

Ecuador & The Galapagos Islands

Naturetrek Tour Report

9 - 25 December 2008



Image of Galapagos Flycatcher courtesy of Robin Richards

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Summary: During our trip we saw 68 species out of 90 possible, including 11 out of 13 finch species. We saw Galapagos penguin, Flightless cormorant, Waved albatross, and the four species of Mockingbirds. Our spectacular marine sightings included Pacific sea horse, African box crab (to be confirmed) and Leopard flounder. In Antisana, even though fauna was less cooperating we saw Silvery grebe, Ecuadorian hillstar, and Aplomado falcon.

Day 0

Tuesday 9th December

FLIGHT FROM UK

Day 1

Wednesday 10th December

Sailing to Pitt Point, San Cristobal Island

FLIGHT FROM QUITO

We started our day with a 5:30 AM breakfast at the Mercure Alameda. Our pick up time was 5:55 AM to Mariscal Sucre, Quito Airport, where the check-in procedures were eased by Monserrat, our ground services person. We smoothly went through all the procedures at the airport. About 7:30 AM, we were sat at the plane queuing for our turn to take off. During the first twenty minutes of our flight we were able to see several snow capped volcanoes and peaks, part of the Volcanoes Avenue that makes our highlands well known around the world. We spotted along our departure from the North Cotacachi and Cayambe. When we turned south we saw part of the summit of Antizana, Sincholagua, and Cotopaxi. We changed direction again and the twin peaks of the Illinizas were almost right underneath our left wing.

On the horizon we were able to spot Sangay, and Altar. Finally, behind the Illinizas, when we were flying west, we had a partial view of the northern face of Chimborazo volcano. Chimborazo was the reference point to notice that we turned south again. It stayed on sight while we were flying south towards Guayaquil until we started to descend to the coast.

BALTRA

The flight towards Baltra started on time, 30 minutes after our landing in Guayaquil, at 10:15 am. The plane flew north and then east above Santa Elena Peninsula, allowing us to see the rice fields that cover the Guayas and Daule Rivers junction. During the flight we received a small brunch. The weather was slightly overcast so we were only able to see San Cristobal Island at the very moment that we were passing above it. Our plane landed on Baltra Airport on time, 11:30 am Galápagos time (one hour less than in the continent). There we met Juan Tapia who would be our local Galápagos Naturalist Guide. After a short bus ride to Baltra Port we embarked on the Cachalote. A refreshing welcome drink and a few common birds and mammals were the hors d'oeuvres. We saw Great and Magnificent frigatebirds, Common noddy, Brown pelican, Swallow tailed gull, and Medium ground-finch.

PLAZA ISLANDS

Right away we sailed south along the east coast of Santa Cruz. After having lunch on our way there, we anchored in the channel between Plazas Islands. We had a short briefing and then a dry landing at 3 pm. Remarkable sightings in the Island were the two species of Carpet weed: Galapagos (*Sesuvium edmonstonei*) and Common carpetweed (*Sesuvium portulacastrum*) that covered the hillside in tones of red, green and orange and the Land Iguanas, with their tones of yellow and gray that appeared amidst the Spiny bush (*Scutia spicata*) at the base of the stems of the Prickly pear (*Opuntia echios* var. *echios*) and Candelabra cactus (*Jasminocereus thouarsii* var. *delicatus*).

The local birds seen during the walk were Audubon's shearwater, Elliot's storm-petrel, Wedge-rumped storm-petrel, Red-billed tropicbird, Magnificent frigatebird, Great frigatebird, Blue-footed booby, Nazca booby, Brown pelican, Whimbrel, Ruddy turnstone, Lava gull, Swallow-tailed gull, Common noddy, Medium ground finch, Small ground finch, Common cactus-finch and Yellow warbler.

Of course, this was our first encounter with the ubiquitous Galapagos sea lion, of which we will have surely several memories.

Day 2

Thursday 11th December

Sailing to Lobos Island, on the Coast of San Cristobal Island

PITT POINT

This morning we anchored about 6:00 am in front of the little bay next to Pitt Point. Upon our arrival we saw Red-footed boobies flying above our heads. We started our hike at 7:00 am so we were able to enjoy the hike during the cooler hours of the day. The first 500 meters of the path extended along the eastern edge of a dry gorge that in rainy periods drains to the western end of the beach where we landed. When we arrived to the highest section of the trail, we found ourselves walking on a barren plateau from where we were able to see first the bay we were anchored and then the eastern slopes of the point.

We saw plants from Arid and Transitional zone such as Thread-leaved chaff flower (*Alternanthera filifolia*), Candelabra cactus (*Jasminocereus thouarsii* var *thouarsii*), Mollugo (*Mollugo flavescens*), and Club leaf (*Nolana galapagensis*). Additionally we saw Cut-leaved Scalesia (*Scalesia incisa*) on our way down from the walk.

Among the birds, we saw Medium and Small ground finches, Red-footed, as well as Nazca and Blue-footed boobies. Malcolm and Ko had their share of birding time at the shore. They had seen also Red-billed tropicbird.

CERRO BRUJO

Right after arriving to the boat we prepared ourselves for snorkelling this small bay. Right after snorkelling we set off to anchor in front of Cerro Brujo. We sailed about three and a half hours along the Northwestern coast of San Cristobal towards Cerro Brujo. Lunch was served on the way. We walked along the beach and had several closer looks at interesting plants: Cut-leaved scalesia, Scorpion weed (*Heliotropium curassavicum*), Ink berry (*Scaveola plumieri*), Galapagos milkwort (*Polygala* spp.), and Sea grass (*Sporobolus virginicus*).

The most remarkable sighting of the day was a Chatham mockingbird, calling from a tall branch of a Palo santo tree (*Bursera graveolens*). At the end of the walk, we had one great look at a pair of American oystercatchers and enough time for pictures. On our way back to the boat the weather allowed us to watch a sunset on Kicker rock from our dingy ...it was worth several photos! Dinner was at 7 and we had the next days' briefing after the meal.

Day 3

Friday 12th December

Sailing to Puerto Villamil, Isabela Island

LOBOS ISLAND

A pack of sea lions caused that we had to land on the easternmost access to the trail. Juan did his best to clear the landing and helped Ko and Malcolm to visit at least the Black mangrove. Along the trail, we saw Galapagos cotton, *Physalis angulata*, *Physalis galapagoensis*, *Lycopersicon* sp., Blue footed boobies, Santa Cruz lava lizards, Smooth-billed ani, Yellow warbler and Small ground finch. After a snack, we went snorkelling along the northern end of the channel between Lobos Is. and San Cristobal. We saw Green turtle, the ubiquitous Concentric pufferfish, Needlenose fish, and Sea lions.

We set off as soon as we were all back in the boat. We had lunch on the way to Santa Fe Island. Along the way we saw jumping Manta rays, Waved albatross, Blue-footed and Nazca Boobies, Wedge rumped and Elliot's Storm petrels, Great Frigatebird and Audubon's shearwater. We anchored about 2:45 pm in Barrington bay.

SANTA FE ISLAND

This time we explored the Uplands trail of the island. The first part of the walk was steep but not extremely complicated. When we arrived to the summit we had excellent views of the bay with Cachalote and two other boats, as well as a perspective of the coastal section of this part of the Island. Opuntias (*Opuntia echios* var *barringtonensis*) and Palo santo (*Bursera graveolens*) covered most of the platform ending in the bay. Around the beach we also saw a hedge-like area formed by mainly Spiny bush (*Scutia spicata*) and Salt bush (*Cryptocarpus pyriformis*).

We also had excellent views of the Galápagos rice rat (*Oryzomys bauri*), Galápagos hawk, Western and Central Lava lizard (*Microlophus albemarlensis*), and medium and small ground finches. Malcolm and Ko, who stayed at the beach, had good views of a group of three Smooth-billed Anis. With the sunset we arrived to the boat. Immediately after dinner (8:00 pm) we lift anchor and sailed to Puerto Villamil, in Bahía Tortuga, Isabela Is.

Day 4

Saturday 13th December

Anchored at Puerto Villamil, Isabela Island

THE WEEPING WALL

We had a very calm sail to Puerto Villamil where we arrived a couple of hours before sunrise. The tide was extremely low. Two fishermen seemed to be walking in the water. They carried their fishing gear to take advantage of the low tide and collect some fish from the sand bank in the middle of the bay.

We boarded a van which took us to the Parking lot of the Weeping Wall visitor site. Along the way we saw a Semipalmated plover with a group of Sanderlings probing the sand for food. We took pictures of the birds, the Marine iguanas and the Galápagos tortoises. Our visit to the Weeping Wall was full of reflections and contemplating moments of silence. Remarkable plants seen during our visit were Wartclub (*Commicarpus tuberosus*), Heliotrope (*Heliotropium angiospermum*), Arrow-leafed morning glory (*Ipomoea linearifolia*), and Waltheria (*Waltheria ovata*). We drove to the Isabela Island Tortoises Breeding Center.

