



Field Guides Tour Report

Galapagos: An Intimate Look at Darwin's Islands III 2013

Aug 3, 2013 to Aug 13, 2013
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For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).

Although the Galapagos Islands got one of their evocative names ("Las Islas Encantadas" or "The Enchanted Islands") back in sailing ship days due to the unpredictable currents between the islands, the almost magical tameness of the archipelago's wildlife means the name is still appropriate in the age of GPS units and motorized engines. On each of the islands we visited -- North Seymour, Floreana, Isabela, Fernandina, Santa Cruz, Espanola, San Cristobal and Genovesa -- we got "nose to nose" with the locals. We recorded most of the islands' endemic bird species, (the sole remaining location for the critically endangered Mangrove Finch is now sadly off-limits), with most of them seen very well indeed. And the extraordinary tameness of the various seabirds meant we had some magnificent encounters with them as well!

Among the chief highlights of a visit to the Galapagos are "Darwin's Finches," the unassuming little brown birds whose subtle differences helped Charles Darwin to crystallize his revolutionary theory of evolution. Now known to be drab members of the tanager family, these birds radiated out across the islands, changing subtly over the eons as they encountered new habitats and competitors. From our first (a mob of Medium Ground-Finches rummaging in the dirt near the airport terminal) to our last (a single Green Warbler-Finch that flicked through a nearby shrub), most proved satisfyingly cooperative. Who will soon forget the little swarm of Gray Warbler-Finches bouncing through the lava boulders on the Espanola beach? Or the 100-strong flock of Small and Medium ground-finches searching for seeds along the path at Whales Bay? Or the Woodpecker Finch carefully selecting and pruning its "poking sticks" -- and using those sticks to fish fat grubs out of woody burrows -- in the mangroves of Santa Cruz?



One of the highlights of this tour is visiting the Waved Albatross breeding colony on Espanola, where some birds nest within yards of the trail. Photo by participant Carolyn Pomarius.

Of course, finches weren't the only birds that we saw well. Two Espanola Mockingbirds dogged our heels on Espanola. A gold-spangled Short-eared Owl preened on a low branch while its mate snoozed on a ledge nearby. Hot pink American Flamingos floated like fever-dream swans in a brackish pool. A pair of Galapagos Hawks tested their wings against the rising winds on Espanola, and an adult and youngster practiced a food handoff on Fernandina. Handsome Galapagos Doves trundled along path edges. And a handful of Floreana Mockingbirds sang from prickly pear cactus pads on Gardner Island. Blue-footed Boobies whistled and grunted and solemnly showed their amazingly hued feet to each other. Nazca Boobies huddled with fluffy "polar bear" chicks. Waved Albatrosses reunited with elaborate bill-clattering greetings, while their fluffy poodle chicks chirruped from ground nests. Storm-petrels accompanied our boat virtually everywhere we went, dipping and slicing over the waves in the open ocean and pattering on the surface in sheltered harbors -- with an Elliot's Storm-Petrel giving us exceptional "up close and personal" views when it landed between our tables during dinner one night. Flightless Cormorants panted on seaweed nests or dried nearly non-existent wings on the shorelines. Great and Magnificent frigatebirds puffed their enormous red throat pouches and clacked their bills and brooded fuzzy chicks.

But it wasn't all about the birds. There were also the lumbering Galapagos Tortoises, looking vaguely ET-ish as they munched on grass and leaves or wandered among the group. And the omnipresent Marine Iguanas, looking like tiny (and some not so tiny) dragons as they rested on rocks beside the sea. And the whip-fast Galapagos Sea Lions that played "chicken" with the snorkelers -- or rested like so many giant sausages on beaches throughout. Peter identified dozens of plants for us: daisy trees, and towering prickly pear cactus trees, and stubbornly tough little plants growing from seemingly dirtless cracks in vast lava fields. And each island's vistas proved enchanting.

Thanks to all of you for your good humor and camaraderie as we shared the adventures. It was great fun, and I hope to see you all in the field again some day!

