



*Field Guides Tour Report*

**Galapagos: An Intimate Look at Darwin's Islands I 2013**

Jun 15, 2013 to Jun 25, 2013  
Willy Perez

*For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).*



*Blue-footed Boobies have easily the most recognizable feet in the whole of the bird world! (Photo by tour participant Linda Rudolph)*

This was the first Galapagos tour for 2013, and I have to say that it was wonderful. The most amazing thing about this trip is that the animals are so tame that the guides even have to say "Please don't step on them!" This was the case many times when the Nazca and Blue-footed Boobies were in the middle of the trail. Albatrosses were seen nesting two feet away, and mockingbirds and finches almost landed on top of us. However it is not just the birds that make Galapagos so special; there are the sea lions and Marine Iguanas that come to check you out, there are Giant Tortoises and Land Iguanas that don't move if you approach them. We also had time to appreciate how the finches in Galapagos have adapted to different food and habitats and some of them, due to this adaptation, look so bizarre, like the Large Ground-Finch, which local people call the "Mega mouth".

The sea also provides a great assortment, of wildlife and we were lucky to see some of these animals even from the boat, such as Hammerhead Sharks, Bottlenose Dolphins, Pacific Green Turtle and many colorful fish.

The Nemo II was comfortable and I would like to say thank you to all the crew members that made this trip successful. Thanks also to our Galapagos guide, Peter, for his knowledge and good energy. And of course a big thank you to all of you that came with me on this tour. It was a pleasure to have you on board and share this time with you, and I hope that I will do more birding with you soon.

--Willy.

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**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

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**BIRDS**

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

**WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL (GALAPAGOS)** (*Anas bahamensis galapagensis*) – John found a pair sleeping the first day at Bachas beach; they looked like rocks, and the ones that we saw at Finca Primicias the last day were much better.

Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos)

**AMERICAN FLAMINGO** (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) – Seen several times in the brackish water lagoons.

*Spheniscidae (Penguins)*

**GALAPAGOS PENGUIN** (*Spheniscus mendiculus*) – The best site for this unique bird was at Punta Moreno where one came out to see what was going on, and Linda got her photo. [E]

*Diomedidae (Albatrosses)*

**WAVED ALBATROSS** (*Phoebastria irrorata*) – Many of them nesting on Espanola Island, but also seen along the way on the open sea. [N]

*Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)*

**GALAPAGOS PETREL** (*Pterodroma phaeopygia*) – Seen many times during the cruising time.

**GALAPAGOS SHEARWATER** (*Puffinus subalaris*) – The most common bird on the open sea, and we had good looks at the ones with black under wings on the western side of Isabela.

*Hydrobatidae (Storm-Petrels)*

**ELLIOT'S STORM-PETREL** (*Oceanites gracilis galapagoensis*) – The small storm-petrel that was always following the boat.

**BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETREL** (*Oceanodroma castro*) – Not very common but seen several times along the way.

**WEDGE-RUMPED STORM-PETREL** (*Oceanodroma tethys tethys*) – The big nesting colony of these birds on Genovesa is really impressive, they were flying everywhere, and also we watched some of them from the boat.

*Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds)*

**RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD** (*Phaethon aethereus mesonauta*) – There were many places where we saw them but it was always fantastic to see them again and again; such graceful birds with long streamers.

*Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)*

**MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD** (*Fregata magnificens*) – The most common of the two species; some of them were chasing other birds to steal their food.

**GREAT FRIGATEBIRD** (*Fregata minor ridgwayi*) – The best place for them was on Genovesa where we could see the green sheen on them.

*Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)*

**NAZCA BOOBY** (*Sula granti*) – The largest of the 3 species of boobies in Galapagos; they were seen in several different places, with a lot of young birds also seen.

**BLUE-FOOTED BOOBY** (*Sula nebouxii excisa*) – This is the one that you see on t-shirts all over the world. We saw them plunging in to the sea to feed, but we were luckiest at Punta Moreno where some of them were doing their unique dance and showing their blue feet.

**RED-FOOTED BOOBY (EASTERN PACIFIC)** (*Sula sula websteri*) – Great sightings on Genovesa where both the brown and white morphs were around. Some of them were nesting and unlike the other two species, these boobies nest in trees.

*Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)*

**FLIGHTLESS CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax harrisi*) – They got the name from their complete inability to fly; wings are present but are too stumpy to get them airborne. We had several of them around Isabela. [E]

*Pelecanidae (Pelicans)*

**BROWN PELICAN** (*Pelecanus occidentalis urinator*)

*Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)*

**GREAT BLUE HERON (BLUE FORM)** (*Ardea herodias cognata*) – We saw them on several occasions but the first one on Bachas beach was so tame that we got very close. It seems that he was waiting to feed on the baby sea turtles.

**GREAT EGRET** (*Ardea alba*)

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

**STRIATED HERON (GALAPAGOS)** (*Butorides striata sundevalli*) – We saw them chasing Sally Lightfoot Crabs. They don't look like the Striated Heron from the mainland. [E]

**YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (GALAPAGOS)** (*Nyctanassa violacea pauper*) – We counted 28 during our 1/4 mile walk on Genovesa.

*Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)*

**GALAPAGOS HAWK** (*Buteo galapagoensis*) – The only resident hawk in Galapagos. The one on Espanola was seen best, but we saw several of them during the trip. [E]

*Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)*

**GALAPAGOS RAIL** (*Laterallus spilonotus*) – We managed to see this tiny rail in the highlands of Santa Cruz, it was as sneaky as a tapaculo. [E]

**PAINT-BILLED CRAKE** (*Neocrex erythrops*) – We watched several of these unique crakes at Finca Primicias, where they were feeding out in the open! What a treat!

**PURPLE GALLINULE** (*Porphyrio martinicus*) – A lifer for Peter which was great for him. It is my second time that I have seen this bird in Primicias.

**COMMON GALLINULE** (*Gallinula galeata*)

*Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)*

**SEMIPALMATED PLOVER** (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) [b]

*Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)*

**AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER** (*Haematopus palliatus galapagensis*) – Surprisingly we saw them only two times.

*Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)*

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

*Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)*

**WANDERING TATTLER** (*Tringa incana*) [b]

**WHIMBREL (AMERICAN)** (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*) [b]

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) [b]

*Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)*

**SWALLOW-TAILED GULL** (*Creagrus furcatus*) – Very graceful black and white gull and the only nocturnal gull in the world; we saw and heard them many times, even mating.

**LAVA GULL** (*Leucophaeus fuliginosus*) – One of the rarest gulls in the world; it was very unique to see them even on the boat. [E]

**BROWN NODDY** (*Anous stolidus galapagensis*) – Seen every day; the most common bird in the Galapagos.

*Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)*

**GALAPAGOS DOVE** (*Zenaida galapagoensis*) – The best place for this small colorful dove was on Genovesa. [E]

**EARED DOVE** (*Zenaida auriculata*) – Seen in Quito.

*Cuculidae (Cuckoos)*

**DARK-BILLED CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus melacoryphus*) – We observed only one of this species at Cerro Dragon on Santa Cruz Island.

**SMOOTH-BILLED ANI** (*Crotophaga ani*) – Very common introduced species, but these birds are responsible for the decline of the Vermilion Flycatcher. [I]

*Strigidae (Owls)*

**SHORT-EARED OWL (GALAPAGOS)** (*Asio flammeus galapagoensis*) – It was great to see it in the storm-petrel colony at Genovesa, and one was seen flying away on Floreana.

*Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)*

**SPARKLING VIOLETEAR** (*Colibri coruscans coruscans*) – Seen in Quito.

**BLACK-TAILED TRAINBEARER** (*Lesbia victoriae victoriae*) – Seen in Quito.

**WESTERN EMERALD** (*Chlorostilbon melanorhynchus*) – Nice female in Quito.

*Psittacidae (Parrots)*

**PACIFIC PARROTLET** (*Forpus coelestis*) – Nice views in Guayaquil airport.

*Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)*

**GALAPAGOS FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus magnirostris*) – We saw this endemic flycatcher on San Cristobal and Santa Cruz islands. [E]

