, under the name **Warbler Finch**.

Gray Warbler-Finch

Certhidea fusca

ENDEMIC

A pair were seen at the back of the beach at Gardner Bay on Española, and another couple of birds were seen near Prince Phillip's Steps on Genovesa.

Vegetarian Finch

Platyspiza crassirostris

ENDEMIC

There is always a finch or two that gives you the run around in the Galápagos, and this year it was this one. After a fruitless search for it during our morning in the highlands of Santa Cruz, we were forced to continue looking in other areas in the afternoon, when, finally, our local guide Franklin found a singing male.

Woodpecker Finch

Camarhynchus pallidus

ENDEMIC

An interesting finch species, which is one of the few known tool-using birds in the world. We were lucky enough to see an individual in the highlands of Santa Cruz using a stick to probe into crevices for insects. This was a popular sighting, and **one of the highlights of the tour**. The species was seen three times within the highlands of Santa Cruz, including near the twin craters of Los Gemelos.

Large Tree-Finch

Camarhynchus psittacula

ENDEMIC

This can be one of the trickier finches to find, although it did not prove too difficult this year, a confiding male found singing within the scalesia zone in the highlands of Santa Cruz.

Medium Tree-Finch

Camarhynchus pauper

ENDEMIC

Easily found this year around Asilo de la Paz, in the highlands of Floreana. This species is endemic to Floreana.

Small Tree-Finch

Camarhynchus parvulus

ENDEMIC

Regularly encountered within the highlands of Santa Cruz, where they were fairly common. Also seen in the hills on San Cristóbal, and the highlands of Floreana too. The most widespread and common of the tree-finches.

Mangrove Finch

Camarhynchus heliobates

ENDEMIC

This species is one of the rarest birds in both the Galápagos and the world, numbering under 100 individuals. It is listed as critically endangered, and is confined to just a handful of sites. It is often difficult to get permission to visit the best of these, Playa Tortuga Negra due to strict park controls. We were lucky to be granted permission to visit this year, and quickly located a singing individual shortly after our early morning arrival on the beach.

Small Ground-Finch

Geospiza fuliginosa

ENDEMIC

Arguably the most common and widespread of "Darwin's Finches", recorded on all but one day of the cruise, (not seen during our day on Genovesa, where they are absent). This was the first endemic of the cruise, seen right around the terminal on arrival on the island of Baltra, and the last one seen, there again, when we left. Good numbers of them were also seen during our morning in the highlands of Santa Cruz.

Large Ground-Finch

Geospiza magnirostris

ENDEMIC

A single bird was seen by just some of the group around the Charles Darwin Research Center on Santa Cruz, (that was identified later from photos). However, we ALL finally caught up with this massive-headed finch on Genovesa, with at least two birds being seen near Prince Phillip's Steps.

Sharp-beaked Ground-Finch

Geospiza difficilis

ENDEMIC

This is the commonest of the finches found on Genovesa, where they were encountered regularly, often at extremely close quarters. Genovesa provided our only chance for this species on the cruise.

Common Cactus-Finch

Geospiza scandens

ENDEMIC

Just recorded during our one afternoon around the Charles Darwin Research Station on Santa Cruz. Some individuals were seen foraging in the **Giant Prickly Pear Cacti** (*Opuntia* sp.) that dominate the landscape around the center, while others were hopping around the café, hoping for food scraps.

Medium Ground-Finch

Geospiza fortis

ENDEMIC

Another (along with the Small Ground-Finch) very common and widespread finch, recorded on all but one day, (they were not seen during our day on Genovesa, where they are absent). The biggest numbers were seen in the Santa Cruz highlands, although they were also conspicuous around the airport terminal on Baltra.

Large Cactus-Finch

Geospiza conirostris

ENDEMIC

The conirostris race was seen on Española, and the propinqua race was seen on Genovesa. Our first sighting actually included several birds that landed on the bridge of the Reina Silvia, while docked just off Gardner Bay on Española that appeared to be attracted to the small pools of water that had developed in the nooks and crannies of the boat. A very confiding species, which along with the local mob of Española Mockingbirds, greeted us by bounding right up to us, shortly after landing on Española.



