



A male Great Frigatebird puffs out his chest pouch in a breeding display on the island of Genovesa. (Photo by guide Alvaro Jaramillo)

The Galapagos are a unique place, one of those spots that you have seen so many images of in life that it is weird and surprising to actually see the real thing. It does not disappoint; it is always different than expectations, but in the end it is always a wonderful experience. No doubt it was wonderful not only because of the great birds and wildlife, but also because of Peter Freire and the great crew of the good ship Nemo II. The food was great, and the service spectacular.

We also did particularly well in getting our custom itinerary accepted, and we were able to get to all spots that had an endemic species. We also found all of the endemics, although the Large Tree Finch was only seen by a few in the group. We tried hard to find another, and it just did not happen. But our luck earlier that day with rails was mind-blowing!! I have never seen either the Galapagos Rail or the Paint-billed Crake that well. The Mangrove Finch gave us a run for our dolares, but in the end we found one foraging down at eye level and it gave us great views. All of the expected seabirds were in evidence, including some nice deep-water pelagics like the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, and Galapagos Petrels. We also enjoyed amazing views of all three boobies at the colony, close fly by Red-billed Tropicbird and the spectacle that is seeing the colony of Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrels with attending Short-eared Owls, and the colony of the gentle looking Waved Albatross. Wow! I also enjoyed watching the displays, either calling Swallow-tailed Gulls, the Great Frigatebirds with pouches fully inflated, or the foot dance of the Blue-footed Boobies. It was cool to say the least.

Our experience with finches was a good one; we had great views of almost all of them, and we were able to chat about what it all means, this bill size variation in one group of birds. We thought about speciation and how it is mediated by environmental factors, and how morphological change can occur so quickly on these islands of wet and dry extremes. The mockingbirds gave a different backdrop to understanding the issues involved in Natural Selection and differentiation as well.

We had a good time, a happy time, albeit a sad punctuation to our tour was finding out that Lonesome George had died the very moment we were heading out to see him! This was tragic. On the other hand we wished Diego well and noted that his star is rising. Also Diego's story is a happy one, he helped to re-populate Española Island, and in turn to save his population of tortoises. Let's hope the world has a lot more Diegos and fewer Georges.

I had a fantastic time birding with you all, and hope that we can see you on another one of our tours! Take care, and good birding to you all.

--Alvaro

For more information about this tour, including future departures, visit our website at www.fieldguides.com. And to see this same triplist online, go to <http://www.fieldguides.com/triplists/gal12aLIST.pdf> and you will find the list in its entirety.

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL (GALAPAGOS) (*Anas bahamensis galapagensis*) – Two pairs at Cerro Dragon on Santa Cruz Island were great to see. The population here is smaller and less colorful than the mainland subspecies. Also the bill colors are not as bright, and the tail is not as white on these Galapagos birds.

Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos)

AMERICAN FLAMINGO (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) – Great views of one at Bachas Beach, Santa Cruz as well as Punta Suarez on Isabela. This species appears to have invaded somewhat recently from the Caribbean!

Spheniscidae (Penguins)

GALAPAGOS PENGUIN (*Spheniscus mendiculus*) – The place to see this range restricted species is on the west side of Isabela and Fernandina. This is exactly where we found them, our first on Black Beach and then some fantastic looks on Punta Moreno. The latter spot is also where some folks got to see one while snorkeling. [E]

Diomedidae (Albatrosses)

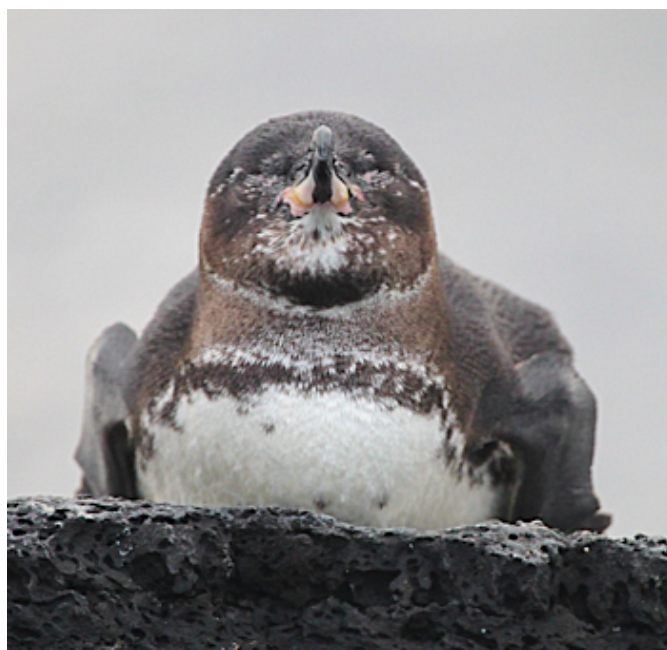
WAVED ALBATROSS (*Phoebastria irrorata*) – We saw our first on the water on the Bolivar Channel. But it was Espanola were we had great experiences with this species. We saw the bill fencing display, as well as the side-to-side head bob and even an egg. They were just getting going on their nesting at this time. There were many in the next couple of days out at sea.

Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

GALAPAGOS PETREL (*Pterodroma phaeopygia*) – On all of the deep water crossing we saw this species, and every once in a while one of them would come close in. There were a bunch close to shore when we left San Cristobal. This species was at one time considered conspecific with the Hawaiian Petrel and was called the Dark-rumped Petrel.

GALAPAGOS SHEARWATER (*Puffinus subalaris*) – Common throughout the archipelago. What is exciting is seeing these dark underwing birds in the Bolivar Channel. I already went on about them too much, suffice to say that it is a mystery what those birds are.

Hydrobatidae (Storm-Petrels)



The Galapagos Penguin is the only penguin to naturally occur north of the equator, and is also the only species most people are ever likely to snorkel with, as some of our group did at Punta Moreno! (Photo by guide Alvaro Jaramillo)

ELLIOT'S STORM-PETREL (*Oceanites gracilis galapagoensis*) – Common throughout the archipelago. This is the most inshore of all of the storm petrels. It is also an endemic subspecies for which the nest has never been found!

BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETREL (*Oceanodroma castro*) – This population is informally called the "Darwin's Storm-Petrel." Genetically it is closest to other Pacific populations of the species, and quite distant genetically from the groups in the Atlantic. We saw this storm petrel only far from land in the deepest crossing, it was not very common.

WEDGE-RUMPED STORM-PETREL (*Oceanodroma tethys tethys*) – Common throughout the trip, but more likely to be observed flying offshore rather than at port. The amazing experience with this species was visiting the breeding colony, this is the only storm petrel that visits the colony in the day.

MARKHAM'S STORM-PETREL (*Oceanodroma markhami*) – Nils was able to glimpse this bird that snuck past the boat and had a dark rump. It flew more like a Band-rumped than a nighthawk, and that is a good way to identify it as a Markham's as opposed to a Black Storm-Petrel.

Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds)

RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD (*Phaethon aethereus mesonauta*) – Common on many of the smaller islands as well as Espanola and Genovesa.

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata magnificens*) – The widespread and common frigatebird. Somewhat odd is that genetically the Galapagos populations of this species are distinct, and show no gene flow with other populations. It is odd because visually the birds on the Galapagos look just like the other ones. I am not sure what taxonomists will make of this!

GREAT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata minor ridgwayi*) – Common only on Genovesa where it was the abundant frigatebird. The males were greenish above and the females had pale throats and a red orbital ring. We saw others here and there, but not commonly as on Genovesa.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

NAZCA BOOBY (*Sula granti*) – Common throughout the islands, they were finishing up with nesting and we found many large young and flying juveniles. This species was at one time lumped under the Masked Booby, however the two breed side by side on islands off Mexico with almost no interbreeding.

BLUE-FOOTED BOOBY (*Sula nebouxii excisa*) – One of the iconic species of the islands! This booby was common and we were able to see it foraging as well as at the nesting colonies. It was just starting nesting, so we were able to see some of the foot waving displays and the wing salute. This is an inshore booby, unlikely to be seen too far from shore.

RED-FOOTED BOOBY (EASTERN PACIFIC) (*Sula sula websteri*) – We visited a breeding colony on Genovesa Island. There we came face to face with lots of Red-foots, mostly of the local brown morph although there were a few of the white morph as well. These boobies are smaller than the others and like to nest on trees or bushes, not on the ground. They also have red feet!!



Unlike the other two booby species that nest on the islands, the smallish Red-footed Booby is a tree-nester. Dark morph birds, like this one, are the more common, though white morphs also occur in smaller numbers. (Photo by guide Alvaro Jaramillo)

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

FLIGHTLESS CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax harrisi*) –

Another of the iconic species of the Galapagos. This huge and heavy cormorant we saw very nicely in the Bolivar Channel. There were some that were on nests, other drying their "wings" and some floating around fishing. [E]

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

BROWN PELICAN (CALIFORNIA) (*Pelecanus occidentalis urinator*) – Common in small numbers throughout. This is an endemic subspecies. It is smaller than mainland Brown Pelicans.