BRACKISH LAGOONS TRAIL

At the Breeding Center, we had a brief look at the Tortoises and started walking the trail back to Puerto Villamil. The trail is about 1 kilometre (0.62 of a mile) and includes a wooden path on stilts, located between three different brackish lagoons. We saw Galápagos flycatcher, Large and Medium ground-finch, White-cheeked pintail, Common gallinule, Wandering tattler, and Ruddy turnstone. The path also produced a good set of plants such as the striking fruit of the Galápagos passion flower (*Passiflora foetida*) and the always intriguing Poison apple tree (*Hippomane mancinella*). On time for 1 pm lunch, we were picked up at the Port deck. Lunch was on board.

TINTORERAS TRAIL

After a short brake, we started our afternoon 4:00 session with a dry landing at Tintorerías visitor site. On our way there, we saw our first group of Galápagos penguins. A colony of Marine iguanas welcomed us to the extraterrestrial landscape of this rocky trail. The path is quite smooth but the surrounding terrain covered mainly with AA lava shows the effect of the gas expelled from the magma while cooling.

As we expected, a group of eight White-tipped reef sharks was waiting for us at the small channel on the western end of the brackish lagoon. There we also saw three Golden cow-nose ray swimming away from us, covered with sand but still showing us patches of yellow-gold colour. When we were about to leave the lagoon we noticed the Skating insects foraging on the surface of the water. Progressing along the trail we saw a Great blue heron resting under a Waltheria bush.

The day ended with us walking along the eastern shore of the islet watching the sun turn the clouds red and ochre, before setting in the horizon. After dinner and the wildlife list, we had a calm night anchored in front of Puerto Ayora.

Day 5

Sunday 14th December

Sailing to Cerro Dragón, Santa Cruz Island

SIERRA NEGRA TRAIL

This morning our first sight upon arrival to the public pier in Puerto Villamil was a Galapagos penguin catching small fish between the boats anchored there. Blue-green water was the background of the revolving black and white colours of the penguin. It did not allow us to take many pictures though. However, the sighting left us with enough images in our minds.

After 20 minutes of driving from the main plaza, we arrived to the parking lot of a lodge. There we saw Medium and Small ground-finches, but no trace of Vegetarian finch. We drove 25 minutes more and arrived to El Cura area. There some of us went exploring and found Fringed orchid (*Habenaria monorrhiza*).

We parked our bus a few meters ahead. Malcolm and Ko, stayed at the bus while the rest of us walked to the rim of the Sierra Negra Crater. We saw the crater with its Sulphur mines and lava flows. Halfway along the trail we stopped to take a break. There we saw Large tree-finch, Woodpecker finch and Warbler finch. After viewing where the midpoint of the trail was (Jaboncillos Area), Chris decided to go back and not to try the hike. The rest of the group was given the option to consider also going back to the bus with me. We would wait at the bus for the others to return to the parking area or would go down and walk in town until the others came back in the bus. Chris, Malcolm and Ko considered that it was better idea to stay and enjoy the peace and the view. So we did. The group returned to the bus about 4:00 pm. Then we drove back to town and went straight to the boat. Immediately after we had dinner we set off to the western coast of Santa Cruz.

Day 6

Monday 15th December

Anchored in front of Sombrero Chino

CERRO DRAGON

About 7:30 we landed at the pier on the northern rocky end of the beach. There we explored the two salt water lagoons. We saw White-cheeked pintail, Whimbrel and Wandering tattler. When the trail split we went to the right and walked until we saw a brand new trail. We went exploring and discovered a secluded beach after a 10 minute walk through Palo santo trees. The beach did not offer much, we thought, so we walked back to the previous junction. Along our walk we saw Western and Central lava lizards, Land iguanas (Yellow and gray), Common cactus finch, and Large ground-finch.

We went back to the boat about 11:00 am. Then we had lunch while sailing to Sombrero Chino. On our way there we saw Great and Magnificent frigatebird, Elliot's and Madeiran storm petrel, Red-billed tropicbird, Blue-footed booby, Nazca booby, Red-necked and Red phalarope.

SOMBRERO CHINO

We arrived right before 3:00 pm. We went snorkelling on the southeastern shore of Santiago Is. There we found White-tipped reef-shark, Green sea-turtle, several colourful fish species and Galápagos penguin. We also saw Galapagos hawk. At about 4:00 pm, we finished snorkelling and went back to the boat.

After a snack we went to land in the northwestern shore of Sombrero Chino. Along our walk the most interesting species seen were Galápagos tomato (*Lycopersicon cheesmanii*), Galápagos sea lion, and Galápagos hawk. The last scenic moment of the day was a sailing boat crossing the sunset. We walked back to the shore and went back to the boat while we watched the sunset. Immediately after dinner we did our wildlife list. We went to bed for a calm night because the next stretch of our navigation took just 1 hour and 10 minutes.

Day 7

Tuesday 16th December

South Eastern coast of Santiago

RABIDA ISLAND

This morning, few minutes after sunrise, we arrived to the bay in front of Rábida Island where we had breakfast (6:45 am). Rábida (also known as Jervis, named after Adm. John Jervis), is a 4.9 square kilometres (1.9 sq miles) island. Upon arrival we saw Brown pelican, Blue footed booby, and Magnificent frigatebird. We landed in the red beach of Rábida at 07h59, 3.3 miles south of the coast of Santiago (James). From the beach, the coast of Santiago looks extremely close. The first birds at the beach were a Wandering tattler (*Heteroscelus incannus*) and an American oystercatcher (*Haematopus palliatus*). The nesting area for Brown pelican was empty with only one adult swimming ashore.

Under a clear blue sky, we started our walk along the beach, for about 0.2 miles. The lagoon, hiding behind the vegetation along the beach, did not present a big diversity of wildlife. There we only saw a Wandering tattler and tracks of Sea lion. The limits of the lagoon are formed by plant species like Saltbush, Spinybush, and Black mangrove. Behind the green barrier that these species mark, fields are dominated by Palo santo, mixed with Giant prickly pear cactus, which extend over the Northwestern hillsides of the island. Careful observation of the vegetation growing between the Palo santo trees and the Giant Prickly pear cacti along the trail allowed us to include Arrow leafed morning glory (*Ipomea linearifolia*) in today's plant list. Only about four individuals of this species were noticeable due to the presence of flowers. Other plants recorded there were Waltheria (*Waltheria ovata*). During our walk (0.9 of a mile), we watched three species of finches feeding on Rábida Giant prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia galapageia* var. *profusa*). Six out of every ten cacti we saw had at least one flower fully opened. Small and Medium ground finches took chances to feed on the nectar and pollen of the flowers. However, Common cactus finch chased them from the flowers whenever it saw them feeding. Other birds seen along the path were Galapagos hawk, Galapagos mockingbird, Galapagos flycatcher and Vermillion flycatcher. This last species has not been recorded before in this island! During our snorkelling we saw one adult Nazca booby, perched on top of the cliff right below the trail where we walked.

SULLIVAN BAY

Around lunch time we navigated to Sullivan bay, a location further away in the eastern shore of Santiago. We anchored in the channel between Bartolomé and Santiago. There we had again a snorkelling session.

Our walk through the lava fields was planned for 4:00 pm so we could walk through the lava field in Santiago without the stress of the midday heat. We discovered the magic of the different textures and artefacts of a lava field; Pahoehoe lava, layers of colour in exposed cracks and Spatter cones.

To finish our walk we lay on the lava for a natural massage. Species present along the walk were Lava cactus, Painted locust, and Mollugo (*Mollugo flavescens*). We watched the sunset on our way back to the boat. We did the wildlife list right after dinner and navigated straight to the channel between Baltra Is. and North Seymour.

Day 8

Wednesday 17th December

Santa Cruz, Anchored in Academy Bay

NORTH SEYMOUR

We explored the southern cliffs of the island and found Galápagos fur seal as well as the common Galápagos sea lion. At the cliffs, we also saw Swallow-tailed gull, Lava gull and a juvenile Yellow-crowned night heron. In order to land we had to wait until the sea lions would move away from the pier. Starting the trail from the northeast, we entered a forest of Dwarf Palo Santo (*Bursera malacophila*), a species very local to Baltra and North Seymour. At the trail we saw one example of the land iguanas that were introduced to the island from Baltra.

