

# Galápagos: Isles of Enchantment

## Trip Report

September 30<sup>st</sup> – October 10th, 2025



*Our group lit up by the sunset at the top of the Darwin Lake trail near Tagus Cove, Isla Isabela.*

## Trip Summary

Our October 2025 journey through the Galápagos Islands was an unforgettable immersion into one of the most extraordinary natural laboratories on Earth. Over ten action-packed days, we explored the archipelago by both sea and land, traversing volcanic shorelines, mangrove lagoons, pristine beaches, and nutrient-rich waters shaped by powerful ocean currents. From our first steps onto Baltra Island to our final snorkel off San Cristóbal, each day brought intimate encounters with wildlife found nowhere else on the planet.

The group observed an exceptional diversity of endemic birds and wildlife, including iconic species such as Waved Albatross, Galápagos Penguin, Flightless Cormorant, Galápagos Hawk, and multiple species of Darwin's finches across several islands. Highlights extended well beyond birds: we snorkeled alongside marine iguanas, sea turtles, reef sharks, penguins, eagle rays, and playful sea lions, often at arm's length. On land, we shared quiet moments with giant tortoises more than a century old, watched lava lizards perform push-up displays, and marveled at the stark beauty of freshly formed lava fields.

Traveling aboard the *Galaxy Yacht* allowed us to access remote islands such as Fernandina, Isabela, and Santiago, where we experienced dramatic seabird colonies and massive marine iguana aggregations. Our land-based follow-up, allowed us to marvel at one of the world's great wildlife spectacles: dozens of Waved Albatross soaring above the cliffs of Punta Suárez. Land-based excursions on Santa Cruz and San Cristóbal complemented our time at sea, offering deeper insight into highland habitats, conservation success stories, and the human history of the islands.

Throughout the trip, expert naturalist guides provided thoughtful interpretation of Galápagos ecology, evolution, and conservation—bringing Darwin's ideas to life while emphasizing the ongoing efforts required to protect these fragile ecosystems. Equally memorable were the shared human moments: laughter during zodiac rides, quiet awe while snorkeling, the group rallying together when challenges arose, and the generosity of local people who reminded us that conservation is as much about community as it is about wildlife.

This Galápagos journey was not a leisurely vacation, but a deeply immersive adventure – one that rewarded curiosity, flexibility, and a sense of wonder. For all of us, it was a powerful reminder of why the Galápagos Islands continue to inspire scientists, naturalists, and travelers alike, and why protecting this place remains so vitally important.



*Map showing the tour itinerary by day, without flights, starting on Isla Baltra (Day 1) notated in red.*

**Day 1 - Tuesday, September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**Quito, Ecuador | Puembo Birding Garden**

Our journey started at the Puembo Birding Garden, where Mercedes Rivadeneira warmly welcomed us with a menagerie of inter-Andean scrub birds that call her gardens home. Highlights included **Scrub Tanager** (right), **Blue-and-Yellow Tanager**, **White-lined Tanager**, **Western Emerald**, **Rufous-tailed Hummingbird**, **Sparkling Violetear**, **Croaking Ground-Dove**, **Shiny Cowbird**, **Saffron Finch**, and **Great Thrush**.



*The viewing room at Puembo Birding Garden (left); a Scrub Tanager in the garden (right).*

**Day 2 - Wednesday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025**

**Quito | Isla Baltra | Isla Santa Cruz | Rancho El Chato | Galaxy Yacht**

Touching down on Baltra Island, it took only minutes before we were immersed in the wildlife that makes the Galápagos so extraordinary. From the airport shuttle alone, we encountered endemic **Galápagos Doves**, **Small Ground-Finches**—some boldly hopping inside the terminal—and our first Baltra land iguanas, basking in the sun as if to welcome us.

At the dock near the Itabaca Canal, the Galápagos truly announced itself. Dozens of **Blue-footed Boobies** filled the air, a **Lava Heron** was seen on the rocky shoreline, and **Elliot's Storm-Petrels** danced delicately across the surface of the water. **Magnificent Frigatebirds** soared effortlessly overhead, while **Brown Pelicans**, **Great Blue Herons**, and the local **Mangrove Yellow Warblers** rounded out our first flurry of sightings.





*Blue-footed Booby by Chad Brack*

We continued into the highlands of Santa Cruz to visit Rancho El Chato, home to dome-shelled giant tortoises. As our guide Julio taught us about their ecology and conservation, birds repeatedly stole our attention: **Galápagos Flycatchers**, **Galápagos Mockingbirds**, **Small** and **Medium Ground-Finches**, a **Hudsonian Whimbrel** foraging on the grassy ground, and several **White-cheeked Pintails** dabbling in a small pond. Walking through a lava tube—formed when flowing lava drained away beneath a hardened crust—felt like stepping into a subterranean time capsule.



