

**BIRD AND OTHER NATURAL HISTORY LISTS FOR:**

**GALAPAGOS ISLANDS CRUISE**  
**ABOARD THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC**  
**ISLANDER**  
**NOVEMBER 29 – DECEMBER 8, 2008**

**TANDAYAPA PRE-TRIP**  
**NOVEMBER 28-29, 2008**

**CERRO BLANCO POST-TRIP**  
**DECEMBER 7, 2008**

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TOUR REPORT  
TANDAYAPA PRE-TRIP TO GALAPAGOS CRUISE  
November 28–29, 2008

By Barry Lyon

On this single day pre-trip to our Galapagos Islands cruise, we explored the beautiful cloud forests of Ecuador's northwestern Andean slopes. As Ecuador's capital, Quito, sits at nearly 9,000 feet, we simply headed northwest from the city, and dropped over a mountain pass and down into a realm of towering tropical hardwoods, cloud-shrouded peaks and ridges, and lush river valleys. The region that centers on the Mindo and Tandayapa valleys is well-known in the world of ecotourism as a premier place for seeing birds in Ecuador, particularly hummingbirds. As the site of some of the best conservation work taking place in the country, it is a natural "first stop" for people visiting Ecuador for the first time.

While there are a number of significant birding sites in the Mindo/Tandayapa region, we focused on those locations that provide the extravagant hummingbird shows that contribute to the region's fame. And though we had only one full day to work with, we certainly made the most of our time. A morning stop at the Sachatamia Lodge produced an enthralling collection of hummingbirds—so much so, in fact, that many in the group were simply overwhelmed by the variety of colors, shapes, and sizes of the more than 10 species present. Such favorites as Violet-tailed Sylphs and Brown Incas represented the larger end of the spectrum, while diminutive woodstars were the smallest of the hummingbirds we saw. In between were species bearing such angelic names as coronets, jacobins, violet-ears, racket-tails, emeralds, and brilliants. Possibly the most beautiful of them all, the Velvet-purple Coronet, was seen with ease. At times the show was mesmerizing, with countless birds zipping through the gardens, clustering around the feeders, and peering out from nearby trees and bushes.

Moving back up the mountain, a stop along the "old" mountain highway produced a regal Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan near a nest site. Surely one of the Andes' most elegant cloud forest birds, the entire group was treated to prolonged scope views.

We finished our day with a lengthy afternoon vigil in the gardens at the house of Tony Nunnery, a VENT tour leader who lives in Ecuador. Once again, we enjoyed a remarkable performance as multitudes of hummingbirds came and went from the gardens. In addition to many of the same species from earlier in the day, we were treated to an additional 10 species, including such stunners as Collared Inca, Green-tailed Trainbearer, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, and Empress Brilliant.

Any trip to the northwestern slopes is bound to be rewarding, but in this situation, as a short pre-trip to the Galapagos Islands, participants gain experiences unlike any other they would have in the Galapagos, while receiving a perfect introduction to the joys of birding in Ecuador.

TOUR REPORT  
GALAPAGOS ISLANDS  
November 29–December 8, 2008

By Barry Lyon

Of all destinations to which a person could travel, few carry the emotional impact or provide such a sublime set of experiences like a trip to the Galapagos Islands. Rugged, primitive, and undeniably beautiful, these Enchanted Islands still effuse the essence of nature—wild, unspoiled, and primitive—in the same way they presented it to Darwin when he stepped ashore here so long ago.

Our trip to the Galapagos Islands was everything we could have asked for: face-to-face encounters with the islands' legendary wildlife, an abundance of spectacular scenery, an action-packed itinerary, lengthy inter-island cruises, and a wonderful vessel, the *National Geographic Islander*, on which to travel. From the time we arrived at the airport on Baltra Island to the time we left, a week later, we never ran out of things to do, new places to visit, or new wildlife to enjoy.

Because a trip to the Galapagos involves far more than birding, a trip here should be considered a full natural history experience, inclusive of geology, botany, and, of course, a luminous human history. But a trip to the Galapagos is also a very personal experience, and, to that end, each of us left with memories that validated our expectations on one level while providing a perspective on the magnitude of a trip here on another.

At each of the seven major islands we visited, we found wildlife in abundance. Walks along sandy beaches and across fantastic fields of ancient lava flows brought us within close proximity of some of the islands' most emblematic and recognizable species. Highlights included “ballooning” Great and Magnificent frigatebirds; Nazca and Blue-footed boobies in courtship display at their nest sites; Waved Albatrosses taking off over the cliffs of Espanola; elegant Red-billed Tropicbirds chasing each other endlessly over the same cliffs; scores of Galapagos Shearwaters and Brown Noddies wheeling around cliff-side nesting colonies; and baby sea lions at our feet at nearly every landing.

But beyond encounters with individual species, the Galapagos are about spectacles, and on that front we certainly witnessed many: our first giant tortoises; piles of marine iguanas clustered on the beaches and lava benches at nearly every landing; seeing the world's only equatorial penguin and its only flightless cormorant; White-vented Storm-Petrels in the ship's wake at nearly all times; hundreds of boobies and frigatebirds filling the sky over tiny Enderby Island; seeking out, and finding, nine of Darwin's finches and three of the Galapagos' mockingbird species; snorkeling with an impressive array of tropical fishes, rays, and other undersea life; Bryde's whales offshore of Isabella Island and hundreds of common dolphins cavorting off Fernandina Island; Zodiac landings on white, green, and black sand beaches; meandering along wild, wave-washed shorelines; and, finally, visiting the islands themselves, where nature's powerful forces of creation and destruction are on bold display at all times.