The walk through the big loop gave us the chance to take pictures of males, females and juveniles of both Magnificent and Great frigatebird. The colony was not as active as it is in August. On the way back we also saw Whimbrel, Wandering tattler, Ruddy turnstone, and Galápagos dove. We also had our regular encounter with a colony of Marine iguanas. We went back to the boat and navigated to Puerto Ayora. We had lunch on the way. Right before our meal (11:30 am), we had the sighting of a pod of Killer whales including a juvenile.

CHARLES DARWIN BREEDING CENTER

We finished our meal and had a short break on the top deck, birding and looking for more wildlife. We anchored about 3:00 pm and landed right away to visit the Charles Darwin Station. There we saw Lonesome George, the last of Pinta tortoises species, along with the other Giant tortoises from the Galapagos Islands. During our walk to and through the Breeding Center, we also spotted some plant and bird species. We found four species of Mangrove: Black, White, Red and Button, and two Scalesia species: *Scalesia helleri*, and *Scalesia crockery*. Five species of finches were available at this site: Medium and Small ground-finches, Common cactus-finch, Small Tree-finch and Warbler Finch.

We left the Breeding Center about 5:00 pm and had a leisurely stroll to town. We had time for some of us to go shopping and for some others to have a beer and watch Puerto Ayora life. The highlight of this was a funny moment when a Brown pelican was stealing a fish from the Fish market and tried to swallow it. Of course, it was not able to do it. Di and Alex tried to take a picture of the event but the light was not great. At 6:00 pm we went back to the boat for dinner and the wildlife list before a quiet night anchored in Academy Bay.

Day 9

Thursday 18th December

Sailing to Española Is.

LOS GEMELOS

Early in the morning we drove up to the Los Gemelos Pit craters. Each is about 100 metres in diameter. Vegetation inside and around the crater characterise the Moist zones (Scalesia, Brown and Miconia zones). However there was no trace of Miconia species along the trail.

Instead we spotted Hand fern (*Doryopteris pedata*), Buttonhole orchid (*Epidendrum spicatum*), Galapagos tillandsia (*Tillandsia insularis*), Galápagos peperomia (*Peperomia galapagensis*), and Tree scalesia (*Scalesia pedunculata*). We also had a great view of Medium and Small ground-finches, Vegetarian finch, Large and Small tree-finches, Woodpecker finch and Warbler finch. We spent about an hour and a half at this site and then we drove to the Tortoise ranch: Rancho Mariposa.

TORTOISE RANCH

At the ranch we had great views of a dark morph of Barn owl, Vermillion flycatcher, and Dark-billed cuckoo perched on barbed wire of a close by fence. We also took pictures of large adult Giant tortoises. This was a quiet and not too strenuous walk to the main ranch-house. After a cup of coffee or tea we drove further ahead towards Altair Restaurant and Lodge in Bellavista.

BELLAVISTA RESTAURANT

People at the restaurant were waiting for us because the birding held us back about half an hour from expected lunch time. We arrived there at 1:30 pm. After a big lunch of chicken and salad, we had a chance to relax at the hammocks and swim in the cool-water pool. Even the jacuzzi was on so we soaked in it for a few minutes. A cup of coffee, a beer or a glass of wine and we were ready to board the bus. We drove to Puerto Ayora about 5:30 after some more birding along the access road to Altair. No new birds were added to the list, but we had fun and another tasty meal with local flavour.

At 6:00 pm we were back in the boat ready for some dinner and to complete the wildlife list. Tonight, we sailed all night long to Española Island, on the southernmost end of the Archipelago.

Day 10

Friday 19th December

Sailing to Floreana Island

GARDNER BAY BEACH

We prepared ourselves for a relaxed morning walk along the white-sand beach at Garner bay in Española Island. We saw the unusual sight of a mother sea lion and its newly-born cub on the beach. Hood mocking birds were approaching the afterbirth to steal a bit of good protein. Soon after we arrived also the frigatebirds were trying to snatch some of this free snack from the beach and from the beaks of the mockingbirds.

Birds seen from and at the beach included also Large cactus-finch, Small ground-finch and Warbler finch. Furthermore, we saw Española lava lizards and a few sea shore flowers such as Beach morning glory (*Ipomoea pes-caprae*).

SNORKELLING AT GARDNER

We went back to the boat and sailed in our pangas to the western side of Gardner Island. There we snorkelled to the north along the cliffs and had excellent views of several species of fish including Golden cow-nose ray, and Hieroglyphic hawkfish. Back to the boat for a snack and then we sailed to Punta Suarez and had lunch on the way.

PUNTA SUAREZ

We anchored at Punta Suarez bay about 2:00 pm, on time for our landing at 2:30 pm. The group had good views of Yellow-crowned night-heron, Red-billed tropicbirds, Nazca and Blue-footed boobies, and Galápagos hawk. Along the trail, the rest of us had great views of landscapes and birds including close-ups of Nazca boobies, and Waved albatrosses. On the way back to the boat we also saw American oystercatcher along the rocky beach, almost at the end of the trail. Again, our schedule allowed us to see the sunset right before our departure from the visitor site. There we saw a mix of warm colours in front of which we saw some of the seabirds we spotted flying back to their perches for the night. We were back at the boat when it started to be dark. We had dinner and right away sailed to Champion Island.

Day 11

Saturday 20th December

Sailing to Punta Moreno, Isabela Island

CHAMPION ISLAND

We woke up to the unusual calm of the sea. After a night in choppy waters, finally we felt the boat stable and did not hear the engines murmuring. The colours of the sky fused with the dark blue of the sea while we embarked in our zodiacs for the ten minute ride to Champion Island. On the way there we saw Galápagos dove flying over the channel towards Champion. Upon arrival to the proximities of the Southwest face of the island, we saw a juvenile and an adult of Charles mockingbird. The birds were looking for food on the rocky ground underneath the Opuntias. We clearly saw the facial and breast patterns of the plumage that distinguish these birds from the other mockingbirds in the archipelago. Despite the difficulty of sailing close to the shore, our zodiac drivers were able to keep us for long enough close to the birds and stable in order to take some good shots of them. Other birds present in the area during our visit were Red-billed tropic bird, Elliot's storm petrels, Audubon shearwaters, Blue footed boobies, Nazca boobies and Magnificent frigatebirds. Additional vertebrates seen along the ride there were Galapagos sea lions, Green turtle, and Marine iguanas. Plants identified in the island included Opuntia, and Jasminocereus cacti. We had breakfast on the way to our next wet landing.

POINT CORMORANT

Few minutes after anchoring at Point Cormorant, there was one Great flamingo flying north into the lagoon that lay behind the seaside vegetation visible from the boat. We hiked along the path towards the beach on the North eastern end of the point and a snorkelling session upon our return to our landing point. As I expected, there was a flock of flamingoes wading the lagoon. The group included about seven adults and the same number of paler coloured and fluffier juveniles. The adults eventually took off while the juveniles stayed on the south-western end of the lagoon. Birds seen at the lagoon included Franklin's and Laughing gull, Black-necked stilt, Wandering tattlers, Semipalmated plover, Whimbrel, and White-cheeked pintails.

Along the trail we saw Small ground- Medium-ground and Large cactus-finches, Yellow warblers, and heard Galapagos mockingbirds and Blue-footed boobies, calling from the northern side of the trail. On the eastern end of the trail, at the beach we saw Ruddy turnstone, Sanderlings, and Whimbrels. The exciting event of this morning was a group of three Green turtle males trying to mate with one female! We left them to solve their romantic affairs and we went back to the landing point for us to change into our snorkelling gear.

There we snorkelled along the eastern cliff of the beach where we landed. It was a very active spot with algae and Green turtle, plus Box fish and Cortez rainbow wrasse, among other colourful fish. The pangas picked us up from ashore and took us to the boat. Our plan was to swiftly cruise to Post Office bay.

POST OFFICE BAY

We arrived right after 12:00 pm for a brief visit to the Post Office Barrel. We picked up postcards in exchange of our own which we left in the barrel. It was fun to see how many people from many different countries: India, Taiwan or Colombia, come to the islands and find this way of communicating charming. Almost right away we sailed towards Puerto Velasco Ibarra. Lunch was impressive...we had a two whole 2-foot long Sea bass – very tasty!

PUERTO VELASCO IBARRA & FLOREANA HIGHLANDS

After lunch we arrived to Puerto Velasco Ibarra. We landed at the Public pier at 2:00 pm and drove to the highlands in a traditional window-less bus: a ranchera, the way to go in hot weathers all over Latin America. When we were about to arrive at the end of the trail at Asilo de la Paz, at the edge of the agricultural area of the island, Sarah spotted a Short-eared owl. All of us had the chance to take pictures of it and to see it quite well. After this exciting start, we walked past Tree scalesia (*Scalesia pedunculata*) to the Tortoises corral, where individuals from different islands are kept in captivity.