Ardeidae (Hérons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (WHITE FORM) (*Ardea herodias cognata*) – I am not sure why our database says white form,

this must be an error. In any case these thick billed and short legged Great Blues are an endemic form here. We saw one amazingly tame juvenile on Santa Fe, and another pretty tame one at Cerro Dragon on Santa Cruz, otherwise widespread.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – Two birds were at Punta Moreno on Isabela.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Small numbers here and there.

STRIATED HERON (GALAPAGOS) (*Butorides striata sundevalli*) – This species is known as the Lava or Galapagos Heron. The taxonomic problems associated with it stem from the fact that it is dimorphic, there are NO Striated Herons in the Galapagos. This confusion needs to be clarified and Lava Heron should be restored as a species. [E]

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea pauper*) – Quite common on Genovesa Island, small numbers elsewhere. This is an endemic subspecies which is darker than the mainland forms.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

GALAPAGOS HAWK (*Buteo galapagoensis*) – This endemic appears to have emerged from Swainson's Hawks of the mainland. Perhaps vagrants from their long intercontinental migrations. We saw hawks the best on Espanola, but they were first seen on Isabela. [E]

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

GALAPAGOS RAIL (*Laterallus spilonotus*) – We were amazingly lucky with this usually difficult to see endemic species. The fact that the bird was seen within minutes of getting off the bus, and seen well was simply amazing. This was at Media Luna on Santa Cruz Island. [E]

PAINT-BILLED CRAKE (*Neocrex erythrops*) – Why this species has become so common and reasonably easy to see is a mystery. While widespread on the mainland, there this rail is very difficult to see. The Galapagos is now perhaps the best place to see this rail in the world. We had great looks at Rancho Primicias on Santa Cruz.

COMMON MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*) – The Common Moorhen has now been separated into two species, the one in the New World is the Common Gallinule (*galeata*) and Galapagos birds fall into this species. We saw gallinules on a few occasions, perhaps best in the ponds at Punta Moreno on Isabela.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – One flew by calling on Santa Cruz Island. [b]

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – A few were about on Santa Cruz Island on our first day of birding. [b]

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus palliatus galapagensis*) – This is a resident and endemic subspecies. We saw oystercatchers on only three occasions

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – Our best views were on Bachas Beach on Santa Cruz Island.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

WANDERING TATTLER (*Tringa incana*) – Widespread and reasonably common. [b]

WHIMBREL (AMERICAN) (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*) – Widespread in small numbers, many authorities separate the dark rumped American Whimbrels as a full species. [b]

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – Widespread in small numbers. [b]

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*) – This migrant showed up on Santa Cruz Island. [b]

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

SWALLOW-TAILED GULL (*Creagrus furcatus*) – This is an iconic species of the Galapagos and is common. They hunt mainly for squid and at night, they are strictly pelagic away from the breeding areas. Swallow-tailed Gulls finish and leave for the south, spending most of their life on the Humboldt Current.

LAVA GULL (*Leucophaeus fuliginosus*) – Although we saw this gull at several spots and was definitely not difficult to see, it is perhaps the rarest gull in the world! Its population may only be several hundred birds, far smaller than that of most gulls. It is closely related to the Laughing Gull. [E]

BROWN NODDY (*Anous stolidus galapagensis*) – Common throughout the trip.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Only in Quito and Guayaquil. [I]

GALAPAGOS DOVE (*Zenaida galapagoensis*) – Common endemic, and a very pretty member of the genus *Zenaida*. [E]

EARED DOVE (*Zenaida auriculata*) – In Quito.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

DARK-BILLED CUCKOO (*Coccyzus melacoryphus*) – This species seems to be getting more and more common. It is perhaps a recent arrival to the Galapagos, and was reasonably rare when Peter was a kid. Only in the last 4-5 years has it become easy to see like we experienced.

SMOOTH-BILLED ANI (*Crotophaga ani*) – Common, some would say too common. This introduced species has been blamed for the decline of the Vermilion Flycatcher. [I]

Strigidae (Owls)

SHORT-EARED OWL (GALAPAGOS) (*Asio flammeus galapagoensis*) – As we expected we found a couple of these owls hunting for storm petrels on the island of Genovesa. The owls are found elsewhere on the Galapagos, but it is here at the storm petrel colony where they are most easily found! Thanks Judi for spotting the first one.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

VERMILION FLYCATCHER (GALAPAGOS) (*Pyrocephalus rubinus nanus*) – I thought we were not going to find this species which is now quite rare on Santa Cruz. Carl spotted one up at Los Gemelos and we were able to get ok looks at a male. I am involved in research on this species and it seems to be a separate species from the mainland populations.