MAMMAL LIST

California (Galapagos) Sea Lion *Zalophus californianus wollebacki*

One of the most visible animals in the Galápagos, seen on all days of the cruise. They are remarkably placid and approachable, and made for one of the best photo subjects of the tour. Newly born pups on Mosquera on our final morning were memorable. However, arguably one of the tour highlights was one mischievous individual sea lion that took a shine to Kathleen, shadowing her for a while during a snorkeling session on northern Isabela, mirroring her moves, and even coming nose to nose with her on occasion. It was certainly very amusing to watch from the Zodiac for me!

Galapagos Fur Seal *Arctocephalus galapagoensis* *ENDEMIC*****

Although not rare, this species is largely nocturnal (unlike their diurnal cousins the Sea Lions), and few colonies are accessible, making them appear rarer than they are. While the sea lions were seen on all days of the cruise, fur seals were only encountered on two days of the tour: near Punta Vicente Roca on northern Isabela, and near Prince Phillip's Steps on Genovesa. The best views came on our morning Zodiac ride along the base of the towering rocky cliffs of Genovesa, where six or so animals were found, including several males that were jousting for the best position on the rocks.

Hoary Bat *Lasiurus cinereus*

Kathleen's sharp eyes picked out one of these bats roosting above our boat in the mangroves of Elizabeth Bay in southern Isabela.

Black Rat *Rattus rattus*

This introduced pest species was seen near Asilo de la Paz, in the highlands of Floreana.

Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus*

One of these introduced animals was seen during our day on Santa Cruz.

Bryde's Whale *Balaenoptera edeni*

One of the tour highlights was being surrounded by up to ten different Bryde's Whales in northern Isabela. The group had been desperate for a whale sighting until then, and our captain clearly felt confident of finding them in this area, but even he seemed shocked at the numbers we encountered. A very dramatic scene indeed.

Sperm Whale *Physeter macrocephalus*

We took to seawatching off northern Isabela as we made our way towards Genovesa. However, by late afternoon the crowd had thinned to just a couple of us, with seemingly few further species we could see. Then, suddenly, there was a large blow on the horizon and the captain powered our boat in the direction of it. Chris was quick to name it as Sperm Whale by virtue of the distinctive angled blow. With the light waning, and most people enjoying the offerings available in the bar I hurried around the boat screaming "Sperm Whale". Most of us got up on to deck in time for the final show, when the Sperm Whale broke the surface of the water once again, but this time went into a deep dive characterized by the large tail fluke which cleared the water dramatically, and was greeted with cheers all round once it was all over! Undoubtedly, one of the tour highlights.

Bottle-nosed Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*

A large pod of dolphins were seen near the Devil's Crown off of mainland Floreana that included some young dolphins among them. Another popular sighting that was mentioned by some as one of the tour highlights.

REPTILE LIST

Galápagos Giant Tortoise

Geochelone elephantopus

ENDEMIC

Wild animals were seen in the highlands of Santa Cruz, while Lonesome George, the famous last remaining individual from Santa Cruz Island was seen at the Charles Darwin Research Station. Please note that some people split the different island forms as separate species.

Pacific Green Turtle

Chelonia midas agassisi

*The Galápagos must be one of the very best places to see this species well, both from land and by snorkeling offshore. Recorded on five different days of the tour, (in North Seymour, Española, Floreana, and Isabela). The best sightings came in a shallow, tidal rock pool at Punta Moreno on Isabela, where two turtles had come in to rest and could be seen very well from dry land. The other notable spot proved to be Punta Vicente Roca in northern Isabela, where the cool waters hold an extraordinary concentration of turtles: at one time we could see seven different turtles in one field of view, and we all came back to the boat with at least twenty different individuals by all of us in around thirty minutes in the water! This latter concentration of turtles was clearly **one of the tour highlights.***

Marine Iguana

Amblyrhynchus cristatus

ENDEMIC

Described by Charles Darwin thus: "...it is a hideous-looking creature, of a dirty black color, stupid, and sluggish in its movements". However, I think we appreciated them a little more than he did! A widespread, though highly variable species through the islands, seen on all but one day of the tour. We saw the largest forms, the giant ones on Isabela (notably loafing next to penguins along the shores of Punta Moreno), the smallest forms, the tiny Genovesa animals, and the most striking form, dappled with red on the shores of Floreana. A strange and unique Galápagos animal, being the only marine lizard on Earth. One of the most difficult animals in the islands to avoid, and also genuinely easy to step on as they slumbered within inches of us and well-camouflaged by the dark volcanic rocks: beware!