**TROPICAL KINGBIRD** (*Tyrannus melancholicus melancholicus*) – From the plane in Guayaquil.

*Hirundinidae (Swallows)*

**GALAPAGOS MARTIN** (*Progne modesta*) – We spotted this bird flying a couple of times but the best time was the first day on Daphne Major. [E]

*Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)*

**GREAT THRUSH** (*Turdus fuscater*) – Quito

*Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)*

**GALAPAGOS MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus parvulus*) – The widespread mockingbird in Galapagos; we saw them on several different islands. [E]

**FLOREANA MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus trifasciatus*) – This is the rarest of the four species and it is found only on two small islands- Champion and Gardner. We did a boat ride around Champion and saw a pair of them. [E]

**ESPANOLA MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus macdonaldi*) – The largest of the four species; many of them on Espanola island. [E]

**SAN CRISTOBAL MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus melanotis*) – Normally this is a hard bird to get but it worked well in the cemetery, which is the usual place for them. [E]

*Parulidae (New World Warblers)*

**YELLOW WARBLER (GALAPAGOS)** (*Setophaga petechia aureola*) – They are very responsive to chirping and came very close whenever we did it.

*Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)*

**GREEN WARBLER-FINCH** (*Certhidea olivacea*) – We had great views of this species in the highlands of Santa Cruz. [E]

**GRAY WARBLER-FINCH** (*Certhidea fusca*) – Seen several times in the dry lowlands of Genovesa, Floreana, and Espanola. [E]

**VEGETARIAN FINCH** (*Platyspiza crassirostris*) – Great views feeding on leaves on San Cristobal. [E]

**WOODPECKER FINCH** (*Camarhynchus pallidus*) – This subspecies was seen on Santa Fe and Santa Cruz islands. [E]

**WOODPECKER FINCH** (*Camarhynchus pallidus striatipectus*) – This is the one that we got on San Cristobal. [E]

**LARGE TREE-FINCH** (*Camarhynchus psittacula*) – The last day in the highlands of Santa Cruz we had a very responsive one that came close and we could see it very well. [E]

**MEDIUM TREE-FINCH** (*Camarhynchus pauper*) – We went to Asilo de la Paz on Floreana which is the right spot for this species, and we watched males and females drinking water in a little pond with the tortoises. [E]

**SMALL TREE-FINCH** (*Camarhynchus parvulus*) – The most common tree-finch on the trip. [E]

**SMALL GROUND-FINCH** (*Geospiza fuliginosa*) – The most widespread ground-finch in the islands; we saw them many times. [E]

**LARGE GROUND-FINCH** (*Geospiza magnirostris*) – The best site for this bizarre bird was on Genovesa. [E]

**SHARP-BEAKED GROUND-FINCH** (*Geospiza difficilis*) – The only place that we enjoyed this interesting bird was Genovesa. [E]

**COMMON CACTUS-FINCH** (*Geospiza scandens*) – San Cristobal was the first place that we saw this finch which is longer billed than any of the other finches. [E]

**MEDIUM GROUND-FINCH** (*Geospiza fortis*) [E]

**LARGE CACTUS-FINCH** (*Geospiza conirostris conirostris*) – These two subspecies of Large Cactus-Finches look very different from each other; this was the one on Espanola that has a heavier bill. [E]

**LARGE CACTUS-FINCH** (*Geospiza conirostris propinqua*) – We saw this subspecies, which is smaller than the previous one, on Genovesa. [E]

*Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)*

**RUFIOUS-COLLARED SPARROW** (*Zonotrichia capensis*) – Quito

*Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)*

**SCRUB BLACKBIRD** (*Dives warszewiczi warszewiczi*) – Guayaquil airport

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## MAMMALS

**HOUSE MOUSE** (*Mus musculus*) [I]

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

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

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

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

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Also there are several things to add to the list that we saw during our trip.

Sally Lightfoot Crabs

Hammerhead Shark

White-tipped Shark

Marine Iguana

Santa Fe Land Iguana

Galapagos Land Iguana

Lava Lizards

Espanola Snake

Pacific Green Turtle

Galapagos Tortoise

Spotted Eagle Ray

Marble Sting Ray

And of course many different colorful fish.

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**Totals for the tour: 71 bird taxa and 5 mammal taxa**