GALAPAGOS FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus magnirostris*) – Widespread, although our first were not until Isla Floreana. This flycatcher was particularly easy to see on Santa Cruz Island. [E]

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

PURPLE MARTIN (*Progne subis*) – One immature male of this vagrant species was found on Genovesa. There are only approximately 10 or so previous records, and none in June! The photos show a bird that is getting dark feathers on the throat and undertail coverts, the latter a feature that a Grey-breasted Martin should never show. Other martins are darker below than this bird, or dark on breast.

GALAPAGOS MARTIN (*Progne modesta*) – One male flew high up over the cliffs on Daphne Major. This endemic can be the most difficult to find at times. [E]

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

GALAPAGOS MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus parvulus*) – Galapagos Mockingbirds were what we saw on Genovesa, Santa Cruz and Isabela. Interestingly, genetically these islands fall into different groups, Isabela in one, Santa Cruz and the central islands in another, and Genovesa is more closely allied to the western populations (Espanola and San Cristobal!). [E]

FLOREANA MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus trifasciatus*) – This is another one of the very rare species on the Galapagos. It is restricted to two offshore islands off Floreana. We saw it on Champion, where we saw adults and young and were actually able to get pretty nice views. [E]

ESPANOLA MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus macdonaldi*) – This is the boldest of all of the mockingbirds, it also is the most terrestrial and the longest billed species. We had great and entertaining experiences with them on Espanola. [E]

SAN CRISTOBAL MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus melanotis*) – We saw a couple at the Cemetery above town in San Cristobal Island. [E]

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

YELLOW WARBLER (MANGROVE) (*Dendroica petechia aureola*) – Although listed as the Mangrove Warbler subgroup of the Yellow Warbler, the Galapagos birds should be in a group of their own. They are abundant and easily seen throughout the trip.

Emberizidae (Buntings, Sparrows and Allies)

GREEN WARBLER-FINCH (*Certhidea olivacea*) – The warbler finch was divided into two species recently, the one found on highlands is the Green Warbler Finch. We saw it on San Cristobal and Santa Cruz Islands. [E]

GRAY WARBLER-FINCH (*Certhidea fusca*) – The warbler finch of low and dry islands, we saw it on Genovesa and Espanola. It is only slightly more greyish than the green. [E]



Besides finches and mockingbirds, endemic landbirds aren't too numerous in the islands. The lovely Galapagos Dove, a close relative of the widespread Eared Dove of South America, is one of the notable exceptions. (Photo by guide Alvaro Jaramillo)

VEGETARIAN FINCH (*Platyspiza crassirostris*) – This is a unique finch, and now gets its own genus. For a while it was included in the genus of the tree finches, which it is not particularly closely related to. It is a big and bulky finch with a big parrot-like bill. It was found on several highland areas in Santa Cruz, and San Cristobal. [E]

WOODPECKER FINCH (*Camarhynchus pallidus*) – We first found the woodpecker finch on San Cristobal, and then saw many on Santa Cruz. The race on San Cristobal is streaked below, more like a Mangrove Finch! Quite unusual was to see one doing its tool using technique, with little stick in beak. That was the first time I had seen that behavior. [E]

LARGE TREE-FINCH (*Camarhynchus psittacula*) – Unfortunately only a couple of people got to see this species. It was at Las Primicias Ranch in Santa Cruz and did not stay for long. We looked for others but could not find any more unfortunately. [E]

MEDIUM TREE-FINCH (*Camarhynchus pauper*) – Only found on Floreana Island where it is reasonably easily found. We saw it there with Small Tree-finches. [E]

SMALL TREE-FINCH (*Camarhynchus parvulus*) – The more common of the tree finches, it was seen on Floreana, San Cristobal and Santa Cruz islands. [E]

MANGROVE FINCH (*Camarhynchus heliobates*) – Oh my gosh this was a close miss! We looked longer and harder than we have ever had to for this finch, but finally Peter spotted one working through the brush. It was likely this same individual we found farther in the bush a little later on. As we mentioned, this species is very rare, with under 100 individuals extant. It is Critically Endangered. [E]

SMALL GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza fuliginosa*) – Perhaps the most common Darwin's Finch of all! It seemingly is everywhere, and it does go up into the trees all the time. Found essentially everywhere we went except Genovesa. [E]

LARGE GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza magnirostris*) – The megamouth! This guy has a huge bill! We had great views on Genovesa, and we also found them elsewhere. [E]