--Megan

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*) – Our best views came on one of the brackish ponds at Punta Moreno, where several small groups of them paddled around the edges -- and some of the activity definitely became a bit x-rated! We saw others far, far below us on the big pond at Tagus Cove and one on the brackish lagoon at Dragon Hills.

Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos)

AMERICAN FLAMINGO (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) – Three fed in one of the brackish pools at Punta Moreno, wading in water so deep that they looked (when their heads were underwater anyway) like big pink swans. We saw others feeding in the brackish lagoon at Dragon Hills.

Spheniscidae (Penguins)

GALAPAGOS PENGUIN (*Spheniscus mendiculus*) – After spotting a few in the water near Punta Moreno, we had super up close and personal views of a pair -- one facing us, the other away -- along the edge at Tagus Cove. The snorkelers got even closer to a trio on a ledge, and watched one swimming past underwater. [E]

Diomedidae (Albatrosses)

WAVED ALBATROSS (*Phoebastria irrorata*) – Fabulous views of dozens and dozens, from fluffy poodle chicks through to sleek, elegant adults on Espanola, where all but a handful of the world's population breeds. Particularly entertaining were the bill clacking, head wagging greetings between reunited pairs. And what fliers! We saw many on the wing over the island's cliffs and the surrounding ocean. [N]

Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

GALAPAGOS PETREL (*Pterodroma phaeopygia*) – Daily over the ocean, where they looked long winged and fluid compared to the next species. Some passed quite close to the boat, allowing good views of the distinctive white patch at the base of their bills.

GALAPAGOS SHEARWATER (*Puffinus subalaris*) – Daily, fluttering past the boat on stiff, slightly bowed wings. We had nice views of both color forms: those in the western islands with brown underwings, and the more widespread form with whitish underwings.

Hydrobatidae (Storm-Petrels)

ELLIOT'S STORM-PETREL (*Oceanites gracilis galapagoensis*) – Very common, dancing on the water behind our boat, with exceptional views of the one who paid us a visit after dinner our first night -- landing right on the boat between the tables! It stumbled around for a bit (those legs don't look very strong) before settling in for a rest on the boat's back apron.

BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETREL (*Oceanodroma castro*) – Carolyn spotted one on our first afternoon's crossing from Daphne Major to North Seymour.

WEDGE-RUMPED STORM-PETREL (*Oceanodroma tethys tethys*) – A maelstrom of thousands and thousands swirled over the broken lava fields on the edge of Genovesa; it was almost like standing in a storm-petrel snow globe! We had others following the boat on many days. [N]

Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds)

RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD (*Phaethon aethereus mesonauta*) – Common throughout, with great views of several pairs on the ground on Espanola, and a dramatic encounter between one and a marauding Great Frigatebird in Darwin's Bay. The frigatebird chased the screaming tropicbird (talk about agile!) for several seconds before grabbing it by the back end and shaking it until it dropped its fish.

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata magnificens*) – Daily, with especially nice views of hundreds and hundreds (including dozens of youngsters of all ages, and a few balloon-throated males) on North Seymour, with many others fighting for scraps behind our boat or jousting for that coveted spot at the top of our mast. [N]

GREAT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata minor ridgwayi*) – Far less common than the previous species (despite what some of the books say), though they were very common on North Seymour and Genovesa. Youngsters of this species show orangey heads, as we saw repeatedly on those islands. [N]

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

NAZCA BOOBY (*Sula granti*) – Daily, with especially nice looks at dozens on Espanola (including the one I nearly brained with my falling camera) and Genovesa. [N]

BLUE-FOOTED BOOBY (*Sula nebouxii excisa*) – Also daily, with the dancing pairs on North Seymour providing particularly delightful entertainment. A huge swarm of them appeared shortly after we boarded the Nemo II and proceeded to fling themselves into the water on the other side of the Itabaca Channel -- obviously, there were fish to be had! [N]