At the corral, along with the Tortoises we saw Medium tree-finch, and Small ground-finch. Further in the Asilo Area we explored the caves that the Rolf-Wittmer family used as a shelter while they struggled in this inhospitable ecosystem. There are many keen strategies they used to protect their animals and to provide themselves with basic comfort to live. One of them is the location of the caves. They are right next to a sweet water spring, located at the base of the cone of Asilo de la Paz Hill. These caves were likely used and provided with citrus trees since the first arrival of people to Florena in the late 1700's: including Pirate Patrick Watkins.

On our way back to the boat we took a final look at the Short-eared owl and got pictures in better light. Then we drove to the pier to transfer successfully to our pangas and to the yacht. We had dinner at 7:00 pm. Then we did our wildlife list and went to sleep while sailing overnight to Moreno Point.

Day 12

Sunday 21st December

Anchored in Punta Moreno, Isabela Island

MORENO POINT HIKE

We woke up anchored at the external section of a calm bay in front of Moreno Point. The temperature of the air was just warm enough for not to form fog on the surface of the water. The sky was blue and just few clouds were visible on the top of the surrounding volcanoes. Starting from the North, the summits on sight were La Cumbre Volcano on Fernandina, Alcedo, Sierra Negra and Cerro Azul Volcanoes on Isabela. As planned we had Breakfast at 7:00 and a Dry Landing at 8:00 on Punta Moreno.

Due to the presence of two other groups of tourists from Diamante and Saggita Yachts we preferred to land at the exit point of the hike and progress backwards.

As we were getting ready to start our walk we spotted four Flightless cormorants (*Nannopterum harrisi*) resting on an islet and a small peninsula in front of the landing point. Several Coastal and Dry Zone area plants were also on sight around us: White and Red mangroves, Lava and Candelabra cactus, and an *Opuntia* species. Two deep tidal pools were the next attractions. On the biggest of both we spotted White-tipped reef shark (*Triaenodon obesus*), and Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas agassisi*)

MORNING SNORKELLING SESSION

This was the snorkelling session I was craving for because here is the only place where there is a good chance that we can find Pacific sea horse. We started in the north of the rocky shore where we were anchored and progress south, scanning for sea horse and other fish. We saw among others Balloon fish, Chameleon (Throat-spotted) clinid, Striped lizardfish, and Pacific seahorse! This was a very short snorkelling session for most of the group because of the low temperature of the water. Quickly we went back to the boat and had a warm drink before lunch. We sailed two more hours to Elizabeth Bay.

ELIZABETH BAY PANGA RIDE

At 4:00 pm we prepared ourselves for the panga ride. The tide was low and retreating. There was a good chance for us to see Flightless cormorant in very close range, and Galapagos penguins. Likewise, we saw Green turtle inside of the mangrove-surrounded lagoons. This is the only place in the world where both Penguins and Mangroves can be seen together. This visit happened on the westernmost end of the Perry Isthmus, which is the narrowest end of the Isabela Island. When we went back to the boat the sunset was in the Bolivar Channel behind our boat: the Cachalote S/Y. We had dinner while anchored on the edge of the bay. We did our wildlife list and went to sleep on a calm sea.

Day 13

Monday 22nd December

Sailing to Santiago Is.

URBINA BAY

We woke up to an extremely calm sea for what we are used to in the area. The wet landing at Urbina Bay looked very promising, even though here there is no guarantee that the conditions of the waves will stay constant. Our wet landing was as calm as we were hoping. We were looking forward to see the corals and other marine life remnants left on the surface of this visitor site after the uplift that formed it 1954.

Along the walk we saw Hermit crab, Land iguana, Common cactus-finch, Medium ground-finch, and Galapagos hawk. Particularly, the Galapagos hawk was calmly allowing us to take pictures of it. However, we were about to have a very unusual sighting of about fourteen hawks, juveniles and adults at our landing point. All of them were gliding very close to the beach, landing and taking off from the sand and from the poles planted to fence the turtle nesting area.

Our departure was a bit rougher but still quite pleasant in comparison to previous visits to this beach. Back at the boat we had a snack and sailed away to Espinoza Point for lunch and our afternoon session. On our way there we saw a pod of Bottle-nose dolphins. We were playing with each other for a few minutes. It allowed us to see them well and to take good pictures and even a video.

ESPINOZA POINT

We landed at the pier and walked through the Red-mangrove trees to the beach. There we found the bones of one of the many species of whales that swim in Bolivar Channel. We saw Marine iguanas coming from foraging at the rocky bottom of the nearby waters. On the beach, on our way to the Marine iguanas' colony, we found four turtles. One of them had a very unusual brown-orange tone on its carapace. Before we departed we approached the viewpoint of the Colony of Flightless cormorants. One pair was nesting and another was starting building the nest. We had good views of this unusual and endemic bird.

We went back to the boat before 5:00 pm so we could have some hours of light to look for whales on the way out of the Channel towards the north. We spotted at least two species of whales. However, just one of them was positively identified: Sei whale. We also saw a few individuals of Common dolphin swimming north in the channel. At the crossing of the Equator, about 7 pm we went up to the Captains deck to see the GPS and celebrate. Then we had dinner, and we did our wildlife list. We slept while sailing to James Bay in Santiago Island.

Day 14

Tuesday 23rd December

Sailing to Santa Cruz Island

JAMES BAY (SANTIAGO ISLAND)

First thing in the morning we went for a walk to explore the tidal pools at James Bay. We landed with all our gear for the snorkelling session we would have after the walk. On the rocky pools we found several octopuses, seashell and fish, particularly Four-eyed blennies. We also spotted one Least Sandpiper mixed within a flock including Sanderlings, Wandering tattlers and Ruddy turnstones. When we arrived to the Blow holes, we also saw a Yellow crowned night heron adult perched at the exit on one of them, in a rocky cliff from where Marine iguanas jump to the water during their grazing outings. On our way back the highlight of the day was a Galapagos flycatcher that approached Cliff and landed on the lens of its camera. Face forward, the bird started to peck the lens probably considering that it was a competing individual. Fortunately Robin had his camera ready and got a picture of the event.

When we went snorkelling, and I found and showed two very unusual organisms to the snorkelling crew, the Leopard flounder (*Bothus leopardinus*) and a Box crab very similar to the African Box crab (*Calappa af. africana*). We went back to the boat for lunch and we had it served while we were sailing to Bartolomé Island.

BARTOLOME & PINACLE ROCK

At 3:00 pm we landed and walked along the wooden trail seeing on the way the different volcanic formations of the Northeastern slope of the island. We talked about Cinder cones, Lava tubes, and Lava tongues or Driblets and the different circumstances under which those are formed. Back to the boat to collect the snorkelling gear and then we went in the water to our last snorkelling session of the trip. It was a great success. We saw three Diamond stingrays each of 1.5 meter diameter. Also we saw White-tipped reef-shark and a Tiger snake-eel. About 6:00 pm we went back to the boat and sailed south and around Bartolomé and headed towards Santa Cruz. We had dinner on the way there and anchored in front of Black Turtle cove. We had a calm night of sleep.

Day 15

Wednesday 24th December

Quito, Mercure Hotel

BLACK TURTLE COVE

This morning we woke up at 5:30 so we could be ready to go explore the cove at 6:00 o'clock. On the way there, we saw all the common birds waking up to the new day: Blue footed boobies, Snowy egrets, Great blue herons, Striated herons, Lava herons, Brown pelicans, Black necked stilt, Lava gull, and Common noddies. We were about to leave and expressed that we wanted to have one more bird for our group's list. Suddenly, I spotted a raptor on a distant snag. I put my binoculars in place and there it was, an Osprey. Juans said that it was an unusual record for that area of the islands based on his experience. We were all able to see it well. This was the bird with which we closed our birding in the Galapagos Islands.

BALTRA AIRPORT

After the panga ride we went back to the boat for breakfast, to finish packing and to say good bye to our friends from the crew. While having breakfast, we sailed to Baltra Public Pier where we disembarked. Juan came with us to the airport and helped us to go through the checking in procedure. Our group did the last bit of shopping at the kiosks in front of the airport. On time, we departed to Quito. We landed at about 3:00 pm in Mariscal Sucre Airport. We went straight to the Hotel and planned our Christmas Eve Dinner. At the last minute, I realized our target restaurant was not available so, we had dinner at the hotel. We shared some wine and anecdotes from this and other trips. At about 10:30 pm we went to bed for us to be ready tomorrow at 5:30 am for breakfast and our pick up at 6:00 am.