*Marveling at the grandeur of a giant tortoise at the Rancho El Chato on Isla Santa Cruz.*



By late afternoon, we arrived in Puerto Ayora, where marine iguanas, Galápagos sea lions, and more seabirds greeted us along the waterfront. Boarding the *Galaxy Yacht* by zodiac, we were welcomed aboard, oriented by the crew, and enjoyed our first Galápagos dinner as the ship set course westward toward Isabela Island under the stars.



*Clockwise from upper left: A Galápagos Mockingbird at El Chato Ranch; the Brown Noddy is a beautiful and abundant tern; the Galaxy Yacht; walking through a lava tunnel at El Chato Ranch.*

**Day 3 – Thursday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025**

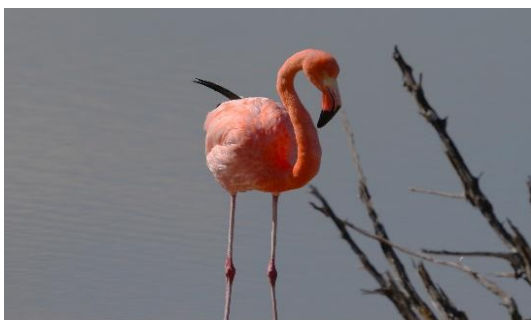
**Isla Isabela | Tintoreras | Arnold Tupiza Tortoise Breeding Center | Puerto Villamil**

We awoke off the coast of Isabela Island and made our first landing at Tintoreras, named for the white-tipped reef sharks that rest in its narrow lava channels. From land and water alike, wildlife was abundant: marine iguanas, green sea turtles, Galápagos sea lions, and a rich assortment of shorebirds including **Wandering Tattlers**, **American Oystercatchers**, and **Ruddy Turnstones**.

While relaxing on the beach afterward, a small miracle unfolded as several **Lava Gulls**—the rarest gull species in the world—flew overhead and landed nearby. With fewer than 800 individuals remaining globally, this was a thrilling and unexpected highlight.

Exploring the boardwalk toward Concha la Perla, we picked up our first **Small Tree-Finch** before continuing inland by Ranchera (see photo below) to Isabela's saline lagoons. Here, **American Flamingos**, **White-cheeked Pintails**, **Black-necked Stilts**, and migrating shorebirds fed in shimmering water under an open sky.

We hopped in a traditional *ranchera* bus to the Arnaldo Tupiza Tortoise Breeding Center, where conservation took center stage. One ancient tortoise—well over a century old—ambled close enough to meet our gaze. Chad quietly remarked that looking into its eyes felt almost spiritual, a moment of deep connection across time.



*White-cheeked Pintail (upper left); American Oystercatchers by Chad Brack (right); American Flamingo (lower left).*

The afternoon was ours to explore Puerto Villamil and its beaches, where more shorebirds, finches, and seabirds filled the shoreline. That evening, back aboard the *Galaxy*, we dined and received our briefing for the next day, drifting west toward Punta Moreno.



*Catching a ride on a traditional ranchera bus, Isla Isabela (left); an ancient dome-shelled Galapagos Tortoise at the Arnaldo Tupiza Tortoise Breeding Center, Isla Isabela (right).*

#### Day 4 – Friday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025

**Punta Moreno, Isla Isabela | Bolivar Channel | Punta Mangle, Isla Fernandina**

We woke anchored near the western coast of Isabela off of Punta Moreno. From the deck, seabirds wheeled endlessly, including **Galápagos Shearwaters**, **Brown Noddies**, and our first nesting **Flightless Cormorants**. A bullseye pufferfish feeding beneath the boat added a whimsical start to the day.

Landing among vast fields of pahoehoe lava, the stark volcanic landscape stretched endlessly, framed by views of Sierra Negra Volcano with lava cactus in the foreground. Massive aggregations of marine iguanas covered the rocks, while **Ruddy Turnstones** fed among them—at times standing directly on iguana backs.





*On the zodiac near Punta Moreno, Isla Isabela (left); Wandering Tattler eating a small fish on pahoehoe lava (photo by Chad Brack); Lava Gull near Concha La Perla, Isla Isabela (photo by Chad Brack).*

Crossing the Bolivar Channel to Fernandina Island, we passed enormous flocks of **Red-necked Phalaropes**, spotted our first **Nazca Boobies**, and entered the cold, nutrient-rich waters of the Cromwell Current. Snorkeling here was unforgettable. A **Flightless Cormorant** swam directly up to us, pecking inquisitively at a GoPro, while sea turtles, colorful reef fish, and playful sea lions darted through the water.