While experiences like these capture the spirit of the islands, the significance of a trip here is also noted in the reactions of the people who visit. Throughout our trip, conversations about Darwin and evolution were heard frequently, both on and off the ship, suggesting that we were all grappling, or coming to terms, with the supreme biological and historical importance of one of the planet's most incredible destinations.

## ITINERARY

**November 29, 2008** – All cruise participants not on the Mindo/Tandaya pre-trip arrived in Quito today. This evening we all gathered in a private room at the Hotel Quito for dinner and a formal introduction to the trip along with instructions for departing the hotel the following morning.

**November 30** – We started the day with an early breakfast and baggage pickup, followed by transportation to the airport for our flight to Guayaquil on the southwest coast. Our mid-morning stop in Guayaquil was a short one before our journey to the Galapagos Islands resumed. Our approach to the islands was from the east, which meant our arrival at Baltra was preceded by fine views of the islands of San Cristóbal and Santa Cruz. Our plane landed at the airport in Baltra in the early afternoon. After proceeding through immigration, we were met by the Lindblad Expeditions staff and escorted to the *Islander* for check-in, orientations, and lunch. After completing lunch and the usual orientation and safety drills, the *Islander* set sail from Baltra on a northerly course toward the island of North Seymour. The trip was a short one, but afforded beautiful views of the Pacific Ocean and a number of the islands including Santa Cruz, Baltra, the two Daphnies, Santiago, and North Seymour. Arriving at North Seymour, we were met by warm temperatures and breezy conditions that progressed to very windy conditions later in the afternoon. Altogether, North Seymour provided a fabulous introduction to the Galapagos Islands. With plenty of boobies, frigatebirds, Swallow-tailed Gulls, and land iguanas around, the allure of the Galapagos was at once revealed. A daily recap at 7:00 p.m. was followed immediately by dinner at 7:30. During the night the ship sailed for tiny Bartolomé Island off the east coast of much larger Santiago.

**December 1** – We awoke this morning amid the sheltered waters of Sullivan Bay and at the foot of Pinnacle Rock. A fascinating pre-breakfast activity was an energizing walk to the 359 foot summit of the island to view the fantastic area geology as well as to take in the breadth of the surrounding Pacific and other islands of the archipelago. We returned to the ship in the mid-morning for a hearty breakfast. After breakfast we were presented opportunities for hiking to the back side of a narrow peninsula to view Pacific green sea-turtles and sharks in the surf, and for snorkeling with the sea lions and looking for fish in the waters of Sullivan Bay. Back on board the ship, we went straight in to lunch. After lunch, *Islander* pulled up her anchor and we set a course around the north end of Santiago Island for Puerto Egas (James Bay) on the island's west side. During the cruise, many people gathered in the lounge for a presentation by one of the ship's naturalists on the Galapagos Islands National Park. Others went up to the top deck for birding and sea-watching. We arrived at James Bay in mid- to late-afternoon. We quickly disembarked the ship and undertook a wonderful walk along the coast that saw us viewing at very close range, Galapagos Hawks, Large Ground-Finches, Galapagos fur seals, Sally lightfoot crabs, and our first marine iguanas. The wave-sculpted shoreline, piles of iguanas, and hordes of

seabirds offshore made for a thoroughly magical afternoon. We returned to the ship around 6:00, followed by our nightly recap and dinner. During the night the ship cut down through the center of the archipelago to Puerto Ayora on the south side of Santa Cruz island.

**December 2** - Today we awoke off Santa Cruz Island to find the ship anchored in Academy Bay alongside the busy port town of Puerto Ayora. Puerto Ayora is the largest settlement in the Galapagos and the headquarters of the world-renowned Charles Darwin Research Station. We spent most of the morning touring the facility and learning about the history and conservation of the emblematic animal of the Galapagos Islands, the giant Galapagos tortoise. As the station is set amid plenty of native vegetation, we spent much of our time viewing the specialty birds of the area, with a focus on finding the Common Cactus Finch. We also took time to view Lonesome George, the last surviving member of his type of Galapagos tortoise. Toward late morning we made the lengthy walk back to town where our waiting buses took us away from the coast toward the center of the island for lunch. Our lunch place was a delightful setting, almost like being in a hacienda, where an open-air restaurant offered fabulous views of the western flank of the island and the distant Pacific Ocean. Those who were especially interested found the birding here to be quite good. In the early afternoon we visited the tortoise preserve in the national park where we enjoyed easy views of wild Galapagos tortoises. We then went deeper into the island to a place called Los Gemelos. Here, the Gemelos, or twins, are actually volcanic pit craters surrounded by a lush, epiphyte-laden, endemic *Scalesia* forest. The forest and surrounding pit craters form one of the most scenic and verdant ecosystems in the islands. We spent much of the rest of the afternoon walking trails through the forest. We boarded the buses in the late afternoon and returned to Puerto Ayora, where we were then transferred back to the ship. A 7:00 recap was followed by dinner. During the night *Islander* retraced her path up through the center of the island to the northwest coast of Isabela Island.