Day 16

Thursday 25th December

Quito, Mercure Hotel

ANTISANA HACIENDA TRIP

The day looked a bit cloudy but it improved when approaching the entrance to the Hacienda. On our way there, at the Inter-Andean mountain forest we saw Giant hummingbird, Black-chested buzzard-eagle, and Black-tailed and Green-tailed trainbearers. At the Bushy Paramo, next to a river we saw a female Ecuadorian hillstar, Bar-winged and Stout-billed cinclodes, and Brown-backed chat-tyrant. Up in the Grassy Paramo, around a swamp, we found Carunculated caracara, Andean lapwing and Andean gull. In a Bushy Paramo area right before the lake, we found Black-winged ground dove. At the lake, besides the eye-catching Andean ruddy duck, we saw Yellow-billed pintail, and the much desired Silvery grebe. When we went to the hacienda for a quick look at the feeders we saw the male of the Ecuadorian hillstar and Aplomado falcon, and then made a start on our journey back to the UK....

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Species Lists

Bold print indicates an endemic species of the Galapagos Islands. (birds and animals)

Mainland bird taxonomy is according to Ridgely and Greenfield, 1998.

Mammal and reptile taxonomy is according to Jackson, 1993.

Fish taxonomy is according to Humann, 1993.

Flowering plant names according to Conley K McMullen, 1999

Birds (N = new for the trip H = heard only d = dead)

	Common name	Scientific name	December																
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
1	Galapagos Penguin	<i>Spheniscus mendiculus</i>					x	x	x	x					x		x		
2	Waved Albatross	<i>Phoebastria exulans</i>				x							x						
3	Galapagos Petrel	<i>Pterodroma phaeopygia</i>			x	x									x	x			
4	Audubon's Shearwater	<i>Puffinus iherminieri</i>		x	x	x			x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		
5	Elliot's Storm-petrel	<i>Oceanites gracilis</i>		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
6	Wedge-rumped Storm-petrel	<i>Oceanodroma tethys</i>		x		x	x			x	x		x			x			
7	Madeiran Storm-petrel	<i>Oceanodroma castro</i>				x			x							x			
8	Red-billed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon aethereus</i>		x	x	x	d		x		x		x	x		x			
9	Magnificent Frigatebird	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
10	Great Frigatebird	<i>Fregata minor</i>		x	x	x		x		x	x					x	x		
11	Blue-footed Booby	<i>Sula nebouxii</i>		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
12	Nazca Booby	<i>Sula granti</i>		x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x		x	x		
13	Red-footed Booby	<i>Sula sula</i>			x														
14	Flightless Cormorant	<i>Nannopterum harrisi</i>														x	x		
15	Brown Pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
16	White-cheeked Pintail	<i>Anas bahamensis</i>			x		x	x	x			x		x	x				
17	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>											x	x					
18	Snowy Egret	<i>Leucophoyx thula</i>			x			x											x
19	Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>					x		x									x	x
20	Great White Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>					x								x	x			
21	Cattle Egret	<i>Bulbulcus ibis</i>					x	x		x	x	x		x					
22	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striatus striatus</i>									x				x	x	x	x	

	Common name	Scientific name	December																
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
23	Lava Heron	<i>Butorides sundevalli</i>					x		x		x		x	x	x	x	x		
24	Yellow-crowned Night-heron	<i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>									x		x	x			x		
25	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>																x	
26	Galapagos Hawk	<i>Buteo galapagoensis</i>				x		x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x		
27	Galapagos Rail	<i>Laterallus galapagoensis</i>											x						
28	Common Gallinule	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>					x						x		x				
29	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>		x			x		x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	
30	Wandering Tattler	<i>Heteroscelus incanum</i>			H	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		
31	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>		x	x		x				x	x	x	x		x	x		
32	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>					x							x		x	x		
33	Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>																x	
34	Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>							x								x		
35	Red (Grey) Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>				x			x		x				x	x			
36	American Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus palliatus</i>			x			x	x	x			x			x	x		
37	Black-necked Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>			x		x	x	x			x		x				x	
38	Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>					x						x		x	x		x	
39	Lava Gull	<i>Larus fuliginosus</i>		x	x							x	x					x	
40	Laughing Gull	<i>Larus atricilla</i>													x	x			
41	Franklin's Gull	<i>Larus pipixcan</i>													x				
42	Swallow-tailed Gull	<i>Larus furcatus</i>		x	x				x		x		x	x					
43	Common Noddy	<i>Anous stolidus</i>		x		x			x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	
44	Galapagos Dove	<i>Zenaida galapagoensis</i>				x			x	x	x	x	x	x			x		
45	Dark-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus melacoryphus</i>											x				x		
46	Smooth-billed Ani	<i>Crotophaga ani</i>				x	x	x		H	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	
47	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus galapagoensis</i>												x					
48	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>												x					
49	Vermillion Flycatcher	<i>Pyrocephalus rubinus</i>						x		x		x							
50	Galapagos Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus magnirostris</i>					x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x		
51	Galapagos Mockingbird	<i>Nesomimus parvulus</i>				x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	
52	Charles Mockingbird	<i>Nesomimus trifasciatus</i>												x					
53	Hood Mockingbird	<i>Nesomimus macdonaldi</i>												x					
54	Chatham Mockingbird	<i>Nesomimus melanotis</i>			x														

	Common name	Scientific name	December																
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
55	Galapagos Martin	<i>Progne modesta</i>						X							X				
56	Large Ground Finch	<i>Geospiza magnirostris</i>					X		X							X	X		
57	Medium Ground Finch	<i>Geospiza fortis</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	
58	Small Ground Finch	<i>Geospiza fuliginosa</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
59	Common Cactus-finch	<i>Geospiza scandens</i>		X			X		X	X	X					X			
60	Large Cactus-finch	<i>Geospiza conirostris</i>											X	X					
61	Vegetarian Finch	<i>Platyspiza crassirostris</i>											X						
62	Large Tree-finch	<i>Camarhynchus psittacula</i>						X					X						
63	Medium Tree-finch	<i>Camarhynchus pauper</i>												X					
64	Small Tree-finch	<i>Camarhynchus parvulus</i>					X					X	X						
65	Woodpecker Finch	<i>Cactospiza pallida</i>						X					H						
66	Warbler Finch	<i>Certhidia olivacea</i>						X		X	X	X	X						
67	Yellow Warbler	<i>Dendroica petechia</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
68	Solitary sandpiper	<i>Tringa solitaria</i>					N												

Reptiles

1	Giant tortoise:	<i>Geochelone elephantopus</i>										X	X		X			
2	Santa Cruz sub-sp	<i>G. e. porteri</i>										X	X					
3	Sierra Negra "	<i>G. e.guntheri</i>					X											
4	Hood/Espanola "	<i>G. e. hoosensis</i>										X						
5	Pinta "	<i>G. e. abingdoni</i>										X						
6	Pinzon "	<i>G. e. ephippium</i>										X						
7	Sanitago "	<i>G. e. darwini</i>										X						
8	Green Sea Turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas agassissi</i>			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
9	Galapagos racer	<i>Alsophis biserialis</i>			X													
10	Striped Galapagos snake	<i>Antillophis steindachneri</i>							X	X								
11	Lava lizard (S. Cristobal)	<i>Microlophus bivittatus</i>			X													
12	Lava lizard (Floreana)	<i>Microlophus grayi</i>												X				
13	Lava lizard (Espanola)	<i>Microlophus delanonis</i>											X					
14	Lava lizard (W & central)	<i>Microlophus albemarlensis</i>		X		X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	
15	Galapagos Land Iguana	<i>Conolophus subcristatus</i>		X					X		X					X		
16	Santa Fe Land Iguana	<i>Conolophus pallidus</i>				X												

	Common name	Scientific name	December																
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
17	Marine iguana:	<i>Amblyrhynchus cristatus</i>																	
18	Fernandina sub-sp	<i>A. c. cristatus</i>																x	
19	Santa Cruz "	<i>A. c. hassi</i>		x		x						x	x		x				
20	Isabela "	<i>A. c. albemarlensis</i>					x	x								x	x		
21	Santiago/S Cristobal	<i>A. c. mertensis</i>			x				x	x								x	
22	Espanola "	<i>A. c. venustissimus</i>												x					