As sunset approached, we cruised Fernandina's shoreline by zodiac, enjoying close looks at **Galápagos Hawks**, **Flightless Cormorants**, and sea lions. A massive raft of **Galápagos Shearwaters** glimmered white against the evening sea as the sky turned pink all around.





*From upper left clockwise: Green sea turtle with Cortez Rainbow Wrass fish on one of our snorkeling sessions; Galápagos Flycatcher in the Santa Cruz highlands; Lava cactus growing out of pahoehoe lava; Sally lightfoot crab on a sandy beach.*



*A flock of Galápagos Shearwaters are lit up by the setting sun off the coast of Isla Fernandina.*



*A marine iguana swims from its subsurface foraging grounds back to the rocky intertidal zone.*



**Day 5 – Saturday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

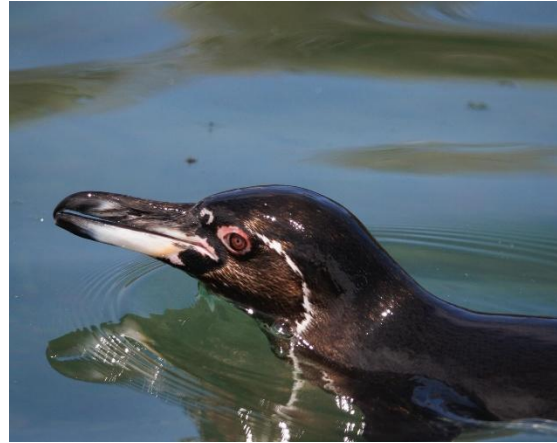
**Punta Espinoza, Isla Fernandina | Bolivar Channel | Tagus Cove, Isla Isabela**

At Punta Espinoza, Fernandina's raw volcanic beauty was on full display. Hundreds of marine iguanas, Fernandina lava lizards, and playful sea lion pups filled the landscape. A close encounter with a **Galápagos Hawk** and even a whale skeleton embedded in the lava reminded us how life and death intertwine here.



*Photographing a Lava Heron eating a fish on volcanic rock while surrounded by Galápagos sea lions.*

Leaving by zodiac, we were thrilled to see a **Galápagos Penguin** zip past the boat—one of only about 2,000 individuals remaining worldwide—followed moments later by a massive Mola Mola Sunfish basking at the surface.



*Ted and Angie getting ready to enjoy one of many great meals we had on the Galaxy (left); Galápagos Penguin (photo by Chad Brack) coming up for a breath near our zodiac off of Isla Fernandina (upper right); Flightless Cormorant showing its blue iris while roosting on a nesting colony near Punta Moreno (lower right).*

Snorkeling among foraging marine iguanas was, for many of us, the highlight of the trip: watching these uniquely adapted reptiles graze underwater in their element was truly mesmerizing.

After lunch, we crossed to Tagus Cove, spotting our first **Band-rumped Storm-Petrels** and **Great Frigatebirds** en route. Some paddled kayaks while others snorkeled, encountering **Galápagos Penguins**,







countless green sea turtles, pencil-spined sea urchins, and sea lions at play. A **Galápagos Hawk** raiding a nest high on the cliffs added a dramatic touch.

That evening, we hiked to an overlook above Darwin Lake, watching the sun set behind Volcán Wolf before returning aboard to continue our voyage.



*A Galápagos Hawk glares down upon its perch on a Cordia shrub on the shores of Tagus Cove, Isla Isabela (photo by Chad Brack).*



*One of the most iconic sites in the Galápagos Islands, Darwin Lake, sits above Tagus Cove, surrounded by fragrant Palo Santo trees. Darwin visited this lake in 1835.*