**December 3** – We began the day with a pre-breakfast sea-watch in the waters between Isabella and Roca Redonda. We were not disappointed as we encountered hundreds of shearwaters, petrels, and storm-petrels, in addition to good looks at Bryde's whales. After breakfast we reconvened on the bridge level of the ship to celebrate the crossing of the equator, at which time the Expedition Leader promptly proclaimed everybody a "shellback" for their achievement. After rounding Isabela Island, we headed for Punta Vicente Roca in the shadow of Volcan Ecuador. Here we spent much of the morning in zodiacs touring the impressive coastline and viewing scores of nesting seabirds and our first Flightless Cormorants. After exploring nearly every nook and cranny we returned to the ship. Those with plenty of energy changed clothes and went snorkeling in the near-shore waters before returning to the ship for lunch. After lunch we spent much of the afternoon cruising south off the west coast of Isabela toward Fernandina Island. Some people took in the staff lecture on Charles Darwin while others spent their time sea-watching from the top deck of the ship. A trip highlight occurred as we approached Fernandina: the sight of approximately 300 short-beaked common dolphins swimming en masse around the ship. With everybody on deck, we enjoyed an unforgettable show of dolphins vaulting out of the water in twisting spins and dives, and splashing down only to reemerge minutes later in more showy bursts. We reached Punta Espinosa on Fernandina Island around 4:00. With so much to see we ended up staying out until sunset. An unforgettable walk on the established national park trail brought us close to many of the classic and charismatic animals of the Galapagos. Along the way we encountered sea lion pups, Flightless Cormorants at their nests, piles of marine iguanas,

lava lizards, Blue-footed Boobies and more. The weather this afternoon was overcast and windy, but these conditions created a wild and undeniably beautiful seascape against which these animals were seen. A steady stream of rollers breaking just offshore were torn apart by the persistent wind so that the tops of the waves simply disappeared in veils of mist. We returned to the ship around nightfall to get cleaned up, go to the recap session, and have dinner. During the night the ship relocated a short distance to Urvina Bay, across the Bolivar Channel off the western shore of Isabella Island.

**December 4** – We disembarked *Islander* before breakfast this morning for a walk at Urvina Beach. The total distance covered was about one and a half miles as the trail led us through native vegetation, over lava flows, and sandy beaches. Darwin’s finches were everywhere and we also saw our first Galapagos Martin and several more land iguanas. Following breakfast back on board the ship some people watched the video presentation “What Darwin Never Saw.” Much of the afternoon was spent cruising south through the Bolivar Channel that separates Isabella from Fernandina islands. Many of us spent the afternoon seawatching from the top deck. Our destination for the late afternoon was a point on the far southwest part of Isabella called Punta Moreno. This was an exciting outing that combined zodiac cruising through the mangrove forests and hiking inland over the ancient lava flows to experience the dramatic volcanic geology of the island and to visit several improbable brackish ponds isolated in the volcanic rock. This was the first place we saw flamingos! We returned to the ship around dusk to freshen up for the nightly recap session and dinner. During the night the ship relocated to Post Office Bay on the north shore of Floreana Island.

**December 5** – A short outing to the famous mail barrel at Post Office Bay was a perfect way to start the day. Led by our local naturalists, the colorful history of the mail barrel was explained at length, after which many participants “mailed” postcards to friends and family back home, while everybody took time to go through the cards already there in hopes of finding someone to whom mail could be hand delivered. It is a great tradition and an event everybody always enjoys. Back on board the ship by 8:00, we enjoyed breakfast until about 9. For the next two hours we cruised in zodiacs around the tiny offshore islet known as Champion. Champion is significant for its small population of Charles (Floreana) Mockingbirds, which no longer exist on larger Floreana. Our searches were successful as we located a number of these special birds, in addition to many nesting seabird species. After the zodiac rides, many people hopped in the water for some superb snorkeling at different places around Champion. Before lunch, a surprise activity came in the form of two transits around Enderby Island. The seabird spectacle was incredible here, with three species of boobies and two species of frigatebirds filling the skies around us. After lunch we backtracked to the west and anchored offshore at Punta Cormorant. The remainder of the day included a walk on a green sand beach, a visit to a brackish lagoon to see more flamingos, and a trip over a small ridge to a beautiful white sand beach. We were back on board the ship by 5:15. For the last hour of day before sundown we cruised away from the island for a short distance as we searched for Band-rumped Storm-Petrels and dolphins. Dinner tonight consisted of a bar-b-que on the top deck under the stars.

**December 6** – Our last full day in the Galapagos Islands was spent on and around the southeasternmost island of Espanola (Hood). Pre-breakfast sea kayaking was an option taken advantage of by some. After breakfast, a final snorkeling outing to the offshore islet of Gardiner proved one of the best of the trip. After snorkeling and kayaking, many people went for a walk

on a beautiful white sand beach on the northeast coast of the island. After lunch a departure briefing was held in the lounge. The ship sailed west a short distance through the early afternoon to Punta Suarez on the west coast of the island. Here, we enjoyed our final activity of the trip: a lengthy walk on a coastal trail to view the dramatic scenery and witness the incredible spectacle of nesting albatrosses and countless other seabirds. On a gorgeous afternoon we finished our trip in style on one of the richest and most diverse of any of the Galapagos Islands. We returned to the ship in the late afternoon to clean up and convene for a final recap. A farewell cocktail toast was held in the lounge followed immediately by dinner. During the night the ship sailed all the way back to Baltra.

**December 7** – A final meal on board the ship was followed by disembarkation from the *Islander* and transfer to the airport. We finally departed Baltra in the late morning and arrived back in Guayaquil in the early afternoon. After gathering our bags we were transferred to our hotel. Those participating on the optional afternoon post-trip (about two-thirds of the group), visited a local preserve, Cerro Blanco, for a couple of hours of birding in the special Pacific dry forest of western Ecuador. We arrived back at the hotel around 6:00. A short time later we gathered a final time as a group to have dinner.