Mammals

1	Galapagos Sea Lion	<i>Zalophus wollebacki</i>		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
2	Galapagos Fur Seal	<i>Arctocephalus galapagoensis</i>										x						x	
3	Bottle-nosed Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>																x	
4	Common Dolphin	<i>Delphinus delphis</i>																x	
5	Orca	<i>Orcinus orca</i>										x							
6	Sei Whale	<i>Balaenoptera borealis</i>																x	
7	Bryde's Whale	<i>Balaenoptera edeni</i>										x							
8	Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>					x												
9	Sante Fe Rice Rat	<i>Oryzomys bauri</i>					x												
10	House mouse	<i>Mus musculus</i>		N															
11	Norwegian rat	<i>Ratus sp</i>			N							x	x						
12	Feral cat	<i>Felis felis</i>							x						x	d			
13	Feral goat	<i>Capris sp</i>			N				d						x				
14	Domestic dog	<i>Canis familiaris</i>							x			x	x		x				
15	Pig								x										
16	Horses								x				x		x				
17	Donkeys								x	d									
18	Mule														x				
19	Black rat														x				
20	Fin Whale	<i>Balenoptera physalus</i>																x	

Fish

1	King Angelfish	<i>Holocanchus passer</i>		x	x					x	x	x		x	x	x			x
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	Common name	Scientific name	December																
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
2	Barberfish	<i>Heniochus nigrirostris</i>							x	x			x						
3	Yellow-tailed Surgeonfish	<i>Prionurus laticlavus</i>			x				x	x	x		x	x	x		x		
4	Moorish Idol	<i>Zanclus cornutus</i>			x														
5	Yellow-finned Tuna	<i>Thunnus albacares</i>														x			
6	Sierra Mackeral (Pacific Sierra)	<i>Scomberomorus sierra</i>				x				x									
7	Wahoo	<i>Acanthocybium solandri</i>																x	
8	Pelican Barracuda	<i>Sphyaena idiaestes</i>																	
9	Dusky Chub	<i>Girella freminvillei</i>														x		?	
10	Blackspot Porgy / Galapagos Seabream	<i>Archosargus pourtalesii</i>					x		x					x				x	
11	Striped mullet	<i>Mugil cephalus</i>																	x
12	Galapagos Mullet	<i>Mugil galapagensis</i>			x	x	x			x		x			x			x	
13	Orange-eyed mullet	<i>Xenomugil thoburni</i>																	
14	Halfbeak	<i>Hyporhampus unifasciatus</i>			x	x								x				x	
15	Yellowtail Grunt	<i>Anisotremus interruptus</i>								x			x						
16	Black-striped Salema	<i>Xenocys jessiae</i>					x		x	x			x	x				x	
17	Blue-striped (Blue-and-gold) Snapper	<i>Lutjanus viridis</i>			x								x	x				x	
18	Jordan's snapper	<i>Lutjanus jordani</i>												?				x	
19	Yellow Snapper	<i>Lutjanus argentiventris</i>																	x
20	Pacific Spotfin Mojarra	<i>Eucinostomus dowii</i>												x					
21	Giant Damselfish	<i>Microspathodon dorsalis</i>							x	x						x		x	
22	Bumphead Damselfish	<i>Microspathodon bairdii</i>																	x
23	White-tailed Damsel	<i>Stegastes leucurus beebei</i>												x	x	x			x
24	Yellow-tailed Damsel	<i>Stegastes arcifrons</i>			x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x
25	Panamic Sergeant Major	<i>Abudefduf troschelii</i>			x		x		x	x			x	x	x				x
26	Camotillo	<i>Paralabrax albomaculatus</i>											x						
27	Bacalao (trout grouper)	<i>Mycteroperca olfax</i>													f				
28	Flag Cabrilla	<i>Epinephelus labriformis</i>							x	x				x					x
29	Grey Threadfin Bass	<i>Cratinus agassizi</i>																	
30	Leather Bass	<i>Dermatolepis dermatolepis</i>																	x
31	Barred Serrano	<i>Serranus fasciatus</i>					x			x					x				x
32	Creole fish	<i>Paranthias colonus</i>							x	x			x	x	x	x			x
33	Bumphead Parrotfish	<i>Scarus perrico</i>								x				x					x

	Common name	Scientific name	December																
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
34	Bluechin Parrotfish	<i>Scarus ghobban</i>			x				x	x			x	x	x		x		
35	Bicolor Parrotfish	<i>Scarus rubroviolaceus</i>							x	x	x		x	x					
36	Azure Parrotfish	<i>Scarus compressus</i>							x										
37	Cortez Rainbow Wrasse	<i>Thalassoma lucasanum</i>			x				x	x			x	x				x	
38	Chameleon Wrasse	<i>Halichoeres dispilus</i>					x											x	
39	Spinster Wrasse	<i>Halichoeres nicholsi</i>											x	x				x	
40	Streamer (Mexican) Hogfish	<i>Bodianus diplotaenia</i>			x				x	x			x	x	x			x	
41	Goldspot Sheepshead	<i>Pimelometopon darwini</i>																x	
42	Large Banded Blenny	<i>Ophioblennius steindachneri</i>							x	x								x	
43	Four-eyed blenny	<i>Dialommus fuscus</i>																x	
44	Bravo Clinid (Checkspot labrisomid)	<i>Labrisomus dendriticus</i>												x				?	
45	Leopard Flounder	<i>Bothus leopardinus</i>																x	
46	Hieroglyphic Hawkfish	<i>Cirrhitus rivulatus</i>			x					x			x	x				x	
47	White-spot (Brown) Chromis	<i>Chromis atrilobata</i>							x	x								x	
48	Bullseye (Concentric) Puffer	<i>Sphoeroides annulatus</i>		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
49	Balloonfish	<i>Diodon holocanthus</i>					x						x	x	x			x	
50	Yellow-spotted burrfish	<i>Cylichthys spilostylus</i>					x												
51	Pacific Boxfish	<i>Ostracion meleagris</i>																x	
52	Yellow-bellied Triggerfish	<i>Sufflamen verres</i>			x				x	x			x	x				x	
53	Finscale triggerfish	<i>Balistespolyepsis</i>											x						
54	Pacific Beakfish	<i>Oplegnathus insignis</i>														x			
55	Trumpetfish	<i>Aulostomus chinensis</i>								x									
56	Cornetfish	<i>Fistularia commersonii</i>								x			x						
57	Tiger snake eel	<i>Myrichthys tigrinus</i>																x	
58	Galapagos Shark	<i>Carcharhinus galapagensis</i>											x						
59	White-tipped Reef Shark	<i>Triaenodon obesus</i>					x		x	x						x		x	
60	Scalloped hammerhead	<i>Sphyrna lewini</i>			x				x										
61	Marbled (Black-blotched) Ray	<i>Taeniura meyeri</i>							x	?					x			x	
62	Diamond (Whiptail) Stingray	<i>Dasyatis brevis</i>			x		x			x			x	x	x			x	
63	Golden Cowray	<i>Rhinoptera steindachneri</i>					x						x						
64	Eagle Ray	<i>Aetobatus narinari</i>						x		x									
65	Manta Ray	<i>Taenioconger klausewitzii</i>				x			x	x	x					x			

	Common name	Scientific name	December																
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
66	Scissortail chromis	<i>Chromis atrilobata</i>			N														
67	Rainbow runner	<i>Elagatis bipinnulata</i>				N													
68	Spotfin Burrfish	<i>Chilomycterus reticulatus</i>					N										x		
69	Pink cardinalfish	<i>Apogon pacifici</i>							N	N			x				x		
70	Yellowtail mullet	<i>Mugil rammelsbergi</i>						N		N		x			x	x			
71	Galapagos snake eel	<i>Quassiremus evionthas</i>								N									
72	Surge wrass	<i>Thalassoma purpureum</i>												N					
73	Chameleon (Throatspotted) Clinid	<i>Malacoctenus tetranemus</i>														x	x	x	
74	Striped lizardfish	<i>Synodus sp</i>														x			
75	Pacific seahorse	<i>Hippocampus ingens</i>														x			
76	Convict Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus triostegus</i>																N	
77	Mojarra grunt	<i>Haemulon scudderii</i>																N	
78	Pacific mutton hamlet	<i>Alphestes immaculatus</i>																N	
79	Black wrasse	<i>Halichoeres adustus</i>																N	

Land Invertebrates

1	Galapagos Carpenter Bee	<i>Xylocopa darwinii</i>		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x
2	Dragonflies	(Several genera, 8 species)			x	x	x	x	x			x				x	x	x
3	Spotwinged glider	<i>Pantala hymenaea</i>					x											
4	Galapagos Sulphur Butterfly	<i>Phoebis sennae</i>						x	x	x								x
5	Monarch Butterfly	<i>Danaus plexippus</i>						x				x						
6	Galapagos Blue Butterfly	<i>Leptodes parrhasiodes</i>			x		x				x							
7	Painted Locust	<i>Schistocerca melanocera</i>				x	x	x	x	x	x					x	x	x
8	Small painted locust	<i>Schistocerca literosa</i>																x
9	Spotless ladybird	<i>Cylonedra sanguinea</i>					x	x	x			x				x	x	
10	Star Spider (Crab spider)	<i>Gasteracantha servillei</i>					x					x						
11	Silver argiope	<i>Argiope argentata</i>					x				x	x						
12	Centipede	<i>Scolopendra galapagensis</i>						x				x						
13	Galapagos green eyed horsefly	<i>Tabanus vittiger</i>			x	x			x									
14	Orange tipped moth							x										
15	Lava grasshopper							x										
16	Crimson speckled footman moth	<i>Utethesia ornatrix</i>						x				x						

