



Field Guides Tour Report

Galapagos: An Intimate Look at Darwin's Islands I 2015

Jun 13, 2015 to Jun 23, 2015

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



Galapagos Dove, one of the numerous endemics we saw on our adventure to the islands. (Photo by guide Willy Perez)

I can't believe that another Galapagos tour has ended. The incredible thing is that on every visit the "Enchanted Islands" have something different to show us -- these islands truly are enchanted! The wildlife is always magnificent: Marine Iguanas, Galapagos Sea Lions, Ruddy Turnstones, Sally Lightfoot crabs, all in the same picture. Darwin's Finches are not the most colourful birds, yet when we see them up close we really can see the differences in their beaks and understand more about evolution and how these birds are adapted to their environment.

Colorful birds were also a big attraction: male Magnificent and Great frigatebirds puffed out their pouches in full show, Red-billed Tropicbirds flew and called at eye level, and of course the dance of the Blue-footed Boobies was as always amazing. Flightless Cormorants and Galapagos Penguins dotted the dark rocky lava, storm-petrels followed our boat, and sometimes a loud splash from a ray kept us awake during our nighttime crossings.

For me, however, the most impressive event was the eruption of the Wolf Volcano on Isabela island--it really showed how the Galapagos Islands were and are continually born, how they grow, and then eventually erode into the sea.

Our base for seeing all this was the *Nemo III*, and we traveled around the islands in good comfort and the timing for the activities worked perfectly. The crew was fantastic and the food was delicious, so I would like to say thank you to the *Nemo III* team. Also, my thanks to Peter Freire, our friendly Galapagos guide who showed us the islands and their magnificent wildlife.

The biggest thank-you, however, goes out to all of you who came along to do this fantastic tour with me--it was a pleasure to spend a week with you, and I hope I will see you again on a future birding adventure with Field Guides.

A big hug and keep birding!

--Willy

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*) – We saw them several times during the trip but the day that we visited Isabela island we counted at least 30.

Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos)

AMERICAN FLAMINGO (*Phoenicopus ruber*) – There were two groups of them on Isabela island, over 20 in Punta Moreno, and at least 30 in the Humedales in Puerto Villamil.

Spheniscidae (Penguins)

GALAPAGOS PENGUIN (*Spheniscus mendiculus*) – There were at least 20 of them in Punta Moreno, some of them were resting with the Marine Iguanas. [E]

Diomedidae (Albatrosses)

WAVED ALBATROSS (*Phoebastria irrorata*) – Very few were flying in the open sea but there were a lot of them in Espanola; some had eggs already but no chicks yet.

Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

GALAPAGOS PETREL (*Pterodroma phaeopygia*) – Great looks during our sailing days.

GALAPAGOS SHEARWATER (*Puffinus subalaris*) – The most common bird on the trip.

Hydrobatidae (Storm-Petrels)

ELLIOT'S STORM-PETREL (*Oceanites gracilis galapagoensis*) – They were always behind the boat flying like fairies.

BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETREL (*Oceanodroma castro*) – We had to work for these on our open-sea sails; we saw a few of them on our way to San Cristobal.

WEDGE-RUMPED STORM-PETREL (*Oceanodroma tethys tethys*) – Genovesa was the place to see big numbers of these; unfortunately some of them were lunch for the Short-eared Owl!

Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds)

RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD (*Phaethon aethereus mesonauta*) – The most handsome bird of the trip, we had eye level views of many of them when we visited Espanola island.

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata magnificens*) – The most numerous of the two species, some males were in full display with their pouches inflated.

GREAT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata minor ridgwayi*) – Not as common as the previous ones, but we saw them on a couple of days.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

NAZCA BOOBY (*Sula granti*) – Seen every day

BLUE-FOOTED BOOBY (*Sula nebouxii excisa*) – The most common of the 3 species; seen diving and dancing.