#### **Day 6 – Sunday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

##### **Puerto Egas, Isla Santiago | Sombrero Chino**

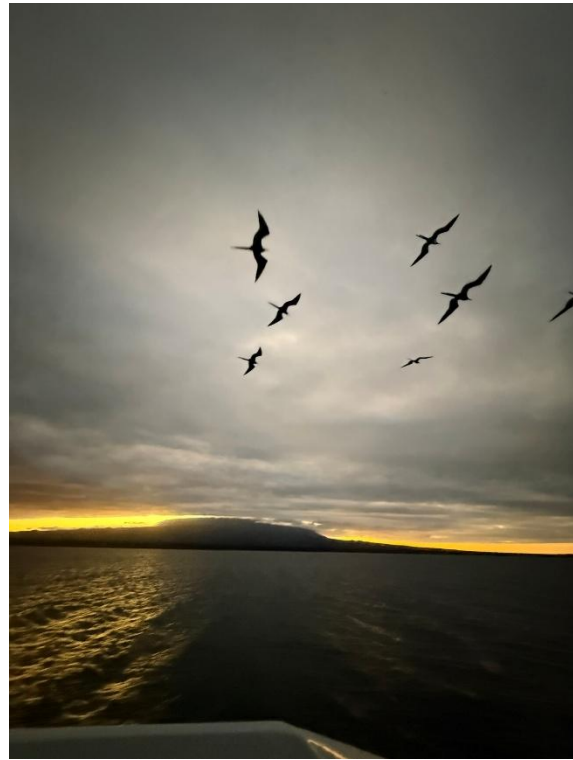
After rounding the northern head of Isla Isabela, we awoke to cloudy skies over Santiago Island. At Puerto Egas, black lava flats met a rugged shoreline. On our morning hiking excursion, we witnessed a Santiago land iguana basking among the vegetation, while **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** and our only Galápagos fur seal (technically a sea lion) of the trip appeared near the rocky grottos. **Galápagos Mockingbirds** alighted on yellow *Cordia* trees while nearby **Small Ground-Finches** seemed to chip from all corners of the island. We enjoyed a wonderfully long view of a beautiful **Galápagos Dove** foraging on the ground near a patch of pink-colored thread-leafed chaff flower.





*Images from Puerto Egas, Isla Santiago, clockwise from upper left: our group standing on natural rock bridges; Santiago land iguana; Galápagos Dove (photo by Chad Brack); landscape at Puerto Egas with the reddish hues of thread-leafed chaff flower; Galápagos sea lion pup.*





*A portion of the group took a tour of the Captain's Bridge, where we learned about some of the Galaxy's navigational capacities (left); Magnificent Frigatebirds soar over our yacht on the western side of Isla Isabela (right).*

On our way back along the beach, we spotted a bird that checked out well for **Sharp-beaked Ground Finch**, and according to Harle's diligently crafted checklists showing what to expect and where to expect it (based on eBird data), it was possible to see one here this time of year. Apparently, they make seasonal migrations to the coastline of Santiago during the dry season.

Snorkeling again revealed reef sharks and sea lions before we sailed east toward Sombrero Chino (Chinese Hat). During this navigation, we enjoyed a tour of the captain's bridge, where we learned about some of the navigational tools that are used to steer the yacht. At Sombrero Chino, turquoise water framed a classic volcanic cone, and snorkeling brought encounters with penguins, white-tipped reef and Galápagos bullhead sharks, turtles, and sea lions. A juvenile **Galápagos Penguin** slept just feet from our zodiac, seemingly unbothered by our presence.



*Several photos of what was identified as a Sharp-beaked Ground-Finch at Puerto Egas and Sombrero Chino.*

That night, as darkness fell, a ghostly shape circled the boat—a **Swallow-tailed Gull**, the world's only nocturnal gull. Several of us scrambled around the deck trying to follow it, laughing as it disappeared into the night.

#### **Day 7 – Monday, October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**Black Turtle Cove, Isla Santa Cruz | Santa Cruz Highlands | Puerto Ayora | Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, Isla San Cristobal**

We began the morning quietly gliding through Black Turtle Cove, surrounded by red, white, and black mangroves. Beneath the surface, green sea turtles, reef sharks, and a spotted eagle ray moved through the channels, while **Lava Herons**, **Mangrove Yellow Warblers**, **Great Egrets**, and **Small Ground-Finches** flitted overhead.

Back on Santa Cruz, we birded multiple highland zones with our guide Carlos, encountering **Woodpecker Finches**, **Vegetarian Finches**, **Green Warbler-Finches**, and both **Small** and **Large Tree-Finches**. At Los Gemelos, a singing **Woodpecker Finch** stole the show and at Cerro Mesa we got our first great long look at **Large Ground-Finch**.



*An assortment of Darwin's finches (clockwise from upper left): Woodpecker Finch (photo by Chad Brack), Vegetarian Finch, Large Ground-Finch (photo by Chad Brack), Green Warbler-Finch (photo by Chad Brack).*

Not every plan worked perfectly—our muddy excursion to Media Luna yielded no birds and plenty of slippery frustration – but that too is part of real field travel.