SHARP-BEAKED GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza difficilis*) – The Sharp-beaked is an interesting finch. It is spotty in its distribution, has a vampire version, a highland version and the lowland version we saw on Genovesa. The three may not be all that closely related, meaning that there may be more than one species of Sharp-beaked! The ones we saw are allied to the Small Ground-Finch in their genetic relationships. [E]

COMMON CACTUS-FINCH (*Geospiza scandens*) – This is a finch of the lowland arid zone, and it does have a liking for cactus. It seemed to be most common on dry areas of Santa Cruz, although we also found it on other islands. [E]

MEDIUM GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza fortis*) – Common throughout, although absent from some of the smaller islands such as Genovesa. It seems to be the most variable of the ground/cactus finches. There were small mediums and big mediums! It is one of the most interesting of the finches to study in terms of understanding how natural selection maintains variation, as well how speciation occurs. [E]

LARGE CACTUS-FINCH (*Geospiza conirostris*) – This one we saw on Genovesa and Espanola. The two are rather different subspecies and perhaps deserve to be separated as species given that genetically they are also rather different. [E]

RUFIOUS-COLLARED SPARROW (*Zonotrichia capensis*)
– Quito outside hotel.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – The dark birds on the fence in Guayaquil airport that some saw from the plane were likely this species.

MAMMALS

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (*Tursiops truncatus*) – We had one group come in to bow ride which was excellent. Otherwise we saw them only at a distance.

"GALAPAGOS" SEA LION (*Zalophus californianus wollebacki*) – Common! We even were able to swim with them, which was very neat.

GALAPAGOS FUR SEAL (*Arctocephalus galapagoensis*) – This small and cute looking pinniped we only see on Genovesa Island. They have a different face, and longer limbs and whiskers. They also fish deeper in the water. [E]



Heather gets a warm welcome from a "Galapagos" Sea Lion on Espanola. (Photo by guide Alvaro Jaramillo)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Marine iguana (*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*) - We saw the big subspecies, the small subspecies and those gorgeous red ones in the southern islands.

Santa Fe Land Iguana (*Conolophus pallidus*) - Endemic to Santa Fe where we had some nice ones.

Land Iguana (*Conolophus subscristatus*) - We saw this species on Santa Cruz Island, at Cerro Dragon. We found males and females.

Galapagos Lava Lizard (*Microlophus albemarlensis*) - The widespread lava lizard, we saw on Isabela, Santa Cruz and Santa Fe Islands.

Española Lava Lizard (*Microlophus delanornis*) - The big lava lizard on Española.

Floreana Lava Lizard (*Microlophus grayi*) - A well marked lava lizard we saw on Floreana.

San Cristobal Lava Lizard (*Microlophus bivittatus*) - A rather uniformly patterned lava lizard.

Española Snake (*Philodryas biserialis hoodensis*) - The snakes that showed up after seeing the Waved Albatross on Española.

Galapagos Snake (*Alsophis dorsalis dorsalis*) - the snake we saw on Santa Fe.

Green Sea Turtle (*Chelonia mydas agassizi*) - The only sea turtles we saw on the trip. They were relatively common and we even got to swim with them!

Galapagos Tortoise (*Geochelone elephantopus porteri*) - Wow! What amazing creatures the giant tortoises are. The ones we saw in Santa Cruz were fully wild and unrestrained animals.

Some of the highlight fish, others were seen by snorkelers:

Black-tip Reef Shark

Manta Ray

Mobula Ray

Diamond Ray

Bullseye Pufferfish

Halfbeaks

Flying Fish

Sally Lightfoot Crab (*Grapsus grapsus*)

Ghost Crab (*Ocypode quadricaudii*)

Fiddler Crab (*Uca helleri*)

Star Spider (*Gasteracantha servillei*)- the spiny crab spiders we saw.

Galapagos Centipede (*Scolopendra galapagensis*) - The absolutely huge centipede we saw at Black Beach on Isabela.

Calvert's Saddlebags (*Tamea calverti*) - the common dragonfly.

Large Painted Locust (*Schistocerca melanocera*) - the big colorful grasshopper.

Darwin's Bee (*Xylocopa darwini*) - common.

Crimson Speckled Footman Moth (*Utethesia ornatrix*) - the white and pink moth we saw on the last days.

Galapagos Sulphur Butterfly (*Phoebis sennae marcellina*) - seen a few times.

Queen Butterfly (*Danaus gilippus*) - on Santa Cruz.

Galapagos Blue Butterfly (*Leptodes parrhasioides*) - a few towards the end of the tour.

Totals for the tour: 69 bird taxa and 3 mammal taxa