RED-FOOTED BOOBY (EASTERN PACIFIC) (*Sula sula websteri*) – We saw the two morphs (brown and white) of this unique birds when we visited the Genovesa island. Fantastic red feet.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

FLIGHTLESS CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax harrisi*) – This species really shows the rule of evolution, use it or lose it. When you look at their wings, they definitely lost them! [E]

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

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

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (BLUE FORM) (*Ardea herodias cognata*)

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*)

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*)

STRIATED HERON (GALAPAGOS) (*Butorides striata sundevalli*) – This very dark heron was seen several times during our trip. [E]

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (GALAPAGOS) (*Nyctanassa violacea pauper*)

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*) – Seen around Quito.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

GALAPAGOS HAWK (*Buteo galapagoensis*) – Once again Espanola was the best place to see this endemic hawk. [E]

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

GALAPAGOS RAIL (*Laterallus spilonota*) – This time the rain almost spoiled our fun when we went to look for this small rail on Isabela. Our persistence payed off nicely when a pair came out to walk along the road side. [E]

PAINT-BILLED CRAKE (*Neocrex erythrops*) – Seen a couple of times when we were on Floreana.

COMMON GALLINULE (*Gallinula galeata*)

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*)

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus palliatus galapagensis*) – Not many this trip, but the nicest one was when we went to Santa Fe and one was chased by a Sea Lion.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*)

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

WANDERING TATTLER (*Tringa incana*)

WHIMBREL (AMERICAN) (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*)

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*)

Stercorariidae (Skuas and Jaegers)

POMARINE JAEGER (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) – This was a nice surprise during one of our afternoon sails from Espanola to San Cristobal.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

SWALLOW-TAILED GULL (*Creagrus furcatus*) – This nocturnal gull was seen during the day, but also almost every night they were following the boat.

LAVA GULL (*Leucophaeus fuliginosus*) – More numerous than usual; we had this rare gull almost every day of the trip. [E]

BROWN NODDY (*Anous stolidus galapagensis*) – Seen every day, even on the top of a pelican's head.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

COMMON GROUND-DOVE (*Columbina passerina*) – Seen in Quito

GALAPAGOS DOVE (*Zenaida galapagoensis*) – Fantastic looks of this endemic dove. [E]

EARED DOVE (*Zenaida auriculata*) – Quito

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

DARK-BILLED CUCKOO (*Coccyzus melacoryphus*)

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

Tytonidae (Barn-Owls)

BARN OWL (GALAPAGOS) (*Tyto alba punctatissima*) – We had to work a bit for this one--we managed to organize a trip to look for this owl. Eventually we had an adult with a chick on a nest inside a house. [N]

Strigidae (Owls)

SHORT-EARED OWL (GALAPAGOS) (*Asio flammeus galapagoensis*) – One was hunting Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrels on Genovesa.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

SPARKLING VIOLETEAR (*Colibri coruscans*) – In the gardens of San Jose Hotel in Quito.

BLACK-TAILED TRAINBEARER (*Lesbia victoriae*) – Quito

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

CRIMSON-MANTLED WOODPECKER (*Colaptes rivolii*) – Quito

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*) – A pair seen around the hotel in Quito.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

SOUTHERN BEARDLESS-TYRANULET (*Camptostoma obsoletum*) [*]

VERMILION FLYCATCHER (VERMILION) (*Pyrocephalus rubinus piurae*) – This is the one that we saw in Quito

VERMILION FLYCATCHER (GALAPAGOS) (*Pyrocephalus rubinus nanus*) – It was great to go to the highlands of Isabela where this subspecies of Vermilion is still common.

GALAPAGOS FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus magnirostris*) – Seen several times. [E]

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

BLUE-AND-WHITE SWALLOW (*Pygochelidon cyanoleuca*) – Quito

GRAY-BREASTED MARTIN (*Progne chalybea*) – Guayaquil airport

GALAPAGOS MARTIN (*Progne modesta*) – Males and females were seen possibly nesting in Tagus Cove. [E]

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

GREAT THRUSH (*Turdus fuscater*) – Quito

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

GALAPAGOS MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus parvulus*) [E]

FLOREANA MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus trifasciatus*) – A few of them were seen on Champion. [E]

ESPANOLA MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus macdonaldi*) – The biggest of all the mockingbirds, nicely seen in Espanola. [E]

SAN CRISTOBAL MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus melanotis*) [E]

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

YELLOW WARBLER (GALAPAGOS) (*Setophaga petechia aureola*)

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)

