



*The ubiquitous Blue-footed Booby is kind of the mascot of the Galapagos islands, enchanting visitors, be they bird watchers or not. In the islands, everybody loves boobies. (Photo by guide George Armistead)*

The Galapagos islands are a dream destination for every nature enthusiast, and we got to see first-hand why the enchanted isles are unique and so alluring, especially for birders. We arrived on Baltra and quickly made our way to the lovely Nemo II, and after settling in and meeting the friendly crew, we were off! Our first visit found us circling legendary Daphne Major, and we were extremely pleased to see a handful of Galapagos Martins working the top of the island for bugs. At North Seymour we were overrun with land iguanas, seeing about 20 of them, as we also side-stepped nesting frigatebirds and Blue-footed Boobies, and took note of our first Galapagos Doves. We sailed overnight for Floreana, where we had a nice hike amid the pirate caves, and tallied our only Medium Tree-Finches of the trip, before loading up and heading to the other side of the island. At Champion-by-Floreana we found a most confiding family of critically endangered Floreana Mockingbirds.

That night we headed west for the Bolivar Channel, beginning the following day by walking the lava fields at Punta Moreno, tallying more great sightings of martins, enjoying lengthy studies of some very close flamingos and White-cheeked Pintails, and also noting all three types of cacti. A stop at Urbina Bay was nice, yielding great views of Vegetarian Finch and a couple of the highly endangered Galapagos Vermilion ("Brujo") Flycatchers. We spent that night in the comfortable confines of Tagus Cove, enjoying a nice hike there in the morning, before heading across the Bolivar Channel to Punta Espinosa on Fernandina. We saw some nice big aggregations of Marine Iguanas there, as well as some tidal pools teeming with fish and other wildlife, along with some shorebirds, then it was time to head north around Isabela. We crossed the equator twice that night, seeing a couple of whales just before dusk, including both Bryde's and Fin (but no "white whale", sorry Tim!).

The next day we were back at Santa Cruz, visiting Dragon Hills where we had one of our few Great Blue Herons (an endemic subspecies), and then we headed on to Espanola island. We spent a magical morning at Punta Suarez amid soaring and sailing Waved Albatrosses, and also got to watch mated pairs displaying and nuzzling with their youngsters. All of that would have been spectacular enough, but to have the majestic gooneybirds set against a backdrop filled with displaying tropicbirds, with skeins of boobies gliding past, and handsome Swallow-tailed Gulls bowing and clicking, the scene was simply stunning. A magical place.

Next we stopped in briefly at San Cristobal, long enough to get good views of the endemic mockingbird and also the endemic forms of Green Warbler-Finch and Woodpecker Finch, before we set sail for Tower (Genovesa). Perhaps as marvelous as Espanola, we were overwhelmed by the dizzying volumes of Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrels at the colony on Tower, and also staggered at sightings of Red-footed Boobies, both frigatebirds, Large Cactus-Finch, Large Ground-Finch and Sharp-beaked Ground-Finch. After a final dip in the water, we headed back to Santa Cruz. It was tough bidding adieu to the Nemo II and its fabulous crew (boy, did they take good care of us), but we were all pleased to be back on dry land; and after all we still had a few key target birds to see! Happily we struck gold with each, netting excellent views of the Galapagos Rail and the Large Tree-Finch before drinking in stupendous views of the Paint-billed Crake.

All in all, it was a pretty good haul. Thanks so much to all of you for making this trip such a supreme pleasure to guide. Peter and I really enjoyed traveling with you and we hope to see you out in the field again soon. Very best,

--George

For more information about this tour, including future departures, visit our website at [www.fieldguides.com](http://www.fieldguides.com). And to see this same triplist online, go to <http://www.fieldguides.com/triplists/gal12cLIST.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*) – The endemic form, seen 5 different days, appears less contrasting, and less richly colored, and probably well deserving of species status.

### *Podicipedidae (Grebes)*

**PIED-BILLED GREBE** (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – One seen distantly from the Pirate Caves on Floreana in a distant pond.

### *Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos)*

**AMERICAN FLAMINGO** (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) – Awesome experiences with this species this year, and we saw them on two different islands. Those found on the Galapagos are the pinkest found anywhere.