Land Iguana

Conolophus subcristatus

ENDEMIC

Just two individuals were seen, on the island of North Seymour on our first afternoon. An animal with an interesting history: reintroduced many years ago (1930s) to North Seymour from the tiny island of Baltra which then had a healthy population. However, following a long presence of a military base on Baltra (following the second world war), Land Iguanas became extinct on Baltra (early 1950s), and were then subsequently re-introduced onto Baltra from the North Seymour population!

Galápagos Lava Lizard

Microlophus albemarlensis

ENDEMIC

Seen on five different days of the cruise: on North Seymour, Santa Cruz, Isabela, and also on Baltra, where they were even seen around the airport terminal.

Española Lava Lizard

Microlophus delanonis

ENDEMIC

Half a dozen or so individuals were seen at the idyllic setting of Gardner Bay on Española, where a number of lizards were seen sunning themselves at the back of the beach. This included some dazzling females complete with vivid vermilion red throats.

Galápagos Snake

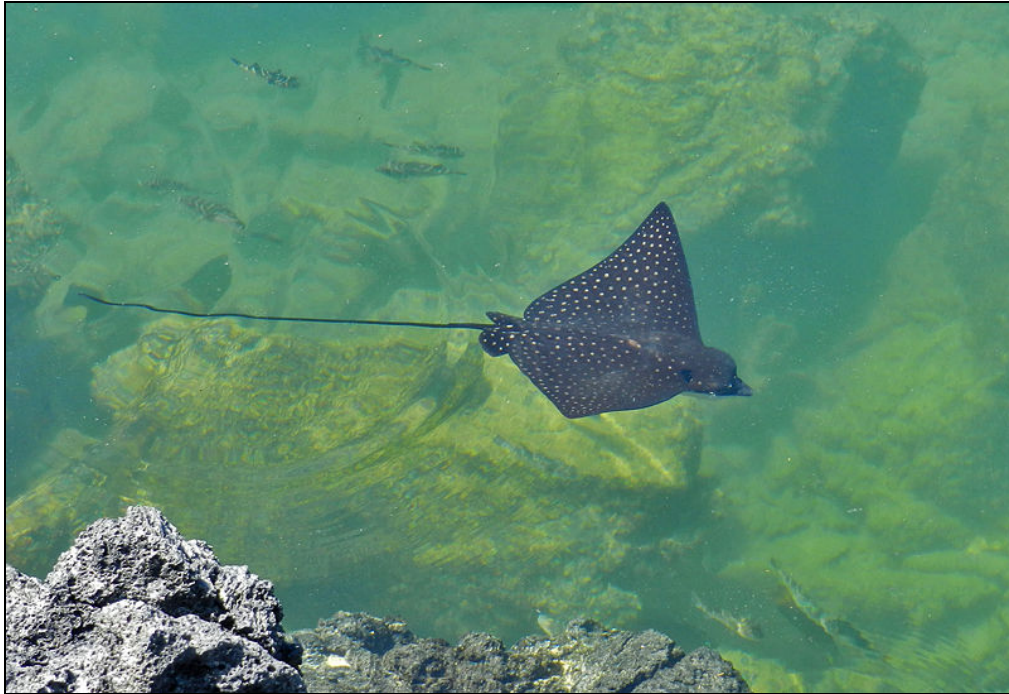
Alsophis dorsalis dorsalis

ENDEMIC

One was seen on the tiny island of North Seymour.