RED-FOOTED BOOBY (EASTERN PACIFIC) (*Sula sula websteri*) – Very common on Genovesa, where we had fine views of both color morphs -- and lots of fluffy white chicks. This is the only one of Galapagos's boobies that nests in trees. [N]

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

FLIGHTLESS CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax harrisi*) – Our best views came at Punta Espinosa, where a pair added a wad of seaweed to a growing nest, another bird preened its tiny wings, and a quintet sparred with a Galapagos Sea Lion that made the misguided attempt to cross through the middle of the colony. We saw others around Punta Moreno and in Tagus Cove. [EN]

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

BROWN PELICAN (*Pelecanus occidentalis urinator*) – Regular throughout, including one standing on the roof of the ferry terminal shortly after our arrival into the Galapagos and several plunge diving into Tagus Cove.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (BLUE FORM) (*Ardea herodias cognata*) – One stalked along a lava ridge at the edge of the water at Punta Espinosa, scattering some nervous Sally Lightfoot crabs and Marine Iguanas. We saw another at Dragon Hills, and a few folks spotted one hunting the edge of the Itabaca Channel before our final breakfast on the boat.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – One gleamed against the dark lava rocks on the beach at Dragon Hills, and another hunted in a marshy area alongside one of the runways at the Guayaquil airport.

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*) – One stood in a marshy ditch along a runway at Guayaquil.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Particularly common on San Cristobal, where we saw a fair few in flight; we also saw a flock of a dozen or so low over the water just before we reached that island, a quartet standing partway up a hillside on Daphne Major, and dozens on Santa Cruz -- including one standing (appropriately) on a cow!

STRIATED HERON (GALAPAGOS) (*Butorides striata sundevalli*) – Daily, including one stalking prey in a narrow crack in the lava on the coast near Punta Moreno and another very photogenic bird in the harbor on San Cristobal. [E]

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (GALAPAGOS) (*Nyctanassa violacea pauper*) – A dark bird preened on the beach near the Nazca Booby colony on Espanola, and another rested in a crack in the lava near the Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel colony on Genovesa. We saw a paler bird in a "cave" near the sea in Darwin's Bay.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*) – Jack spotted one circling over the Guayaquil airport as we approached for a landing on our way back to Quito.

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – Several folks spied one teetering over Quito on our drive from the airport to the hotel near the end of the tour.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

GALAPAGOS HAWK (*Buteo galapagoensis*) – Seen on most days, with particularly fine views of a pair sharing a rock on Espanola, a couple of adults and a fuzzy youngster on a nest at Bahia Urbina, and an adult and juvenile practicing a food exchange at Punta Espinosa. [EN]

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

GALAPAGOS RAIL (*Laterallus spilonotus*) – Wow! This is generally the hardest of the Galapagos endemics to get a good look at; our first pair, which skulked (calling occasionally) in thick grass not far from where we parked our bus on Media Luna were a good example of that, showing themselves to only a very lucky few. But a hike up (and up and up) into the park brought us jaw-dropping views of at least three birds, which poked around a puddle in the middle of the trail and rummaged through trackside vegetation almost to our feet. Amazing!! [E]

PAINT-BILLED CRAKE (*Neocrex erythrops*) – Two birds in the background of our Galapagos Rail extravaganza at Media Luna just added to the fun. And a trio (or perhaps a quartet) of birds scurrying like oversized mice back and forth between dense thickets along a pond edge at Rancho Primicias or chasing each other in noisy scuttling battles (before one eventually stood right out in the open) were pretty entertaining as well.

COMMON GALLINULE (*Gallinula galeata*) – At least a half dozen lurked on the edges (or steamed across the middle) of the brackish ponds at Punta Moreno.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

SEMPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – One pattered across a lava outcrop near Punta Espinosa on the fringe of a little mixed gang of shorebirds, and another foraged at the near end of the brackish lagoon at Dragon Hill.