The afternoon ferry to San Cristóbal was rough, testing stomachs and spines alike, but spirits lifted once we arrived in Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, checked into Hotel Cactus, and turned in early.





*Canopy view of Scalesia trees near Los Gemelos (left); Walking the muddy trail to Media Luna (right).*

### **Day 8 – Tuesday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, Isla San Cristobal | Isla Española | P.B.M, Isla San Cristobal**

Our day trip to Española Island proved unforgettable. During the crossing, we got fleeting glimpses of **Galápagos Petrels** riding wave winddrifts, flocks of **Red-necked Phalaropes**, **Nazca Boobies**, and **Galápagos Shearwaters** before landing near the northern side of the island to snorkel near Isla Gardner. The snorkeling was decent here, observing many of the fish species we had already seen earlier in the trip: Harlequin Wrasse, Cortez Rainbow Wrasse, Blue-and-Gold Snapper, Black-striped Salema, Streamer (Mexican) Hogfish, King Angelfish, and Galápagos Ringtail Damselfish, to name just a few.

The real highlight of this trip was landing on the western side of the island at Punta Suárez. Here, among nesting **Blue-footed** and **Nazca Boobies** and dramatic cliffs, we encountered the heart of the Galápagos: thousands of **Waved Albatross**, nearly the entire world population, soaring overhead with their immense wingspans fully on display in front of us. Seeing these birds in courtship and flight was awe-inspiring.



*A Waved Albatross soars above us at Punta Suarez on Isla Española (top); Harvey and Ted on a land excursion hike (bottom left); Isla Española hosts the most striking variety of marine iguanas, also known as "Christmas Iguanas," for their striking red and green colors during the mating season (bottom right).*



Here we also saw male and female **Galápagos Hawks** perched side by side, something our guide said he had never seen before. **Swallow-tailed Gulls** perched on the cliffs nearby and several **Red-billed Tropicbirds** flew back and forth, with their long streamer tails trailing behind them. **Española Mockingbirds**, **Gray Warbler-Finches**, and **Española Ground-Finches** approached fearlessly, while Española lava lizards darted across the trail. A rare **Galápagos Martin** was spotted by several lucky group members.



*Clockwise from upper left: Galápagos Hawk male and female; boarding a dingy to get back to our daytrip panga at Isla Española; a Swallow-tailed Gull flies in front of us at Punta Suarez; An endangered Galápagos Martin flutters erratically over the trail on Isla Española.*

When Minda slipped on volcanic rock and injured her hand, Harvey stepped in immediately, and later that night a local nurse stitched her up—refusing payment entirely. “*Está gratuito,*” she insisted. “It’s free.” It was a moment of perspective we surely won’t forget.



*Our group posing on the rocks at Punta Suarez, the nesting site for over 99.9% of the world’s population of Waved Albatross.*





*A Red-billed Tropicbird soars along the cliffs of Punta Suarez, Isla Española.*

#### **Day 9 – Wednesday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, Isla San Cristobal | Kicker Rock | Punta Pitt | P.B.M, Isla San Cristobal**

Our final full day began snorkeling at Kicker Rock, where we swam between towering tuff formations in deep blue water. Highlights included spotted eagle rays, spinetail mobulas, and even a fleeting glimpse of a scalloped hammerhead.

At Punta Pitt, we entered booby paradise—the only site in the Galápagos where all three booby species nest together. **Red-footed Boobies**, once reduced to just 40 individuals here due to invasive goats, now thrive thanks to conservation efforts.

**Great Frigatebirds** perched nearby, allowing direct comparison with Magnificents – green sheen on the back versus purple; “green is great!” as we joked. **Red-billed Tropicbirds** streamed overhead, their long tails trailing behind them, framed by a brilliant landscape of crimson red *Sesuvium* plants.

That evening, we reunited with Chad and Jacque (who had spent the day near Playa Mann) for a final Galápagos dinner, sharing stories and toasting an extraordinary journey.



*Close up of Red-footed Booby at Punta Pitt, Isla San Cristobal; Our group exploring Punta Pitt (lower right); heading away from Kicker Rock after our snorkeling adventure there.*



**Day 10 – Thursday, October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, Isla San Cristobal | Quito, Ecuador**

Our time in the Galápagos came to a close as we flew back to Quito. Though the trip was brief, the sheer density of experiences made it feel much longer – in the the best possible way. This was not a restful vacation, but a deeply immersive, action-packed exploration of one of the most extraordinary places on Earth.

We said our goodbyes with full hearts, already knowing these memories would stay with us for a lifetime and we packed our bags chalk-full of stories from the isles of enchantment.