	Common name	Scientific name	December																
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
17	One milimeter ladybird										N								
18	Zig-zag spider	<i>Neoscona cooksoni</i>											N						
19	8 mm green spider												N						
20	Giant huntsman	<i>Heteropoda venatoria</i>											N						
21	Green long-antenna grasshoper												N						
22	Turquoise bodied fly												N						
23	Galapagos mantis	<i>Mantis sp.</i>																	
24	Land snail (Several species)				x														
25	Yellow paper wasp	<i>Polistes versicolor</i>					x	x	x		x	x			x	x	x		

Marine Invertebrates

1	Pencil-spined Urchin	<i>Eucidaris thouarsii</i>			x	x	x		x	x			x		x	x	x		
2	White Urchin	<i>Tripneustes depressus</i>															x		
3	Crowned Sea Urchin	<i>Centrostephanus coronatus</i>																	
4	Green Sea Urchin	<i>Lytechinus semituberculatus</i>			x		x		x	x			x		x	x	x		
5	Panamic Cushion Star	<i>Pentaceraster cumingi</i>								x							x		
6	Pyramid Sea Star	<i>Pharia pyramidata</i>								x									
7	Blue Sea Star	<i>Phataria unifascialis</i>								x									
8	Chocolate-chip Star	<i>Nidorellia armata</i>								x							x		
9	Sea Cucumber	<i>Stichopus fuscus</i>													x				
10	Sea Cucumber	<i>Holothuria atra</i>					x												
11	Sea Cucumber	<i>Holothuria kefersteini</i>					x											x	
12	Sally Lightfoot Crab	<i>Grapsus grapsus</i>		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		
13	Ghost Crab	<i>Ocypode sp.</i>			x		x		x	x						x	x		
14	Semi-terrestrial hermit crab	<i>Coenobita compressus</i>			x					x			x			x			
15	Orange-tipped Hermit Crab	<i>Calcinus explorator</i>							x				x			x			
16	Galapagos Fiddler Crab	<i>Uca galapagensis</i>																	
17	Heller's Fiddler Crab	<i>Uca helleri</i>							x										
18	Ocean skater	<i>Halobates robustus</i>					x								x				
19	Anemone	(many species)								x			x						
20	Carved chiton	<i>Chiton sulcatus</i>															x		
21	Common fireworm	<i>Eurythoe complanata</i>																	

	Common name	Scientific name	December																
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
22	Sand-dollar					N												x	
23	Sea Cucumber	<i>Holothuria theeli</i>						N											
24	Hatpin Urchin	<i>Diadema mexicanum</i>											x			x		x	
25	Rounded Jellyfish															x			
26	Spiny sand star	<i>Astropecten armatus</i>																N	
27	African Box crab	<i>Calappa af. Africana</i>																N	
28	Giant pacific conch																	N	

PLANTS (Native species only)

Coastal, Arid & Transitional lowland zones (NB some species also occur in humid upland zones)

1	Galapagos acacia	<i>Acacia rorudiana</i>										x	x				x	x	
2	Spiny-headed chaff flower	<i>Alternanthera echinocephala</i>										x	x		x		x		
3	Thread-leaved chaff flower	<i>Alternanthera filifolia</i>											x			x		x	
4	Galapagos three-awn grass	<i>Aristida subspicata</i>																	x
5	Black Mangrove	<i>Avicenna germinans</i>			x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x		x		
6	Blechum	<i>Blechum pyramidatum</i>											x						
7	Lava cactus	<i>Brachycereus nesioticus</i>								x						x	x	x	
8	Palo Santo (holy pole)	<i>Bursera graveolens</i>		x	x	x			x	x		x				x	x	x	
9	Palo Santo	<i>Bursera malcophilla</i>									x								
10	Galapagos Shore Petunia	<i>Cacabus miersi</i>				x	x												x
11	Bitterbush	<i>Castela galapaeia</i>			x				x										x
12	Spurred Chamaesyce	<i>Chamaesyce viminea</i>														x		x	
13	Chamaesyce	<i>Chamaesyce amplexicaulis</i>								x									x
14	Silk cotton tree	<i>Ceiba pentandra</i>							N										
15	Wartclub	<i>Commicarpus tuberosus</i>						x		x									
16	Button Mangrove	<i>Conocarpus erectus</i>						x											
17	Muyuyo (Yellow cordia)	<i>Cordia lutea</i>			x	x	x											x	x
18	Revolute-leafed cordia	<i>Cordia revoluta</i>															x		
19	Cordia	<i>Cordia leucophyctis</i>						x											
20	Glory bower	<i>Clerodendrum molle</i>						x				x	x		x				
21	Galapagos Croton	<i>Croton scouleri</i>			x	x	x		x					x					
22	Saltbush	<i>Cryptocarpus pyriformis</i>			x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	

	Common name	Scientific name	December																
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
23	Galapagos (Anderson's) Sedge	<i>Cyperus anderssonii</i>							x										
24	Sedge species	<i>Cyperus sp</i>													x				
25	Galápagos cotton	<i>Gossypium barbadense</i>										x							
26	Darwin's cotton	<i>Gossypium darwinii</i>				x	x	x	x					x		x	x		
27	Heliotrope (scorpionweed)	<i>Heliotropium angiospermum</i>					x										x		
28	Seaside Heliotrope	<i>Heliotropium curassavicum</i>			x				x				x	x					
29	Manzanillo (poison apple)	<i>Hippomane mancinella</i>					x								x	x	x		
30	Lava morning glory	<i>Ipomoea habeliana</i>						x											
31	Beach morning glory	<i>Ipomoea pes-caprae.</i>										x	x					x	
32	Blue morning glory	<i>Ipomoea nil</i>						N											
33	Candelabra cactus	<i>Jasminocereus thouarsii</i>			x	x	x		x					x	x			x	
34	Galapagos lantana	<i>Lantana peduncularis</i>					x											x	
35	White Mangrove	<i>Laguncularia racemosa</i>			x		x		x			x			x			x	
36	Wing-fruited lecocarpus	<i>Lecocarpus pinnatifidus</i>													x				
37	Narrow-leaved lippia	<i>Lippia rosmarinifolia</i>														x			
38	Galapagos Lycium	<i>Lycium minimum</i>											x						
39	Galápagos tomato	<i>Lycopersicon cheesmanii</i>							x										x
40	Macraea Galapagos Rosemary	<i>Macraea laricifolia</i>					x								x				
41	Leather leaf	<i>Maytenus octogona</i>		x			x		x	x						x			x
42	Mollugo	<i>Mollugo flavescens subsp gracilina</i>														x			
43	Crocker's Mollugo	<i>Mollugo crockeri</i>								x									
44	Bitter melon	<i>Mormordica charantia</i>										x	x						
45	Hairy merramia	<i>Merramia aegyptica</i>																x	
46	Club Leaf	<i>Nolana galapagensis</i>			x		x								x				
47	Balsa Tree	<i>Ochroma pyramidale</i>							N										
48	Prickly pear cactus	<i>Opuntia echios</i>														x	x	x	
49	Prickly pear cactus	<i>Opuntia echios var echios</i>		x					x										
50	Prickly pear cactus	<i>Opuntia echios var barringtonensis</i>				x													
51	North Seymour Prickly pear cactus	<i>Opuntia echios var zacana</i>											x						
52	Prickly pear cactus	<i>Opuntia galapageia</i>									x								
53	Prickly pear cactus	<i>Opuntia helleri</i>			?														
54	Prickly pear cactus	<i>Opuntia insularis</i>					x												