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus palliatus galapagensis*) – One paced along a rocky ledge on Daphne Major, briefly drawing eyes away from our first Swallow-tailed Gulls, and we spotted another pair snoozing on a lava shelf near Punta Espinosa, a pair flying over Espanola and one near Dragon Hill.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – A handful strode around the brackish lagoon at Dragon Hill, searching for tidbits.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

WANDERING TATTLER (*Tringa incana*) – Our first was one along the tideline in Tagus Cove, seen as we returned from our whale chase. We saw others around Punta Espinosa (including one hunting near the cormorant colony), with another two on the rocky beach at Dragon Hills.

WHIMBREL (AMERICAN) (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*) – A few on Floreana, including one hunting on the rocky fringes of the harbor and another piping loudly as it flew through the mist in the highlands. We saw another two with a mixed shorebird flock at Punta Espinosa.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – One paraded around the landing dock on Floreana -- even venturing among the snoozing Galapagos Sea Lions -- and a half dozen others rested among a mixed flock of shorebirds on a lava spit near Punta Espinosa. A few folks saw more in the rocky harbor at San Cristobal.

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*) – A trio fed at the far, shallow end of the brackish lagoon at Dragon Hills, providing a bit of an ID challenge since we didn't have a scope. Thank goodness for SLR cameras with zoom lenses -- we could confirm they had pale legs to go with those dark backs and pointy beaks!

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus lobatus*) – One flew past the boat on our last afternoon's cruise south from Genovesa. This is a winter visitor to the islands.

RED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) – A loose group of a dozen or so floated on the waves between Punta Moreno and Bahia Urbina.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

SWALLOW-TAILED GULL (*Creagrus furcatus*) – Many fine views of this gorgeous gull throughout the trip, including a gaggle of youngsters dotting the nesting ledges on Daphne Major and Genovesa and some lovely views of birds in flight along the cliffs of Espanola. This species is largely a nocturnal feeder, specializing on squid. [N]

LAVA GULL (*Leucophaeus fuliginosus*) – One with an apparently injured leg circled over the airport terminal on Baltra, and another checked out the leavings at the cafe near the ferry terminal there. We saw a couple of others over the Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel colony on Genovesa. This is one of the world's rarest gulls. [E]

BROWN NODDY (*Anous stolidus galapagensis*) – Seen every day of the tour, including a few preening on rocks near the Baltra ferry terminal, and others swarming over a patch of sea between Isabela and Fernandina; there must have been a lot of fish under there!

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Seen by some in the Quito area as we headed from the airport to our hotel on the last afternoon. [I]

GALAPAGOS DOVE (*Zenaida galapagoensis*) – This must certainly be one of the prettiest doves in this hemisphere! We saw them well, particularly on North Seymour (where we took the time to study them) and Genovesa. [E]

EARED DOVE (*Zenaida auriculata*) – One on the telephone wire over the parking lot of our Quito hotel -- and many more in the monkey puzzle trees on the grounds -- allowed good views of the dark marks that get called "ears".

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

DARK-BILLED CUCKOO (*Coccyzus melacoryphus*) – One along the Tagus Cove trail beat a caterpillar to death and gobbled it up before disappearing down into the center of a dense bush, and we saw another briefly at Whales Bay.

SMOOTH-BILLED ANI (*Crotophaga ani*) – Small numbers seen on most of our hikes on Isabela, with a handful of others on Floreana and more on Santa Cruz. This species was introduced to Santa Cruz back in the 1930s, and has unfortunately proved far too willing to munch the eggs of the local endemics! [I]

Strigidae (Owls)

SHORT-EARED OWL (GALAPAGOS) (*Asio flammeus galapagoensis*) – Amazing views of at least a half dozen of these chocolate brown owls on Genovesa, where some were stalking (one successfully) the nesting Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrels. But our best views probably came at the first little bridge along the trail, where one sleepy bird roosted on a rocky ledge while its mate preened in a nearby tree.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

SPARKLING VIOLETEAR (*Colibri coruscans*) – Several of these large hummingbirds hovered around the flowery trees near the entrance to our Quito hotel.