**December 8** – With the trip officially over, participants were transferred to the international airport in Guayaquil for departing flights home.

## BIRDLIST

Note: Checklist order, common and scientific names used are those given by *The Clements Checklist of Birds of the World*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition 2007, with all current updates. **E** = Galapagos endemic species; **NE** = Galapagos near-endemic species.

### **Penguins (*Spheniscidae*)**

Galapagos Penguin (*Spheniscus mendiculus*) (**E**) – Seen mainly in the northern and western parts of the archipelago, such as at Sullivan Bay, Bartolome Island; James Bay, Santiago Island; Punta Vicente Roca and Punta Moreno, Isabella Island; and Punta Espinosa, Fernandina Island. We had many fine views of the world's most northerly penguin species in the water and on shore. A number of people had exciting encounters with them while snorkeling.

### **Albatrosses (*Diomedidae*)**

Waved Albatross (*Phoebastria irrorata*) (**NE**) – In saving the best for last, we had many wonderful views of these birds at their primary nesting places on Espanola (Hood) Island. While walking the lengthy coastal trail on the final afternoon of the trip, we had no problems finding individuals throughout the area, with adults on the ground as well as in flight. We also noted a number of mostly grown immatures. Except for one small island off the coast of Ecuador, the entire world's population nests only on Espanola.

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

Galapagos Petrel (*Pterodroma sandwichensis*) (**NE**) – This species nests only in the Galapagos

Islands though it does range much further at sea. Formerly considered part of the now-defunct Dark-rumped Petrel complex. We had many wonderful studies of birds at sea, particularly while cruising the north shore of Santiago Island and off the northwest coast of Isabella Island.

Galapagos Shearwater (*Puffinus subalaris*) (E) – This newly recognized species was traditionally considered a member of the Audubon's Shearwater complex, though seabird authorities have known for many years it is morphologically distinct. We saw these birds daily, sometimes in flocks of hundreds everywhere.

Sooty Shearwater (*Puffinus griseus*) – A regular visitor to Galapagos waters, we saw approximately 3 individuals in the waters off Santiago and Isabella islands.

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

White-vented Storm-Petrel (*Oceanites gracilis*) – Also known as Elliot's Storm-Petrel, this was the most common and often seen storm-petrel species. Birds were seen every day of the trip, sometimes several hundred in a day. This species is known to follow ships and we noted them with ease in the wake at almost all times. This is a small member of the storm-petrel group

Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma Tethys*) – Also known as Galapagos Storm-Petrel. We encountered this species in one area: the colder deeper waters off the north and west coasts of Isabella Island. We enjoyed especially fine looks at numbers of birds in the early morning hours while we cruised between Isabella Island and Roca Redonda.

Band-rumped Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma castro*) – As this species is chiefly nocturnal, it is often difficult to see well. One bird was seen well by a couple observers who were on the top deck of the ship early in the morning while we were at anchor off Floreana. Later that same day, a couple of individuals were noted toward last light while we were departing the same island.

### **Tropicbirds (*Phaethontidae*)**

Red-billed Tropicbird (*Phaethon aethereus*) – This species nests widely through the archipelago and we were fortunate to encounter it on four separate days. Individuals were noted the first afternoon around North Seymour; others around Bartolome; several around Champion and Enderby; and, of course, many around the cliffs at Espanola. One lucky group saw one on the water during a zodiac cruise. One of the great seabirds of the world.

### **Pelicans (*Pelicanidae*)**

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) – Fairly common at different places in the islands; the endemic subspecies, *urinator*.

### **Boobies (*Sulidae*)**

Blue-footed Booby (*Sula nebouxii*) – A very common resident in parts of the archipelago. Many seen the first afternoon on North Seymour and every day thereafter. Especially abundant around all the major islands, especially Fernandina, Floreana, and Espanola. The comical breeding display in which the male raises his blue feet for the female to see was observed on several occasions, most notably at North Seymour and Espanola.

Nazca Booby (*Sula granti*) NE – Seen every day of the trip but one; this black and white seabird is among the most elegant of all Galapagos birds; the biggest concentration was a nesting

colony on Enderby Island.

Red-footed Booby (*Sula sula*) – The least common of the Galapagos boobies, this species was seen widely in places away from its distant nesting grounds. A couple individuals were seen the first afternoon at North Seymour; another individual was spotted at sea en route to Punta Espinosa, Fernandina Island; many were seen mixed in with the other two booby species in the huge seabird gathering west of Enderby Island; and at least two more were seen the last afternoon at Espanola Island. The majority of the birds that breed in the Galapagos are dark morphs, but we were lucky enough to encounter several white morph birds off Enderby.

### **Cormorants (*Phalacrocoracidae*)**

Flightless Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax harrisi*) (E) – Wonderful studies of birds at nests and in the water. The world's only flightless cormorant is found only in the western part of the Galapagos archipelago. We encountered birds on and around the beaches of Isabella and Fernandina.

### **Frigatebirds (*Fregatidae*)**

Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*) – Common and seen daily.

Great Frigatebird (*Fregata minor*) – Though not as widespread as the former species, we enjoyed good studies of nesting birds and birds on the wing at North Seymour and Enderby. Also, great side-by-side comparisons with Magnificents in several places.

### **Hérons & Egrets (*Ardeidae*)**

Great Blue Heron (*Ardea Herodias*) – Widespread in low numbers.

Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) – Same.

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Santa Cruz only.

Striated Heron (*Butorides striata*) – Fairly common and widespread throughout the Galapagos Islands. Individuals were noted at many stops, especially where significant stretches of rocky coastline were exposed as lava benches, as well as around the larger bays and marinas. The form we encountered almost exclusively was *B.s. sundevalli*, or Lava Heron, an edemic subspecies which appears as a nearly uniform sooty gray version of a Green Heron. The taxonomic status of *sundevalli* has changed periodically through the years, when at times it has been regarded as a separate species unique to the Galapagos Islands, and at other times considered a member of the Striated complex. Currently *sundevalli* is considered a distinct island subspecies. Interestingly, the nominate form of Striated Heron, *B.s. striata*, occurs uncommonly throughout the Galapagos Islands as well and is thought to interbreed with *sundevalli*. We saw several individuals that may have been *striata/sundevalli* intergrades.

Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) – A very rare visitor to the Galapagos Islands, Michael O'Brien photographed an adult bird in the mangroves at Punta Moreno on Isabella Island. Seen by about a quarter of the group.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – Fairly common throughout; we had individuals at a number of coastal locations.

### **Flamingos (*Phoenicopteridae*)**

American Flamingo (*Phoenicopus ruber*) – Terrific views of birds at the islands of Isabella

and Floreana. The first individuals were a lovely pair feeding and resting in a brackish wetland at Punta Moreno, Isabella Island. A dramatic site was the small group flying across the ocean at Post Office Bay, Floreana, while the 20+ birds, with young, were a great sight at Punta Cormorant, also at Floreana. The taxonomic status of this species has changed as well through the years. Originally considered a subspecies of the Old World Greater Flamingo, *P. roseus*, this bird was eventually given fully species status, Caribbean Flamingo, *P. ruber*. The most recent publications have cited a newer common name, American Flamingo.

### **Ducks (*Anatidae*)**

White-cheeked Pintail (*Anas bahamensis*) – The only duck to be expected in the Galapagos Islands, we had memorable encounters on three different islands. Unquestionably, the best studies were had at the giant tortoise preserve in the highlands of Santa Cruz, where a very tame flock was studied close and at length at a stock tank.

### **Hawks (*Accipitridae*)**

Galapagos Hawk (*Buteo galapagoensis*) (E) – Noted on at least four islands. We enjoyed superb Scope views at Santiago (James Bay) and Floreana (Urvina Beach), but others were noted at Hood and Floreana, and sometimes in impressive concentrations of half a dozen birds at a time.

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

Sora (*Porzana Carolina*) – Generally a very rare visitor to the Galapagos Islands, we found an immature bird in one of the brackish wetlands at Punta Moreno, Isabella. Another individual was found in the same place by a VENT group the previous year. The presence of an immature bird is suggestive, but not conclusive, of breeding.

Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) – Several individuals in the brackish lagoons at Punta Moreno.

### **Oystercatchers (*Haematopodidae*)**

American Oystercatcher (*Haematopus palliatus*) – Noted on four of the islands. We had outstanding views repeatedly in several places, perhaps most notably at Hood Island (Espanola) where we were closer to several individuals than at any other location we visited. We saw the endemic subspecies, *galapagensis*, which is limited to a couple of hundred pair.

### **Stilts (*Recurvirostridae*)**

Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – Scope views of several birds at the large salt pan at Punta Cormorant, Floreana Island.

### **Plovers (*Charadriidae*)**

Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – A couple of individuals amid the other shorebirds along the shoreline north of James Bay, Santiago Island.

Semipalmated Plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – One of the most frequently encountered shorebirds in the Galapagos. We noted this species on four different islands.

### **Sandpipers (Scolopacidae)**

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) – Individuals noted on five different islands; a fairly common winter visitor.

Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*) – A single bird at Punta Cormorant, Floreana Island.

Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) – Same.

Wandering Tattler (*Tringa incana*) – A common winter visitor to the archipelago, we noted birds on as many as six different islands. Outstanding scope views repeatedly.

Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) - Another common wintering shorebird.

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) – Same.

Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*) – A collection of perhaps a dozen individuals along the shoreline at James Bay, Santiago Island. A couple others at Punta Cormorant, Floreana.

Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*) – A lightly detected species in the Galapagos, we had a single bird in with the other shorebirds in the tidal zone at Santiago (James) Island.

This is the second year in a row this species was located by a VENT tour.

Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*) – The least expected shorebird of the trip, we found a single individual on the mudflats at Punta Cormorant, Floreana Island.

Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) – Numerous flocks, with varying numbers of birds, noted in the Bolivar Channel between Isabella and Fernandina islands. A common wintering shorebird in the offshore waters of the Galapagos Islands.

Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicaria*) – A couple dozen noted among the more numerous Red-necked Phalaropes in the same area.

### **Gulls (Laridae)**

Lava Gull (*Larus fuliginosus*) (**E**) – A fairly common Galapagos endemic, this species was noted at three different islands, including North Seymour, Santiago, and Santa Cruz.

Swallow-tailed Gull (*Creagrus furcatus*) (**NE**) – One of the world's most attractive gull species. We noted large numbers around Espanola (Hood) and the offshore islands of Floreana. Other individuals were studied at nesting sites at North Seymour. Squid makes up a significant portion of the diet of this species, and they tend to come closer to the surface at night, which explains why these birds were particularly active around sundown. Equally impressive were the large numbers of birds in flight at once over the cliffs at Espanola as they were agitated by the presence of a Galapagos Hawk. This species is restricted almost entirely to the Galapagos Islands, but individuals wander to the nearshore waters of Ecuador and Peru.

Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipixcan*) – A winter resident typically present in small numbers. We had about a dozen individuals at sea and on beaches throughout the islands.

### **Terns (Sternidae)**

Brown Noddy (*Anous stolidus*) – Common and seen daily at sea and at cliffside nesting colonies.

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) – An extremely rare vagrant to the Galapagos Islands, we had one individual (immature, photographed) flying over the bay at Punta Espinosa, Fernandina Island.

### **Jaegers (Stercorariidae)**

Parasitic Jaeger (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) – Another very rare wintertime vagrant to the waters of the Galapagos Islands; we had a single bird chasing gulls and terns in the Bolivar

Channel between Isabella and Fernandina Islands.

### **Pigeons & Doves (*Columbidae*)**

Galapagos Dove (*Zenaida galapagoensis*) (E) – Common and widespread through most of the islands.

Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*)

### **Cuckoos (*Cuculidae*)**

Dark-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus melacoryphus*) – Numbers of good views on three different islands: Santa Cruz, Santa Fe, and Isabella.

Smooth-billed Ani (*Crotophaga ani*) – Originally introduced to the Galapagos Islands to control pests, this species has become a pest in its own right, feeding on the eggs and young of Darwin's finches. Birds were noted on five different islands.

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

Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) – A brightly marked male was well-studied by all at the tortoise preserve in the highlands of Santa Cruz.

Galapagos Flycatcher (*Myiarchus magnirostris*) (E) – This common endemic species was noted on five of the islands we visited. In appearance and vocalization, it is most like the Dusky-capped Flycatcher, a widespread and common tropical flycatcher.

### **Swallows (*Hirundinidae*)**

Galapagos Martin (*Progne modesta*) (E) – We saw several individuals near the landing site at Urvina Beach, Isabella Island, and another fly-by male at Punta Moreno, also at Isabella Island, later in the afternoon. This species is not rare, but it occurs only locally and can be challenging to find.

### **Mockingbirds (*Mimidae*)**

Galapagos Mockingbird (*Nesomimus parvulus*) – The most common and widespread of the Galapagos mockingbirds, occurring on all the main islands except San Cristobal, Espanola (Hood) and Floreana.

Charles Mockingbird (*Nesomimus trifasciatus*) – This species has been wiped out of its single island range, Floreana, because of pressure from introduced rats; however, it survives in small numbers on the offshore islets of Champion and Enderby. Zodiac cruises around Champion allowed us to successfully find this highly endangered species.

Hood Mockingbird (*Nesomimus macdonaldi*) – A common resident on Espanola (Hood). We had no problems finding and studying this species.

### **New World Warblers (*Parulidae*)**

Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*) – A widespread and common resident throughout the Galapagos Islands. The subspecies *aureola*.

### **Finches (*Emberizidae*)**

Large Ground-Finch (*Geospiza magnirostris*) (E) – Common and seen on five of the islands.

Medium Ground-Finch (*Geospiza fortis*) (E) – Same.

Small Ground-Finch (*Geospiza fuliginosa*) (E) – Seen on six of the islands; very common.

Common Cactus-Finch (*Geospiza scandens*) (E) – Seen only around the Charles Darwin Research Station at Puerto Ayora, Santa Cruz. Excellent views for all, eventually.

Large Cactus-Finch (*Geospiza conirostris*) (E) – Seen well on the beach and in the bushes at Espanola (Hood); at least one more along the trail at Punta Suarez later in the day.

Vegetarian Finch (*Camarhynchus crassirostris*) (E) – A very good trip for this species; individuals were noted on Santa Cruz and Isabella islands; seen well by all.

Small Tree-Finch (*Camarhynchus parvulus*) (E) – Noted on three of the islands.

Woodpecker Finch (*Camarhynchus pallidus*) (E) – Seen on two of the islands; like usual, we didn't see more than a few, but the ones we found were seen well by all.

Warbler Finch (*Certhidea olivacea*) (E) – We had good looks at a few birds on Santa Cruz and Espanola (Hood). Far fewer individuals this year seemed an ominous sign. An introduced parasitic fly has hit this species particularly hard, and the obviously reduced numbers seemed to reflect that point.

**Total = 68**

## MAMMAL LIST

Galapagos Sea Lion (*Zalophus californianus wollebacki*) – A common and widely distributed animal throughout the Galapagos archipelago. December is a very good time to see them at different stages of the breeding cycle. Most beach landing sites were filled with pups from 1-3 months of age as well as one-year olds from the previous season. Many of the largest males had already returned to the sea, but a few were noted at a few of our stops. Traditionally considered a subspecies of California sea lion, some authorities recognize full species status.

Galapagos Fur Seal (*Arctocephalus galapagoensis*) - A less numerous and far less conspicuous inhabitant than its sea lion relative, we had good looks at several animals swimming around a grotto on Santiago Island.

Bryde's Whale (*Balaenoptera edeni*) – Relatively good views of up to half a dozen animals early one morning between the northwest tip of Isabella and the offshore rock formation known as Roca Redonda.