	Common name	Scientific name	December																
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
55	Prickly pear cactus	<i>Opuntia megasperma</i>												X					
56	Prickly pear cactus	<i>Opuntia galapageia</i> var. <i>profusa</i>								X									
57	Palo verde	<i>Parkinsonia aculeata</i>			X		X		X					X					
58	Passion flower	<i>Passiflora foetida</i>					X					X		X					
59	Pectis	<i>Pectis tenuifolia</i>														X			
60	Galapagos Bean	<i>Phaseolus mollis</i>											X						
61	Galápagos mistletoe	<i>Phoradendron henslovii</i>					X							X					
62	Ground cherry	<i>Physalis angulata</i>																	
63	Ground cherry	<i>Physalis pubescens</i>					X										X	X	
64	Ground cherry	<i>Physalis</i> sp					X												
65	Matazarno	<i>Piscidia carthagenensis</i>											X						
66	Leadwort	<i>Plumbago scandens</i>					X						X						
67	St George's milkwort	<i>Polygala sancti-georgii</i>			X													X	
68	Mesquite	<i>Prosopis juliflora</i>							X					X		X			
69	Galapagos guava	<i>Psidium galapageium</i>											X	X					
70	Guava	<i>Psidium guajaba</i>							N										
71	Red Mangrove	<i>Rhizophora mangle</i>			X		X						X			X	X	X	
72	Common purslane	<i>Portulaca oleracea</i>											X						
73	Galapagos sarcostema	<i>Sarcostemma angustissimum</i>														X		X	
74	Radiate-headed Scalesia	<i>Scalesia affinis</i>					X									X			
75	Heller's (Santa Fe) Scalesia	<i>Scalesia hellerii</i>					X												
76	Cut-leafed Scalesia	<i>Scalesia incisa</i>			X														
77	Stewart's Scalesia	<i>Scalesia stewartii</i>																X	
78	Long-haired Scalesia	<i>Scalesia villosa</i>												X					
79	Inkberry / Sea grape	<i>Scaveola plumieri</i>			X														
80	Thorn shrub	<i>Scutia spicata</i> var. <i>pauciflora</i>					X												
81	Galapagos carpetweed	<i>Sesuvium edmonstonei</i>		X								X		X					
82	Common carpetweed	<i>Sesuvium portulacastrum</i>		X	X		X		X		X			X					
83	Beach dropseed	<i>Sporobolus virginicus</i>			X		X						X				X		
84	Grey Mat Plant	<i>Tiquilia galapagoa</i>																X	
85	Grey Mat Plant	<i>Tiquilia nesiotica</i>		X	X		X		X	X									
86	White-haired Tournefortia	<i>Tournefortia pubescens</i>												X					

	Common name	Scientific name	December																
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
87	Smooth stemmed tournefortia	<i>Tournefortia psilostacya</i>											x			x			
88	Trema	<i>Trema micrantha</i>					x									x			
89	Trianthena	<i>Trianthena portulacastrum</i>																	
90	Punctureweed (Caltrop)	<i>Tribulus cistoides</i>		x			x			x							x		
91	Punctureweed	<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>																	
92	Pearl berry	<i>Vallesia glabra</i>							x				x						
93	Velvet shrub	<i>Waltheria ovata</i>			x	x	x		x	x	x					x	x		
94	Prickly caesalpinia	<i>Caesalpinia bonduc</i>					N												
95	Glory bower	<i>Chlorodendron molle</i>					N												
96	Milkberry	<i>Chicocca alba</i>					N						x						
97	Air plant	<i>Kalanchoe pinnata</i>						N					x						
98	Chinese hat chamaesyce	<i>Chamaesyce punctulata</i>							N										
99	Saltwort	<i>Batis maritima</i>							N				N						
100	Morning glory	<i>Ipomoea linearifolia</i>								N									

Plants - Humid upland zones

1	Dayflower	<i>Commelina diffusa</i>						x					x					
2	Thin-leaved aster	<i>Darwiniothamnus tenuifolius</i>						x										
3	Hand fern	<i>Doryopteris pedata</i>						x										
4	Button weed	<i>Diodia radula</i>						x										
5	Buttonhole orchid	<i>Epidendrum spicatum</i>						x										
6	Quinine	<i>Cinchona succirubra</i>						x										
7	False loosestrife	<i>Ludwigia leptocarpa</i>											N					
8	Yellow star grass	<i>Hypoxis decumbens</i>						x										
9	Clubmoss	<i>Lycopodium cernuum</i>						x					x					
10	Huperzia	<i>Huperzia sp.</i>							N									
11	Miconia	<i>Miconia robinsoniana</i>																
12	Colinvaux's passion flower	<i>Passiflora colinvauxii</i>											x					
13	Galapagos peperomia	<i>Peperomia galapagoensis</i>											x		x			
14	Knotweed	<i>Polygonum opelousanum</i>																
15	White wild coffee	<i>Psychotria rufipes</i>											x					
16	Bracken fern	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>							x									

	Common name	Scientific name	December																
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
17	Carolina Leaf flower	<i>Phyllanthus caroliniensis</i>										N							
18	Scalesia "Daisy Tree"	<i>Scalesia pedunculata</i>										x		x					
19	Wild Cowpea	<i>Vigna luteola</i>							x										
20	Cat's Claw	<i>Zanthoxylum fagara</i>										x							
21	Purple cuphea	<i>Cuphea sp</i>							N										
22	Common plantago	<i>Plantago major</i>							N			x							
23	White sisyrinchium	<i>Sisyrinchium macrocephalum</i>							N										
24	Galapagos justicia	<i>Justicia galapagana</i>										N							
25	Ageratum	<i>Ageratum conyzoides</i>										N							
26	Fringed orchid	<i>Habbenaria monorrhiza</i>							N										
27	Bird pepper	<i>Capsicum frutescens</i>										N							
28	Glossy nightshade	<i>Solanum americanum</i>										N							
29	Galapagos jaegeria	<i>Jaegeria gracilis</i>										N							
30	Galapagos pilea	<i>Pilea baurii</i>										N							
31	Brazilian tea	<i>Stachytarpheta cayennensis</i>												N					
32	White valerian	<i>Astrephia chaerophylloides</i>																	
33	Galapagos dead nettle	<i>Pilea baurii</i>										N		N					
34	Bromeliad	<i>Racinea insularis</i>										N		N					
35	Bermuda grass	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>																	

Quito/Cotapaxi/Otavalo

1	Andean Teal	<i>Anas andium</i>																	x
2	Yellow-billed Pintail	<i>Anas spinipectus</i>																	x
3	Black Vulture	<i>Coragyps atratus</i>	x																x
4	Black-chested buzzard-eagle	<i>Geranoaetus melanoleucus</i>																	x
5	Carunculated Caracara	<i>Phalacrocorax carunculatus</i>																	x
6	American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>	x																x
7	Aplomado Falcon	<i>Falco femoralis</i>																	x
8	Andean Coot	<i>Focha andina</i>																	x
9	Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>																	x
10	Andean Lapwing	<i>Vanellus resplendens</i>																	x
11	Andean Gull	<i>Larus serranus</i>																	x

	Common name	Scientific name	December																
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
12	Eared Dove	<i>Zenaida auriculata</i>	x															x	
13	White-collared Swift	<i>Streptoprocne zonaris</i>																x	
14	Sparkling Violet-ear	<i>Colibri coruscans</i>	x																
15	Ecuadorian Hillstar	<i>Oreotrochilus chimborazo</i>																x	
16	Black-tailed Trainbearer	<i>Lesbia victoriae</i>	x															x	
17	Green-tailed Trainbearer	<i>Lesbia nuna</i>																x	
18	Tyrian Metaltail	<i>Metallura tyrianthina</i>																	
19	Stout-billed Cinclodes	<i>Cinclodes excelsior</i>																x	
20	Bar-winged Cinclodes	<i>Cinclodes fuscus</i>																x	
21	Brown-backed Chat-tyrant	<i>Ochthoeca fumicolor</i>																x	
22	Great Thrush	<i>Turdus fuscater</i>	x															x	
23	Brown-bellied Swallow	<i>Notiochelidon murina</i>																x	
24	Blue and White Swallow	<i>Notiochelidon cyanoleuca</i>																x	
25	Black Flower-piercer	<i>Diglossa humeralis</i>																x	
26	Plumbeous Sierra-finch	<i>Phrygilus unicolor</i>																x	
27	Rufous-collared Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia capensis</i>	x															x	
28	Spectacle whitestart	<i>Myioborus melanocephalus</i>																N	
29	Andean ruddy-duck	<i>Oxyura ferruginea</i>																N	
30	Silvery greebe	<i>Podiceps occipitalis</i>																N	
31	Black-winged ground dove	<i>Metriopelia melanoptera</i>																N	

Mammals (Quito area)

1	Brazilian (Common) rabbit	<i>Sylvilagus brasiliensis</i>																N
2	White-tailed deer	<i>Odocoileus peruvianus</i>																N

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We are delighted to launch the Naturetrek Facebook page so that participants of Naturetrek tours can remain in touch after the holiday and share photos, comments and future travel plans. Setting up a personal profile at www.facebook.com is quick, free and easy. The [Naturetrek Facebook page](#) is now live; do please pay us a visit!