*A Blue-footed Booby plung-diving near Punta Pitt, Isla San Cristobal.*





## BIRD LIST

### **Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)**

#### **WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL** (*Anas bahamensis galapagensis*)

The only resident ducks on the Galápagos Islands, these dabblers frequent lagoons, lakes, and pools. There are three subspecies, including this one unique to the Galápagos.

### **Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)**

#### **Galápagos Dove** (*Zenaida galapagoensis*)

One of the most attractive of the New World doves, it is mostly a rich chestnut brown, with an iridescent green sheen on the face and neck and a distinctive blue eye ring. Thought to share a common ancestry with the Zenaida Dove (*Z. aurita*) from the West Indies and the Yucatán.

### **Cuculidae (Cuckoos and Anis)**

#### **SMOOTH-BILLED ANI** (*Crotophaga ani*)

This species was seen regularly in the pastures near and around Rancho El Chato. Typically associated with grazing livestock, this introduced species is a cooperative breeder, often seen in groups.

### **Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)**

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

Regularly seen among the tortoise ponds in the Santa Cruz highlands. We counted at least a dozen individuals in the ponds at Cerro Mesa.

#### **PURPLE GALLINULE** (*Porphyrio martinica*)

One bird was seen in the bushes at Rancho El Chato. They are regularly found in the Santa Cruz highlands.

### **Recurvirostridae (Avocets and Stilts)**

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

Seen in the flamingo lagoon in Puerto Villamil, Isla Isabella.

### **Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)**

#### **AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER** (*Haematopus palliatus*)

Occurs on most of the Galápagos Islands. Mostly seen in pairs scattered among the rocky and muddy coastal areas on Isabela, Fernandina, Santiago, Española, and San Cristobal.

### **Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)**

#### **BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

This vulnerable shorebird was seen on the beach in Puerto Villamil, Isla Isabella. Migratory.

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

Many seen along the beach in Puerto Villamil, Isla Isabella. Also seen at Fernandina, Santiago, and San Cristobal. Migratory.

### **Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)**

#### **HUDSONIAN WHIMBREL** (*Numenius hudsonicus*)

Seen mostly near mudflats across the islands of Santa Cruz, Isabela, Fernandina, Santiago, and San Cristobal. Migratory.

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

Seen in large flocks over open ocean in the Bolivar Channel as well as on the crossing between San Cristobal and Española.

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

Seen in rocky areas on Isabela, Fernandina, Santiago, and San Cristobal. Breeds in northern North America, so it is very much a wandering migrant.

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

This near-threatened migratory shorebird seemed anything but, finding them in just about every corner of our trip. Often found in rocky intertidal areas (and sometimes on the backs of marine iguanas!), it is named for its habit of methodically probing and turning over small stones.

#### **SANDERLING** (*Calidris alba*)

Seen on the sandy beach in front of Puerto Villamil, Isla Isabela, running up and down the tide line.

### **Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)**

#### **SWALLOW-TAILED GULL** (*Creagrus furcatus*)

A Galápagos endemic, this magnificent gull is adorned with a black hood, grayish upper breast, dark gray mantle, and extensive black wingtips. It has large eyes, fit for a nocturnal lifestyle, that are surrounded

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by bright red eye rings. We first saw this species off the boat at night and then later saw it during the day on Española and on San Cristobal.

**LAVA GULL** (*Leucophaeus fuliginosus*)

Endemic to the Galápagos, is arguably the rarest of the world's 102 gull species, with only 400 existing breeding pairs. Unlike many other gulls, it is not colonial and defends a large territory within which the nest is located. We saw our first Lava Gull near Concha La Perla on Isla Isabela and then later from the beach near Puerto Villamil, Isla Isabela.

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

This elegant tern does a fair amount of nodding to one another during courtship, perhaps giving them their common name. We saw these birds frequently, from the moment we boarded our first boat at the Itabaca Canal to the moment we got off our last boat in Puerto Baquerizo Moreno.

**Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos)**

**AMERICAN FLAMINGO** (*Phoenicopus ruber*)

3 flamingos were seen in the saline lagoon near Puerto Villamil, Isla Isabela.

**Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds)**

**RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD** (*Phaethon aethereus*)

Several birds were seen near the cliffs at Punta Suarez and we later saw a pair at Punta Pitt, Isla San Cristobal.

**Spheniscidae (Penguins)**

**GALÁPAGOS PENGUIN** (*Spheniscus mendiculus*)

This endangered Galápagos endemic was first seen swimming in the water off of Punta Espinoza, Isla Fernandina. We later saw several birds resting on the rocks at Tagus Cove and Sombrero Chino.