BLACK-TAILED TRAINBEARER (*Lesbia victoriae*) – Some folks spotted one of these long-tailed hummingbirds near the hotel parking lot our last afternoon in Quito.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*) – A disheveled little male -- sporting distinctive "horns" thanks to some displaced feathers -- hunted in the open areas behind our Quito hotel.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

GALAPAGOS FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus magnirostris*) – Widespread, seen on all but two days, from our first, hunting near the spring in the highlands of Floreana, to our last -- a pair right beside the trail into the Charles Darwin Research Station. This must surely be one of the smallest of the *Myiarchus* flycatchers! [E]

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

BLUE-AND-WHITE SWALLOW (*Pygochelidon cyanoleuca*) – A chattering little group of these highland swallows swirled over our Quito hotel on the last afternoon of the tour.

GALAPAGOS MARTIN (*Progne modesta*) – Two zipped back and forth over the vast lava field and brackish ponds at Punta Moreno. They look very like Purple Martins, though the females are much browner and both are a bit smaller. [E]

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

GREAT THRUSH (*Turdus fuscater*) – Common on the grounds of our Quito hotel on our last afternoon, with particularly nice looks at one in the parking lot.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

GALAPAGOS MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus parvulus*) – Common, widespread and eminently approachable on many of the islands we visited. Those along the trail at Whales Bay (which perched right over our heads and crept down branches to inspect us more closely) were especially fun. [E]

FLOREANA MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus trifasciatus*) – At least five different birds chortled from prickly pear cacti or scurried around on the ground on Champion, an islet off the coast of Floreana. That's a significant proportion of the world population for the species! [E]

ESPAOLA MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus macdonaldi*) – This, the largest and longest billed of Galapagos's mockingbirds, was common -- and ridiculously tame -- on Espanola. Several of them accompanied us along the trail, and some could only have gotten closer if they'd actually sat on someone. [E]

SAN CRISTOBAL MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus melanotis*) – One just outside the cemetery on San Cristobal was quick to mimic our squeaks -- and quick to fly into the nearest tree to see who was making all the noise. It was joined by a second a bit further down the road. [E]

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

YELLOW WARBLER (GALAPAGOS) (*Setophaga petechia aureola*) – Abundant and widespread throughout the archipelago, with especially nice studies of the distinctively pale females (which sure look different than North American birds) in the bushes along the beaches of North Seymour.

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)

GREEN WARBLER-FINCH (*Certhidea olivacea*) – A single bird foraging first in some daisy trees near the parking lot, then through some little bushes right beside the trail was an 11th-hour find at Los Gemelos on Santa Cruz. Given the dreary light, we struggled to see much green on it. [E]

GRAY WARBLER-FINCH (*Certhidea fusca*) – Particularly common on Espanola, where little parties swarmed across the rocky beaches, and on San Cristobal, where a gang foraged busily (feeding rather like kinglets might) in the trees along the road we walked. The San Cristobal birds looked rather greener than the Gray Warbler-Finches on Espanola -- or Green Warbler-Finches on Santa Cruz, for that matter! [E]

VEGETARIAN FINCH (*Platyspiza crassirostris*) – One nibbling leaves high in a tree over the road we walked on San Cristobal certainly lived up to its name. We spotted another on Rancho Primicias, not far from where all the big male tortoises were gathered. [E]

WOODPECKER FINCH (*Camarhynchus pallidus*) – One checking out tree trunks at Dragon Hills, a second probing Darwin's Bee holes at Whales

Bay and a third investigating moss beards on a tree in the highlands of Media Luna were nice. But the highlight sighting had to be the one in the mangroves at Puerto Ayoro, which created and tried out a whole succession of little stick tools in a successful effort to pry a tasty grub or two out of their holes. [E]