Short-beaked Common Dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*) – A massive aggregation of this species was located in the Bolivar Channel west of Isabella Island but north of Fernandina Island. Given that several hundred animals were present, the group was easily sighted at a distance we judged as about two miles. As we witnessed animals vaulting high out of the water in twisting acrobatic displays, we initially thought we were seeing spinner dolphins. The ship's captain gave chase and we ultimately caught up with the herd north of Punta Suarez, Fernandina Island. With everybody on deck, we enjoyed a magnificent behavioral display of common dolphins swimming and evidently playing as the group moved as a massive unit. At a distance of only a few yards from the closest animals, we were able to note the distinctive field marks that clinched the identification as this species. Probably 300 animals in all and a definite trip highlight.

Norway Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) – A single individual scurrying out of a tree at sundown on Santiago Island was an unwelcome sight. Introduced to the Galapagos archipelago in the distant past, the rats have successfully adapted to the harsh ecosystems of the

Galapagos Islands, typically to the detriment of the nesting native birds. Most rats in the islands are the black rat, so the sighting of a Norway rat so far from human habitation was an ominous sign, or so said our local Galapagos guide.

House Mouse (*Mus musculus*) – Another introduced mammal, we found a single individual feeding in the shelter of a large cactus in the Lonesome George enclosure at Puerto Ayora, Santa Cruz Island.

Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) – A single animal emerging from the mangroves in Puerto Ayora before sundown was identified as this species. Not seen by more than a few of us.

## REPTILE LIST

Giant Tortoise (*Geochelone elephantopus*) – As the emblematic animal of the Galapagos Islands, we made a point to experience these remarkable creatures to the extent possible. Beginning with our time at the Charles Darwin Research Station at Santa Cruz Island, we spent time with the tortoises where they are rehabilitated and propagated in captivity in the hands of able scientists and researchers. We saw tortoises in various stages of their life cycle, from young ones only a couple of months old to ancient giants approaching 200 years of age. Besides viewing the tortoises, we received interpretation from our local guides on the life history of the animals, their role in the human history of the islands, and their role as a viable organism as the islands changed through the centuries. In the afternoon we went to the highlands of the island to view wild tortoises in their native environment.

Pacific Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) – Seen very well by all at different places and in different situations throughout the islands. Some were “stranded” on beaches after a night of egg laying while others were seen at sea from the decks of the *Islander*, while still others were noted while snorkeling. The form occurring in the Galapagos is really more black than green in appearance and belongs to the eastern Pacific subspecies, *agassizi*, that some authorities consider a separate species.

Galapagos Leaf-toed Gecko (*Phyllodactylus galapagoensis*) (E)

Galapagos Lava Lizard (*Microlophus albermarlensis*) (E) – The most widespread lava lizard species.

Floreana Lava Lizard (*Tropidurus grayi*) (E) – Noted at Floreana where it is endemic

Espanola Lava Lizard (*Tropidurus delanonus*) (E) – Noted at Espanola (Hood) where it is endemic.

Isabella Lava Lizard (*Tropidurus albermarlensis*) (E) – Noted at Isabella where it is endemic.

Galapagos Land Iguana (*Conolophus subcristatus*) (E) – A large and striking animal, we saw this species for the first time on North Seymour Island the first afternoon and again at Urvina Beach on Isabella Island.

Marine Iguana (*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*) (E) – Common and widespread at almost every landing, we noted the differences between various island forms and studied the animals at length eating, sleeping, sunning, and defending territories.

## CRAB LIST

Hermit Crab

Ghost Crab

Sally Lightfoot Crab – The signature species of the tidal zone. It would be impossible to miss these bright orange inhabitants of the rocky shore as they scurried everywhere along the coasts of all islands we visited.

## FISH LIST

Razor Surgeonfish

Finescale Triggerfish

Orangeside Triggerfish

Panamic Fanged Blenny

Galapagos Shark

White-tipped Reef Shark

Giant Hawkfish

Pacific Burrfish

Balloonfish

Reef Cornetfish

Burrito Grunt

Mojarra (Gray) Grunt

Galapagos Grunt

Black-striped Salema

Longfin Halfbeak

Dusky Chub

Cortez Rainbow Wrasse

Amarillo (yellow) Snapper

(Spotted) Eagle Ray

Manta Ray

Golden Ray

Southern Stingray

Marbled Ray

Golden cowray

Pacific Beakfish

King Angelfish

Panamic Sergeant Major

Scissortail Chromis

Bumphead Damselfish

Giant Damselfish

Yellow-tailed Damselfish

Galapagos Ringtail Damselfish

Azure Parrotfish

Blue-chinned Parrotfish

Bicolor Parrotfish

Flag Cabrilla

Pelican Barracuda

Guineafowl Puffer

Bullseye Puffer

Ocean Sunfish (Mola Mola)

## BUTTERFLY LIST

Cloudless Sulphur (*Phoebis sennae*)

Galapagos Blue (*Leptotes parrhasioides*)

Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)

Dorante's Longtail (*Urbanus dorantes*)

## MINDO/TANDAYAPA PRE-TRIP BIRDLIST

**Note:** This is an un-annotated birdlist that simply reflects the total number of birds recorded on the one-day pretrip to the Galapagos Islands cruise. Not every participant saw every species while a few of these birds were recorded as heard only.