### *Spheniscidae (Penguins)*

**GALAPAGOS PENGUIN** (*Spheniscus mendiculus*) – This is the world's only tropical penguin and also the rarest, with only about 1500 total. We saw them three days while visiting the southern part of Isabela and also on the black sand beach of Floreana. [E]

### *Diomedidae (Albatrosses)*

**WAVED ALBATROSS** (*Phoebastria irrorata*) – Magical birds that we saw 4 days, but best of all on Espanola. Adults return to Espanola in April, after a pelagic stint away from the archipelago for a few months, beginning in December. Upon returning, they perform their amazing displays to reestablish lifelong pair bonds, and the intricate choreography - full of bill rattles, head bows, and groans - is the primary way that pairs recognize each other after months apart. It surprises some folks to discover that this is actually a rather small albatross. It is among the "gooneybirds" group of albatrosses, which includes four species that breed in sub-tropical or tropical latitudes in the Pacific. Long-line fishing has had a severe impact on populations, as has hunting of them in Peruvian waters. Voted the 2nd most "favorite" bird of the trip.



*While many of the island's birds are rather subdued in terms of color, the American Flamingos here are anything but; the ones found here are the pinkest of all. (Photo by guide George Armistead)*



Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

**GALAPAGOS PETREL** (*Pterodroma phaeopygia*) – One of the island's most endangered breeders due to the nest predation by the introduced Black Rat and other feral animals. Populations seem to be sliding, but we did have what seemed to be healthy numbers around the southern islands. Formerly lumped with Hawaiian Petrel, under the name Dark-rumped Petrel, it is now considered distinct and differs from Hawaiian in head pattern, bill size and underwing pattern. Locally known as the "pata pegada" we saw them 5/8 days.

**GALAPAGOS SHEARWATER** (*Puffinus subalaris*) – Daily.

Hydrobatidae (Storm-Petrels)

**ELLIOT'S STORM-PETREL** (*Oceanites gracilis galapagoensis*) – Also daily. Amazing that no nests have ever been found for such a common species.

**BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETREL** (*Oceanodroma castro*) – In his latest tubenose book, Howell recommends splitting the Galapagos BRSPs as "Darwin's Storm-Petrel". We saw them just two days, offshore of Tower Is. and Espanola.

**WEDGE-RUMPED STORM-PETREL** (*Oceanodroma tethys tethys*) – This is the most abundant stormie on the islands, although it is not as widely seen as Elliot's. It's unusual among storm-petrels in that it visits colonies during the day. We saw this at Genovesa, where thousands were flying over the islands and crawling into their burrows.



Though not an endemic species, Paint-billed Crakes are probably easier to see in the Galapagos than anywhere else in their extensive South American range. (Photo by guide George Armistead)

Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds)

**RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD** (*Phaethon aethereus mesonauta*) – Seen 4/8 days.

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

**MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD** (*Fregata magnificens*) – Daily.

**GREAT FRIGATEBIRD** (*Fregata minor ridgwayi*) – 4/8 days. This is a far more pelagic species than the former, specializing on flying fish. The feeding technique takes quite a while to master and thus the chick-rearing period for this species is much longer than that for Magnificent.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

**NAZCA BOOBY** (*Sula granti*) – 7/8 days.

**BLUE-FOOTED BOOBY** (*Sula nebouxii excisa*) – The favorite bird of the trip! Awesome encounters daily.

**RED-FOOTED BOOBY (EASTERN PACIFIC)** (*Sula sula websteri*) – 2/8 days. The most pelagic sulid, feeding mostly on flying fish, and more nocturnal than the others, and also the only one that nests in trees and is polymorphic.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

**FLIGHTLESS CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax harrisi*) – This unique and vulnerable bird was on display on Isabela. With a population of perhaps only ~1500, El Nino years may halve the population. Its closest relatives appear to be the group of marine cormorants that includes Brandt's, Bank, Black-faced, and the extinct Spectacled Cormorant from the Bering Sea. [E]

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

**BROWN PELICAN (CALIFORNIA)** (*Pelecanus occidentalis urinator*) – Ol' urinator... seen daily.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

**GREAT BLUE HERON (WHITE FORM)** (*Ardea herodias cognata*) – Not a "white form" but indeed an endemic subspecies that is shorter-legged than mainland birds, and shows a whiter neck. Seen 3 days.

**GREAT EGRET** (*Ardea alba*) – Just one seen.

**CATTLE EGRET** (*Bubulcus ibis*)

**STRIATED HERON (GALAPAGOS)** (*Butorides striata sundevalli*) – Nearly daily. There are pale birds that look like Striated Heron on the islands, and the classic dark Lava Herons. It turns out that both these dark and pale birds have

stockier features (thicker legs, bigger feet, and thicker bills) quite unlike the true Striated Heron on the mainland. It's been suggested by Floyd Hayes that there is actually just one species of Butorides heron on the Galapagos; but it comes in a pale and dark morph. Polymorphism is common in herons, and Hayes's theory seems to make a lot of sense. [E]

**YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nyctanassa violacea pauper*) – Seen 4 days, and another endemic subspecies with a funny name.

*Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)*

**GALAPAGOS HAWK** (*Buteo galapagoensis*) – Most unusual was seeing not a single one on Espanola where they are nearly always conspicuous. Good thing that we enjoyed nice views on Isabela, including seeing a nest with young there. [E]

*Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)*

**GALAPAGOS RAIL** (*Laterallus spilonotus*) – Good views in the highlands of Santa Cruz. [E]

**PAINT-BILLED CRAKE** (*Neocrex erythrops*) – Stupendous studies of this widespread, but typically hard-to-find species.

**COMMON MOORHEN** (*Gallinula chloropus*)

*Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)*

**SEMIPALMATED PLOVER** (*Charadrius semipalmatus*)

*Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)*

**AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER** (*Haematopus palliatus galapagensis*)

*Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)*

**BLACK-NECKED STILT** (*Himantopus mexicanus*)

*Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)*

**WANDERING TATTLER** (*Tringa incana*)

**WHIMBREL (AMERICAN)** (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*)

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*)

**LEAST SANDPIPER** (*Calidris minutilla*)

**RED-NECKED PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus lobatus*)



*Getting up close and personal with spectacular Waved Albatrosses on Espanola is easily one of the highlights of a visit to the islands. (Photo by guide George Armistead)*



**RED PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) – Dozens of both the phalaropes were present along the Bolivar Channel as they often are in August.

*Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)*

**SWALLOW-TAILED GULL** (*Creagrus furcatus*) – Many would argue that this is the most beautiful gull in the world. It is virtually endemic but for a few that breed on Malpelo Island off of Colombia. This species is unusual for a gull as it feeds mostly nocturnally (primarily on squid) and also is essentially a pelagic bird during the non-breeding season, when they range south in the Humboldt Current as far as central Chile. 4/8 days.

**LAVA GULL** (*Leucophaeus fuliginosus*) – Seen 4/8 days but nowhere is this endemic common, and it is in fact the world's rarest gull with only about 800 total. Neither are they colonial nesters. [E]

**BROWN NODDY** (*Anous stolidus galapagensis*)

*Stercorariidae (Skuas and Jaegers)*

**PARASITIC JAEGER** (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) – A flock of 4 jaegers flew south past us along the Bolivar Channel.

While Pomarine would be the most expected species, these four birds were hard to assess given they were all sub-adults and moving quickly past us. The one I studied at any length however seemed to most resemble this species.

*Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)*

**GALAPAGOS DOVE** (*Zenaida galapagoensis*) – 5/8 days. [E]

*Cuculidae (Cuckoos)*

**DARK-BILLED CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus melacoryphus*)

**SMOOTH-BILLED ANI** (*Crotophaga ani*) [I]

*Tytonidae (Barn-Owls)*

**BARN OWL (GALAPAGOS)** (*Tyto alba punctatissima*) –

This is an unpredictable bird on Galapagos. We have a couple good spots for it, but still it is either present, or not. Their tameness seems odd compared to Barn-Owls elsewhere. This endemic subspecies is smaller and darker than birds on the mainland, and it is also particularly well spotted, hence the name *punctatissima*. We saw 1 in a lava tube.

*Strigidae (Owls)*

**SHORT-EARED OWL (GALAPAGOS)** (*Asio flammeus galapagoensis*) – Gorgeous golden owls! We saw at least 4 on Tower.

*Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)*

**VERMILION FLYCATCHER (GALAPAGOS)**

(*Pyrocephalus rubinus nanus*) – The males of the Vermilion Flycatcher look pretty much like the ones on the mainland, but the females and juveniles are rather different. The vocal differences from those elsewhere is quite distinct, which means that this flycatcher needs to be separated from the mainland bird as a different species. Flycatchers do not learn their songs, thus clear and distinctive differences in voice are equivalent to genetic differences. It also suggests that the two would not recognize each other as they speak a different flycatcher language. Visually males are actually separable from mainland birds too, so there are consistent audio and visual differences. We had good luck finding several of these now rare birds (already extirpated on San Cristobal and Floreana) on Isabela and surprisingly on Santa Cruz, where fewer than 50 remain.