BLUE-AND-YELLOW TANAGER (*Pipraeidea bonariensis*) – Quito only

BLUE-GRAY TANAGER (*Thraupis episcopus*) – Hotel garden in Quito

SCRUB TANAGER (*Tangara vitriolina*) – Quito

CINEREOUS CONEBILL (*Conirostrum cinereum*) – Quito
GREEN WARBLER-FINCH (*Certhidea olivacea*) – Seen on Isabela and Santa Cruz [E]
GRAY WARBLER-FINCH (*Certhidea fusca mentalis*) – Seen on Genovesa [E]
GRAY WARBLER-FINCH (*Certhidea fusca luteola*) – Great views on San Cristobal [E]
GRAY WARBLER-FINCH (*Certhidea fusca cinerascens*) – This is the one that we saw on Espanola. [E]
VEGETARIAN FINCH (*Platypiza crassirostris*) – Fantastic views when we visited San Cristobal island [E]
WOODPECKER FINCH (*Camarhynchus pallidus pallidus*) – This is the one that we saw at Los Gemelos on Santa Cruz island. [E]
WOODPECKER FINCH (*Camarhynchus pallidus productus*) – We saw this one in the highlands of Isabela. [E]
WOODPECKER FINCH (*Camarhynchus pallidus striatipectus*) – We observed this one behaving as a woodpecker during our visit to San Cristobal. [E]
LARGE TREE-FINCH (*Camarhynchus psittacula psittacula*) – Our last day in Galapagos we managed to see this one on Santa Cruz. [E]
MEDIUM TREE-FINCH (*Camarhynchus pauper*) – The visit to the Asilo de la Paz was great for this species, we saw them several times there. [E]
SMALL TREE-FINCH (*Camarhynchus parvulus parvulus*) – We saw this one on a few islands except San Cristobal. [E]
SMALL TREE-FINCH (*Camarhynchus parvulus salvini*) – The one that we saw on San Cristobal [E]
SMALL GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza fuliginosa*) – The most numerous of the Darwin's Finches. [E]
LARGE GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza magnirostris*) – Seen only once on Genovesa. [E]
SHARP-BEAKED GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza difficilis difficilis*) – Genovesa was a good place to see this nice finch. [E]
COMMON CACTUS-FINCH (*Geospiza scandens intermedia*) – Both male and female were seen in the lowlands of Isabela. [E]
MEDIUM GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza fortis*) – Seen several times along the way. [E]
LARGE CACTUS-FINCH (*Geospiza conirostris conirostris*) – The subspecies from Espanola [E]
LARGE CACTUS-FINCH (*Geospiza conirostris propinqua*) – Seen on Genovesa [E]

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

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

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – Guayaquil

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

GOLDEN-RUMPED EUPHONIA (*Euphonia cyanocephala*) – Quito [*]
HOODED SISKIN (*Spinus magellanicus*) – Quito

MAMMALS

COMMON MINKE WHALE (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) – Seen briefly by some of our group.
"GALAPAGOS" SEA LION (*Zalophus californianus wollebacki*) – Many of them along the way.
GALAPAGOS FUR SEAL (*Arctocephalus galapagoensis*) [E*]

Herps

MARINE IGUANA (*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*) [E]
LAND IGUANA (*Conolophus subcristatus*) [E]
GALAPAGOS LEAF-TOED GECKO (*Phyllodactylus galapagoensis*) [E]
GALAPAGOS LAVA LIZARD (*Microlophus albemarlensis*) [E]
ESPANOLA LAVA LIZARD (*Microlophus delanonis*) [E]
FLOREANA LAVA LIZARD (*Microlophus grayi*) [E]
SAN CRISTOBAL LAVA LIZARD (*Microlophus bivittatus*) [E]
GALAPAGOS (GIANT) TORTOISE (*Geochelone elephantopus*) [E]
GREEN SEA TURTLE (*Chelonia mydas*)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Also in this tour we saw a lot of fish. I am going to mention some that were really impressive:

Moorish Idol

King Angel

Rainbow Wrasse

Yellow-tailed Surgeon

Azure Parrot

Galapagos Shark

Yellow-finned Tuna

Spotted Eagle Ray

Totals for the tour: 88 bird taxa and 3 mammal taxa