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)  
Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*)  
Plain-breasted Hawk (*Accipiter ventralis*)  
American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)  
Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*)  
Band-tailed Pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata*)  
Plumbeous Pigeon (*Patagioenas plumbea*)  
Eared Dove (*Zenaida auriculata*)  
White-throated Quail-Dove (*Geotrygon frenata*)  
Red-billed Parrot (*Pionus sordidus*)  
Chestnut-collared Swift (*Cypseloides rutilus*)  
White-collared Swift (*Streptoprocne zonaris*)  
Brown Violet-ear (*Colibri delphinae*)  
Green Violet-ear (*Colibri thalassinus*)  
Sparkling Violet-ear (*Colibri coruscans*)  
Western Emerald (*Chlorostilbon melanorhynchus*)  
Rufous-tailed Hummingbird (*Amazilia tzacatl*)  
Andean Emerald (*Agyrtria franciae*)  
Speckled Hummingbird (*Adelomyia melanogenys*)  
Fawn-breasted Brilliant (*Heliodoxa rubinoides*)  
Empress Brilliant (*Heliodoxa imperatrix*)  
Buff-tailed Coronet (*Boissonneaua flavescens*)  
Velvet-purple Coronet (*Boissonneaua jardini*)  
Brown Inca (*Coeligena wilsoni*)  
Collared Inca (*Coeligena torquata*)  
White-necked Jacobin (*Florisuga mellivora*)  
Hoary Puffleg (*Haplophaedia lugens*)  
Purple-bibbed Whitetip (*Urostitte benjamini*)  
Booted Racket-tail (*Ocreatus underwoodii*)  
Black-tailed Trainbearer (*Lesbia victoriae*)  
Green-tailed Trainbearer (*Lesbia nuna*)  
Violet-tailed Sylph (*Agelaiocercus coelestis*)  
Purple-throated Woodstar (*Calliphlox mitchellii*)  
White-bellied Woodstar (*Chaetocercus mulsant*)  
Little Woodstar (*Chaetocercus bombus*)  
Masked Trogon (*Trogon personatus*)  
Toucan Barbet (*Semnornis ramphastinus*)  
Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan (*Andigena laminirostris*)  
Crimson-mantled Woodpecker (*Piculus rivolii*)  
Azara's Spinetail (*Synallaxis azarae*)  
Spillman's Tapaculo (*Scytalopus spillmanni*)

Chestnut-crowned Antpitta (*Grallaria ruficapilla*)  
Sierran Elaenia (*Elaenia pallatangae*)  
Smoke-colored Pewee (*Contopus fumigatus*)  
Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*)  
Golden-crowned Flycatcher (*Myiodynastes chrysocephalus*)  
Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*)  
Blue-and-white Swallow (*Notiochelidon cyanoleuca*)  
House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*)  
Gray-breasted Wood-Wren (*Henicorhina leucophrys*)  
Andean Solitaire (*Myadestes ralloides*)  
Great Thrush (*Turdus fuscater*)  
Blackburnian Warbler (*Dendroica fusca*)  
Blackpoll Warbler (*Dendroica striata*)  
Slate-throated Redstart (*Myioborus miniatus*)  
White-sided Flowerpiercer (*Diglossa albilatera*)  
Golden-naped Tanager (*Tangara ruficervix*)  
Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager (*Anisognathus somptuosus*)  
Golden Tanager (*Tangara arthus*)  
Beryl-spangled Tanager (*Tangara nigroviridis*)  
Rufous-collared Sparrow (*Zonotrichia capensis*)  
Hooded Siskin (*Carduelis magellanica*)  
**Total = 62**

## CERRO BLANCO, GUAYAQUIL POST-TRIP BIRDLIST

**Note:** This is an un-annotated birdlist that simply reflects the total number of birds recorded on the afternoon post-trip to the Galapagos Islands cruise. Not every participant saw every species while a few of these birds were recorded as heard only.

Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*)  
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*)  
Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)  
Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*)  
Gray Hawk (*Buteo nitidus*)  
Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)  
Rufous-headed Chachalaca (*Ortalis erythroptera*)  
Pale-vented Pigeon (*Columba cayennensis*)  
Ecuadorian Ground-Dove (*Columbina buckleyi*)  
White-tipped Dove (*Leptotila verreauxi*)  
Gray-cheeked Parakeet (*Brotogeris pyrrhoptera*)  
Red-lored Parrot (*Amazona autumnalis*)  
Squirrel Cuckoo (*Piaya cayana*)  
Amazilia Hummingbird (*Amazilia amazilia*)  
Long-billed Starthroat (*Heliomaster longirostris*)  
Pale-legged Hornero (*Furnarius leucopus*)

Streak-headed Woodcreeper (*Lepidocolaptes souleyetii*)  
Collared Antshrike (*Sakesphorus bernardi*)  
Streaked Flycatcher (*Myiodynastes maculatus*)  
Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*)  
One-colored Becard (*Platypsaris homochrous*)  
Boat-billed Flycatcher (*Megarhynchus pitanga*)  
Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*)  
Gray-breasted Martin (*Progne chalybea*)  
Fasciated Wren (*Campylorhynchus fasciatus*)  
Ecuadorian Thrush (*Turdus maculirostris*)  
Tropical Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila plumbea*)  
White-tailed Jay (*Cyanocorax mystacalis*)  
Rufous-browed Peppershrike (*Cyclarhis gujanensis*)  
Gray and Gold Warbler (*Basileuterus fraseri*)  
Thick-billed Euphonia (*Euphonia laniistrosis*)  
Blue-gray Tanager (*Thraupis episcopus*)  
Southern Yellow (Golden-bellied) Grosbeak (*Pheucticus chrysogaster*)  
Scrub Blackbird (*Dives warszewiczi*)  
Yellow-tailed Oriole (*Icterus mesomelas*)  
Yellow-rumped Cacique (*Cacicus cela*)  
Lemon-rumped Tanager (*Ramphocelus icteronotus*)  
Variable Seedeater (*Sporophila corvine*)  
**Total = 38**