**GALAPAGOS FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus magnirostris*) – A common and tame flycatcher that we connected with in several spots. [E]

**TROPICAL KINGBIRD** (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) – Couple in Guayaquil.

*Hirundinidae (Swallows)*

**GALAPAGOS MARTIN** (*Progne modesta*) – Great encounters with these birds this year. An endangered species with a



*A hooked bill seems a risky thing to have next to a fully inflated chest pouch, but this displaying male Magnificent Frigatebird seems unfazed by the danger. (Photo by guide George Armistead)*

total population of probably less than 600 birds (perhaps fewer than 300; no one knows), we were fortunate to see them at Isabela and at Daphne Major. [E]

*Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)*

**GALAPAGOS MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus parvulus*) – 5/8 days. [E]

**FLOREANA MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus trifasciatus*) – This is one of the rarest birds in the world, and we got to see a nice family of three, and heard a couple others. Extirpated from the main island of Floreana with the arrival of cats and rats by 1888, the species is now confined to but two tiny offshore islands. [E]

**SAN CRISTOBAL MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus melanotis*) – Also known as the Chatham Mockingbird, we found them relatively easily on San Cristobal. [E]

**ESPANOLA MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus macdonaldi*) – Great views of this most inquisitive species on its namesake island.

*Parulidae (New World Warblers)*

**YELLOW WARBLER (MANGROVE)** (*Dendroica petechia aureola*)

*Emberizidae (Buntings, Sparrows and Allies)*

**GREEN WARBLER-FINCH** (*Certhidea olivacea*) – This highland species is found in wetter areas of the larger islands often with some altitude. The two species of warbler-finch essentially displace each other, so are never found on the same island; they also have different song types and demonstrate some plumage differences. We had them on San Cristobal and Santa Cruz. [E]

**GRAY WARBLER-FINCH** (*Certhidea fusca*) – This lowland species tends to be found on older islands with less altitude, often in scrubby lowland habitats. We saw a number of these at Genovesa and Espanola for many fine, point-blank studies. [E]

**VEGETARIAN FINCH** (*Platyspiza crassirostris*) – Not once have I ever seen these guys dig into a steak, but still they are plump and large. We saw them on three days. [E]

**WOODPECKER FINCH** (*Camarhynchus pallidus*) – We had them on 5 days, including on San Cristobal where an endemic subspecies resides. [E]

**LARGE TREE-FINCH** (*Camarhynchus psittacula*) – Often the last species of Darwin's finch that we find, such was the case this year on Santa Cruz where we enjoyed great studies of a territorial male. [E]

**MEDIUM TREE-FINCH** (*Camarhynchus pauper*) – Confined to Floreana amid the Scalesia zone which on this island remains more intact than most of the other islands. [E]

**SMALL TREE-FINCH** (*Camarhynchus parvulus*) – 5/8 days. [E]

**SMALL GROUND-FINCH** (*Geospiza fuliginosa*) – 7/8 days, our most commonly encountered finch. [E]

**LARGE GROUND-FINCH** (*Geospiza magnirostris*) – 2/8 days. The "Megamouth"! [E]

**SHARP-BEAKED GROUND-FINCH** (*Geospiza difficilis*) – Just on Genovesa, where we saw several dozen. This is the species at times known as the Vampire Finch. [E]

**COMMON CACTUS-FINCH** (*Geospiza scandens*) – 3/8 days. [E]

**MEDIUM GROUND-FINCH** (*Geospiza fortis*) – 7/8 days. [E]

**LARGE CACTUS-FINCH** (*Geospiza conirostris*) – We saw both subspecies on Espanola and Tower. [E]

*Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)*

**PERUVIAN MEADOWLARK** (*Sturnella bellicosa*) – Couple folks saw them in the Guayaquil airport.

**MAMMALS**



*It's large, it's in a tree, must be a Large Tree-Finch! Given the similarity between many of the Darwin finches, it's understandable that some folks think this is really how we identify these birds! It's not though. (Photo by guide George Armistead)*

**HOUSE MOUSE** (*Mus musculus*)

**BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN** (*Tursiops truncatus*)

**BRYDE'S WHALE** (*Balaenoptera edeni*)

**FIN WHALE** (*Balaenoptera physalus*)

**"GALAPAGOS" SEA LION** (*Zalophus californianus wollebacki*)

**GALAPAGOS FUR SEAL** (*Arctocephalus galapagoensis*) **[E]**

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## **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

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**Totals for the tour: 68 bird taxa and 6 mammal taxa**