**Diomedidae (Albatrosses)**

**WAVED ALBATROSS** (*Phoebastria irrorata*)

This critically endangered Galápagos endemic was seen only on Isla Española at Punta Suarez. Being later in the breeding season, many of the chicks had a scraggly appearance as they sat quietly on their nests. Quite a few birds were seen flying along the cliffsides at Punta Suarez.

### **Oceanitidae (Southern Storm-Petrels)**

#### **ELLIOT'S STORM-PETREL (*Oceanites gracilis*)**

Seen everywhere throughout the islands. The most common seabird, following closely behind our boat, fluttering over the wake, with their feet sticking out beyond the tail.

### **Hydrobatidae (Northern Storm-Petrels)**

#### **BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETREL (*Hydrobates castro*)**

We got good clear looks at a few of these birds mixed in with a group of Elliot's off the back of the yacht headed towards Tagus Cove. Their legs clearly didn't extend past their tails and the white on the rump extends slightly higher than on that of the Elliot's.

### **Procellariidae (Petrels and Shearwaters)**

#### **GalÁPAGOS PETREL (*Pterodroma phaeopygia*)**

A Galápagos endemic, this critically endangered seabird was seen on our day trips out of Puerto Baquerizo Moreno. Never seen very well from the shaky boat, we could be certain we were looking at this rare bird because of the black and white pattern on the underwing, light underparts, and dark upperparts. No other seabird here shares these same features.

#### **GalÁPAGOS SHEARWATER (*Puffinus subalaris*)**

Another Galápagos endemic, nesting only on the archipelago, this species was seen regularly on open ocean, most notably off the coast of Fernandina near Punta Mangle.

### **Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)**

#### **MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata magnificens*)**

These unique seabirds were seen all throughout the archipelago, from day 1 to 10. I will never forget the feeling of watching the sunset on the bow of the Galaxy with the frigatebirds soaring peacefully above us.

#### **GREAT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata minor*)**

Much less common than Magnificent in most of the archipelago, we didn't start getting really good looks at this species until we got to the eastern islands.

### **Sulidae (Boobies)**

#### **RED-FOOTED BOOBY (*Sula sula*)**

It was such a treat to see these tropical seabirds nesting in the trees at Punta Pitt, Isla San Cristobal.



**NAZCA BOOBY** (*Sula granti*)

Formerly considered a subspecies of the Masked Booby, the Nazca booby mature adult has a pink bill, unlike the yellow bill of the adult Masked. This species was most commonly seen on the eastern islands, but we did see solo individuals flying over near Fernandina and Isabela.

**BLUE-FOOTED BOOBY** (*Sula nebouxii*)

This iconic species was seen throughout the entire trip; it was one of the most common bird species seen.

**Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)****FLIGHTLESS CORMORANT** (*Nannopterum harrisi*)

This vulnerable Galápagos endemic, can only be seen in the western islands. Snorkeling with these birds near Punta Espinoza was a magical experience that we'll always remember.

**Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)****YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nyctanassa violacea*)

Three birds were seen tucked away in the rock grottos on Isla Santiago, near Puerto Egas. One was also seen on the rocky shoreline close to Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, Isla San Cristobal. Harle commented that this was the last place he would expect to find a night-heron. Indeed, this species occupies very different habitat here than what we are used to finding it in.

**LAVA HERON** (*Butorides sundevalli*)

Recently separated (again) from the Striated Heron, the Lava Heron is an endemic heron that we saw throughout the archipelago, from Isla Baltra to Isla San Cristobal.

**WESTERN CATTLE-EGRET** (*Bubulcus ibis*)

A good number of Cattle Egrets were seen in and around the agricultural fields near Rancho El Chato and then again at Cerro Mesa on Isla Santa Cruz.

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

Three birds were seen at Black Turtle Cove.

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

A total of 7 birds were seen on the trip, all on the central and western islands.

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

An endemic subspecies, the Galápagos Brown Pelican was seen throughout the archipelago, most notably on and near the piers in front of Academy Bay in Puerto Ayora, Isla Isabela.

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### **Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)**

#### **GALÁPAGOS HAWK** (*Buteo galapagoensis*)

Thought to have evolved from the mainland Swainson's Hawk, this Galápagos endemic was seen on several occasions throughout the trip, first at Isla Fernandina, then on several land excursions, one at Tagus Cove, Isla Isabela, and another at Punta Suarez, Isla Española.