FISH LIST

King Angelfish	<i>Holacanthus passer</i>
Barberfish	<i>Johnrandallia nigrirostris</i>
Yellowtailed Surgeonfish	<i>Prionurus laticlavus</i>
Goldrimmed Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus nigricans</i>
Purple Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus xanthopterus</i>
Convict Tang	<i>Acanthurus triostegus</i>
Moorish Idol	<i>Zanclus comutus</i>
Indo-Pacific Bonito	<i>Sarda orientalis</i>
Blackspot Porgy	<i>Archosargus pourtalesii</i>
Yellowtailed Mullet	<i>Mugil rammelsbergi</i>
Halfbeak	<i>Hyporhamphus unifasciatus</i>
Golden-eyed Grunt	<i>Haemulon scudderi</i>
Galápagos Grunt	<i>Orthopristis forbesi</i>
Black-striped Salema	<i>Xenocys jessiae</i>
Yellow Snapper	<i>Lutjanus argentiventris</i>
Giant Damselfish	<i>Microspathodon dorsalis</i>
Bumphead Damselfish	<i>Microspathodon bairdii</i>
White-tail Damselfish	<i>Stegastes leucurus</i>
Yellow-tail Damselfish	<i>Stegastes arcifrons</i>
<i>Panamic Sargeant Major</i>	<i>Abudefduf troschelii</i>
Brown Chromis	<i>Chromis atrilobata</i>
Creole Fish (Gringo)	<i>Paranthias colonus</i>
Blue-chinned Parrotfish	<i>Scarus ghobban</i>
Azure Parrotfish	<i>Scarus compressus</i>
Rainbow Wrasse	<i>Thalassoma lucasanum</i>
Harlequin Wrasse	<i>Bodianus eclancheri</i>
Streamer Hogfish	<i>Bodianus diplotaenia</i>
Blacktip Cardinalfish	<i>Apogon atradorsatus</i>
Large-banded (Panamic) Blenny	<i>Ophioblennius steindachneri</i>
Leopard Flounder	<i>Bothus leopardinus</i>
Hieroglyphic Hawkfish	<i>Cirrhitus rivulatus</i>
Concentric Pufferfish	<i>Sphoeroides annulatus</i>
Spotted Porcupinefish	<i>Diodon hystrix</i>
Pacific Burrfish	<i>Chilomycterus affinis</i>
Yellow-bellied Triggerfish	<i>Sufflamen verres</i>
Blunthead Triggerfish	<i>Pseudobalistes naufragium</i>
Trumpetfish	<i>Aulostomus chinensis</i>
Sun Fish	<i>Mola mola</i>
White-tipped Reef Shark	<i>Triaenodon obesus</i>
Marbled Ray	<i>Taeniura meyeri</i>
Diamond Stingray	<i>Dasyatis brevis</i>
Golden Cowray	<i>Rhinoptera steindachneri</i>
Eagle Ray	<i>Aetobatus narinari</i> (photo next page)



OTHERS

Galápagos Sulphur Butterfly
Monarch Butterfly
Long-tailed Skipper
Fire Ant
Darwin Carpenter Bee
Yellow Paper Wasp
Spot-winged Dragonfly
Galápagos Painted Locust
Zig-zag Spider
Giant Barnacle
Sally Light-foot Crab
Ghost Crab
Terrestrial Hermit Crab
Pencil Sea Urchin
Green Sea Urchin
Needle Sea Urchin
Noduled Sea Cucumber
Chocolate-chip Sea Star
Panamic Sea Star
Blue Sea Star
Red Sun Star
Palmed Oyster

Phoebis sennae
Danaus plexippus
Urbanus galapagensis
Wasmannia auropunctata
Xylocopa darwini
Polistes versicolor
Pantala hymaena
Schistocerca literosa
Neoscona cooksoni
Megabalanus peninsularis
Grapsus grapsus
Ocypode gaudichaudii
Coenobita compressus
Eucidaris thouarsii
Lytechinus semituberculatus
Diadema Mexicana
Stichopus fuscus
Nidorellia armata
Pentaceraster cumingi
Phataria unifascialis
Heliaster cumingii
Saccostrea palmula