WOODPECKER FINCH (*Camarhynchus pallidus striatipectus*) – A pair, showing the distinctively streaky breasts of this subspecies, flicked through a flowering tree over the road we walked on San Cristobal. This subspecies is restricted to that island. [E]

LARGE TREE-FINCH (*Camarhynchus psittacula*) – Another last minute find at Los Gemelos on Santa Cruz. Our first was a female preening in a daisy tree near the sinkhole's edge, and most of the group watched a male feeding with a group of smaller (and smaller billed) Small Tree-Finches on the trail there a few minutes later. [E]

MEDIUM TREE-FINCH (*Camarhynchus pauper*) – It took a while to find our first, but then we lucked into several scattered individuals, including one peeling bark and eating fruits near one corner of the tortoise "corral" on Floreana. [E]

SMALL TREE-FINCH (*Camarhynchus parvulus*) – The most widespread of the tour's tree-finches, found on most of the islands we visited, including a pair near the Floreana pirate caves (conveniently close to a flock of Small Ground Finches for easy comparison) and others among the big flock of finches on our Whales Bay walk. [E]

SMALL GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza fuliginosa*) – Abundant and widespread, including almost ridiculous numbers along the weedy edges of the road through the little town on Floreana and scores in the trees along the Whales Bay trail. [E]

LARGE GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza magnirostris*) – A female in the middle of the trail at Bahia Urbina gave us great views of her enormous beak -- which was considerably larger than those of the nearby Medium Ground Finches. We saw another pair or two near the Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel colony on Genovesa, and another handful on the grounds of Rancho Primicias. [E]

SHARP-BEAKED GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza difficilis*) – Abundant on Genovesa, where we saw dozens scabbling for seeds in the sandy soil. [E]

COMMON CACTUS-FINCH (*Geospiza scandens*) – Two on our Dragon Hills walk showed wonderfully well -- a male munched on an *Opuntia* cactus pad (unfortunately for the photographers, in deep shade) while a female nibbled a smaller pad from a convenient perch in a nearby tree. [E]

MEDIUM GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza fortis*) – Common throughout, including birds showing a surprisingly wide range of bill sizes. [E]

LARGE CACTUS-FINCH (*Geospiza conirostris conirostris*) – Good looks at several on Espanola, including a couple grubbing seeds out of some VERY deep dead grass mats along the trail. [E]

LARGE CACTUS-FINCH (*Geospiza conirostris propinqua*) – One near the top of "Prince Philip's Steps" on Genovesa gave us nice views as it foraged for seeds with a dozen or so Sharp-beaked Ground-Finches. This is smaller billed than the previous subspecies. [E]

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

RUFOUS-COLLARED SPARROW (*Zonotrichia capensis*) – A few flicked through trees (or brush piles) on the grounds of our Quito hotel, and we heard the lovely clear whistle of a singing bird from beyond the perimeter wall.

Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

HOODED SISKIN (*Spinus magellanicus*) – One in a tree just outside the front doors of our Quito hotel entertained the troops as we waited for everyone to gather for our final afternoon's birding.

MAMMALS

BLACK RAT (*Rattus rattus*) – Some of the group saw one near the Floreana harbor. It's never good news for the local wildlife when this species makes it to an island.

HOUSE MOUSE (*Mus musculus*) – Some of the group spotted one scuttling near the houses on Floreana while walking back to the harbor at the end of our visit to the island, and Steve and Kathleen saw a tiny youngster scurry along the track up Media Luna.

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (*Tursiops truncatus*) – A good-sized pod swam alongside the boat -- some joyfully riding our bow wave for a bit -- as we steamed south from Whales Bay.

SHORT-BEAKED COMMON DOLPHIN (*Delphinus delphis*) – Those on deck as we headed south from Genovesa saw the distant splashes of this small dolphin surfacing -- and watched at least one leaping repeatedly out of the water.