### **Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)**

#### **GALÁPAGOS FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus magnirostris*)

This endemic is the only member of its family in the Galápagos, making identification simple. We saw this fearless flycatcher first at Rancho El Chato, and then later on our hike at Tagus Cove, Puerto Egas, Los Gemelos, Cerro Mesa, Punta Suarez, and Playa Mann.

### **Hirundinidae (Swallows)**

#### **GALÁPAGOS MARTIN** (*Progne modesta*)

This endangered Galápagos endemic was seen unexpectedly by a few members of our group flying over the trails at Punta Suarez on Isla Española.

### **Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)**

#### **GALÁPAGOS MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus parvulus*)

This Galápagos endemic was seen on many occasions on Santa Cruz, Isabela, Fernandina, and Santiago.

#### **ESPAÑOLA MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus macdonaldi*)

This vulnerable Galápagos endemic welcomed us to the shores of Española with inquisitive looks, as they hopped up towards us on the beach and in the shrubs just out of reach above our heads.

#### **SAN CRISTOBAL MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus melanotis*)

This near threatened Galápagos endemic was seen on the streets of Puerto Baquerizo Morena, near Playa Mann, and Punta Pitt on Isla San Cristobal.

### **Parulidae (New World Warbler)**

#### **MANGROVE YELLOW WARBLER** (*Setophaga petechia aureola*)

This beautiful little bird, an endemic subspecies, was all over the place! Aside from Small Ground-Finch, it is probably the most common songbird in the archipelago.



### **Thraupidae (Tanagers)**

#### **GREEN WARBLER-FINCH (*Certhidea olivacea*)**

We found these fun endemics in the Santa Cruz highlands.

#### **GRAY WARBLER-FINCH (*Certhidea fusca*)**

We got amazing looks at these endemic birds on Isla Española.

#### **VEGETARIAN FINCH (*Platypsiza crassirostris*)**

This endemic parrot-billed bird was seen in the transition zone on the road headed from the Itabaca Canal towards Los Gemelos on Isla Santa Cruz.

#### **WOODPECKER FINCH (*Camarhynchus pallidus*)**

One of the most iconic birds of the Galápagos, this endemic, near threatened, tool-using bird was seen throughout the highlands of Santa Cruz. We enjoyed really clear, long looks at this species at Los Gemelos and Cerro Mesa.

#### **LARGE TREE-FINCH (*Camarhynchus psittacula*)**

This vulnerable endemic species was found only once at the transition zone site where we also found the Vegetarian Finch. This was a unique spot, where a road had been cut into the National Park leading to a quarry in the middle of the transition zone.

#### **SMALL TREE-FINCH (*Camarhynchus parvulus*)**

We had a number of good looks at this endemic, as they were fairly common throughout the archipelago and easy to separate from the similarly sized Small Ground-Finch.

#### **SMALL GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza fuliginosa*)**

The most common songbird in the archipelago, this endemic species was seen at all land sites.

#### **LARGE GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza magnirostris*)**

Our best looks at this endemic finch were at the Tortoise Breeding Center on Isla Isabela and at Cerro Mesa on Isla Santa Cruz.

#### **SHARP-BEAKED GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza difficilis*)**

Chad photographed several birds on Santiago Island (Puerto Egas) and Sombrero Chino that look like they could be this species, but I am not fully convinced. I'd like to have another opinion on this identification from someone who knows these finches well. The male bird photographed on the ground looks like a Common Cactus Finch to me and the female/immature looks like a Small Ground-Finch.

#### **COMMON CACTUS-FINCH (*Geospiza scandens*)**

This endemic finch was seen at the Tortoise Breeding Center on Isla Isabela and around Playa Mann on Isla San Cristobal.

**MEDIUM GROUND-FINCH** (*Geospiza fortis*)

One of the most common and conspicuous of the Galápagos finches. Bill is at least as long as it is deep and the mandible has a distinct rounded culmen. Seen all throughout the archipelago.

**ESPAÑOLA GROUND-FINCH** (*Geospiza conirostris*)

This vulnerable Galápagos endemic was seen on the ground along the trail to Punta Suarez on Isla Española.

**BIRDS WE MISSED****GALAPAGOS RAIL****PAINT-BILLED CRAKE****SHORT-EARED OWL****BARN OWL****SOOTY TERN****WEDGE-RUMPED STORM-PETREL****BRUJO FLYCATCHER****FLOREANA MOCKINGBIRD****DARK-BILLED CUCKOO****MANGROVE FINCH****VAMPIRE GROUND-FINCH****GENOVESA GROUND-FINCH****GENOVESA CACTUS FINCH**