FERAL (DOMESTIC) CAT (*Felis catus*) – One in the brush at Bahia Urbina was an unwelcome sighting; this species has had a catastrophic (no pun intended!) impact on the local wildlife. We saw another streak across the road in front of our bus, not far from the Itabaca Channel.

"GALAPAGOS" SEA LION (*Zalophus californianus wollebacki*) – Abundant throughout: sprawled on rocky coastlines, snoozing on landing docks (and park benches!), curled up on our boat's stern or zipping around after fish -- or just for fun! The snorkelers had several "up close and personal" encounters with some exuberant youngsters.

GALAPAGOS FUR SEAL (*Arctocephalus galapagoensis*) – One sprawled on a rocky ledge near the blowhole on Espanola, looking rather like a furry overstuffed sausage, and we saw a few others (including one that departed in quite a hurry after our panga drew close) on Genovesa. This species is shorter nosed and stumper looking than the previous. [E]

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

In addition to the birds and mammals, the Galapagos has many other special animals. Here's what else we identified:

REPTILES

Espanola Snake (*Philodryas biserialis hoodensis*) - A tiny one lurked in the underbrush beside the trail on Espanola.

Marine Iguana (*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*) - A number of very distinctive subspecies, ranging from small and dark to large and colorful. The turquoise-limbed bright red male basking on the rocks on Espanola was particularly memorable.

Land Iguana (*Conolophus subcristatus*) - These big rusty red vegetarians were especially common on North Seymour and (appropriately) around Dragon Hills.

Lava Lizards: These were the smaller lizards seen on most islands -- including some standing on the heads or bodies of their larger Marine Iguana cousins. We saw four species, all but the one of which (the widespread Galapagos) were restricted to the island for which they are named:

Galapagos Lava Lizard (*Microlophus albemarlensis*)

Floreana Lava Lizard (*Microlophus grayi*)

Espanola Lava Lizard (*Microlophus delanonis*)

San Cristobal Lava Lizard (*Microlophus bivittatus*)

Galapagos Tortoise (*Geochelone elephantopus*) - Some taxonomists break out various populations as species, others as subspecies. We saw several forms, including those of Isabela and Santa Cruz.

Pacific Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas agassizi*) - Lots of these huge sea turtles fed on seaweed below the ocean's surface, particularly between Isabel and Fernandina. The snorkelers, in particular, had some close encounters.

NOTABLE INVERTEBRATES

Sally Lightfoot Crab (*Grapsus grapsus*) - EVERYWHERE!

Semi-terrestrial Hermit Crab (*Coenobita compressus*) - A few roamed the beach or undergrowth at Bahia Urbina.

Ghost Crab (*Ocypode gaudichaudii*) - A handful of pink individuals lurked near their holes (and quickly disappeared at our approach) on the beach at Dragon Hills.

Queen (*Danaus gilippus thersippus*) - This big orange butterfly was seen on several islands.

Sulphur (*Phoebis sennae marcellina*) - As was this sizable yellow butterfly.

Large-tailed Skipper (*Urbanus dorantes*) - This endemic brown butterfly was seen only at Bahia Urbina, where it fed on trailside flowers.

Galapagos Blue (*Leptodes parthasioides*) - These tiny, endemic, blue and brown butterflies were particularly common along the trail above Tagus Cove.

Amazon Darner (*Anax amazili*) - This was the green dragonfly with green and black striped abdomen that we saw at Dragon Hills on Santa Cruz.

Tawny Pennant (*Brachymesia herbida*) - The little gang of dragonflies we found sitting atop stems near one of the brackish pools at Punta Moreno were this species.

Tramea cophysa - This was the dragonfly with the mostly reddish abdomen with a black tip and a narrow stripe in the wing (along the body). It has no recognized common name!

Large Painted Locust (*Schistocerca melanocera*) - Especially nice views of one on the Dragon Hills walk.

Spotless Ladybug (*Cylonea sanguinea*) - This was the small, unspotted ladybug we found on several islands.

Totals for the tour: 76 bird taxa and 7 mammal taxa