



Field Guides Tour Report

GALAPAGOS: An Intimate Visit to Darwin's Islands

Jul 7, 2012 to Jul 17, 2012
Megan Crewe with Peter Freire

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The scattered islands of the Galapagos have been considered enchanted for centuries -- first by the whalers and pirates who used them for shelter and succor (while at the same time struggling with the sometimes treacherous currents surrounding them) and more recently by the bands of happy ecotourists who flock to the archipelago. And their appeal is certainly undeniable: on each of the islands we visited -- North Seymour, Floreana, Isabela, Fernandina, Santa Cruz, Espanola, San Cristobal and Genovesa -- we got encountered wildlife that was almost magically tame. With the exception of the critically endangered Mangrove Finch (limited now to a single location on Isabela which was off-limits during our tour), we had superb up-close-and-personal visits with all of the archipelago's bird endemics, and a fine mix of its special reptiles, butterflies and flora as well.

Among the chief highlights of a visit to the Galapagos are "Darwin's Finches", the quintessential "Little Brown Jobs" now known to be closely related to the plain, dark grassquits of Central and South America and the Caribbean. These unassuming little birds, which show subtle (and not so subtle) differences in bill size and shape, have evolved over the millenia since their distant ancestor first reached the archipelago, radiating to fill all the niches available on the islands. Some, like the omnipresent Small Ground Finches, were practically everywhere, swarming over beaches and through arid vegetation. Others, like the Medium Tree Finch, are restricted to single islands (in this case, Floreana). As a group, they proved remarkably cooperative. A Woodpecker Finch patiently peeled bark off twigs, stripping away a fat, white grub's defenses. A Vegetarian Finch nibbled leaves. A Large Ground Finch delicately cracked tiny seeds in his massive beak, standing practically on our boot tips after playing hard to get for most of the tour. Warbler-finches thronged over rocks and bushes, looking remarkably like their namesakes as they gleaned for insects.

Of course, finches weren't the only landbirds that we saw well. Handsome Galapagos Doves trundled along path edges. An adult Floreana Mockingbird bounced along a rocky shelf, its begging youngster trailing loudly behind. A gold-spangled Short-eared Owl stood on the bloody remains of a Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel, mere feet from the path we stood on. A bright male Vermilion Flycatcher lurked in tangled greenery, his color giving him away. A tiny Galapagos Rail crept through thick undergrowth, occasionally peeping out for a look around. Espanola Mockingbirds rummaged in the sand at our feet. A screaming pair of Galapagos Hawks mated in one of the few big trees on Fernandina -- and then the male flew past carrying a succession of sticks for an out-of-sight nest.

But the real stars of the show were the seabirds. Waved Albatrosses bowed and called and clattered their bills together, or waddled across the grassy flats of Espanola to fling themselves from the cliffs, becoming spectacularly graceful once airborne. Blue-footed Boobies grunted and whistled and lifted their dazzling toes to each other in solemn courtship displays. Male Great and Magnificent frigatebirds ballooned their red throat sacs, fishing for passing females. Red-billed Tropicbirds winged past in noisy gangs, or quarreled on rocky ledges. Endearingly stumpy Galapagos Penguins snoozed beside Marine Iguanas. Flightless Cormorants panted on seaweed nests or stood spread-eagled (wings? what wings?) on the shore. Elliot's Storm-petrels danced over the water around our boat, and a whirling mass of Wedge-rumped Storm-petrels surrounded us on Genovesa. Galapagos Shearwaters pattered over boiling seas full of bait fish and Galapagos Petrels traced arcing flights against the horizon. Swallow-tailed Gulls, surely among the world's handsomest gulls, blinked from nest sites with their huge-eyed, ghostly youngsters at their sides.

It wasn't all birds, of course. Who will soon forget the massive bulk of the Galapagos Tortoises, like huge walking boulders, dotted along the paths of several islands? Or the sprawling heaps of Marine Iguanas, periodically blowing gouts of salty water from their nostrils? Or the golden-brown Land Iguanas dozing on sandy beaches? Or the massive pod of Bottlenose Dolphins leaping joyfully on our bow wave? Or the whip-fast Galapagos Sea Lions, playing chicken with the snorkelers?

Thanks to all of you for sharing the adventure. I hope to see you again someday, somewhere! -- Megan

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant



*Blue footed Boobies danced on many islands, solemnly showing their outrageously bright toes to all and sundry.
Photo by Megan Crewe.*

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL (GALAPAGOS) (*Anas bahamensis galapagensis*) – A flock of seven dropped into one of the brackish lagoons near the coast at Punta Moreno (Isabela), showing nicely for few moments before disappearing behind the flamingoes. But our best views came at Rancho Promicias, where a trio paddled around in one of the little ponds.

Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos)

AMERICAN FLAMINGO (*Phoenicopus ruber*) – A trio snoozed behind a little island in one of the brackish lagoons at Punta Moreno, and a quartet stood in the brackish pond near the start of the Dragon's Hill trail on Santa Cruz.

Spheniscidae (Penguins)

GALAPAGOS PENGUIN (*Spheniscus mendiculus*) – From our first (a trio squatting on the rocks in a little bay on Floreana) to our last (a pair with a sizeable but still fluffy chick in Tagus Cove), we enjoyed every sighting of these endearing birds. Particularly fun for some of the snorkelers was one bird zooming around underwater, in pursuit of some speedy small fish. [E]

Diomedidae (Albatrosses)

WAVED ALBATROSS (*Phoebastria irrorata*) – Fantastic views of scores, dotting the "plains" of Espanola -- where virtually all of the world's Waved Albatrosses breed. We saw them snoozing on nests, waddling across the grassy openings, whacking bills against each other in greeting and courting ceremonies, nuzzling chicks, throwing themselves off cliffs, and gliding past in graceful, soaring flight.

Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

GALAPAGOS PETREL (*Pterodroma phaeopygia*) – Seen regularly from the boat during our "high seas" crossings, including some that were satisfyingly close. This is a critically endangered species.

GALAPAGOS SHEARWATER (*Puffinus subalaris*) – Hundreds (thousands?) cruised past, flying low over the water on stiffly held wings, and many others floated in groups on the sea in various places. Particularly impressive were the masses flinging themselves into the roiling bait ball in the Bolivar Channel, chasing the little fish being driven to the surface by larger predatory fish.

Hydrobatidae (Storm-Petrels)

ELLIOT'S STORM-PETREL (*Oceanites gracilis galapagoensis*) – Scores danced on the water around our boat throughout the tour, including a big swirling swarm around the boat when Pescadito dumped the chicken scraps before we started on our long journey around the north end of Isabela.

LEACH'S STORM-PETREL (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*) – A single bird made a few passes around the boat as we sailed from Espanola to San Cristobal, showing its bouyant flight and dark central tail feathers.

BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETREL (*Oceanodroma castro*) – Best seen on our final sea crossing (from Genovesa back to Santa Cruz), where we had a handful pass close to the boat, with other individuals on scattered days throughout.

WEDGE-RUMPED STORM-PETREL (*Oceanodroma tethys tethys*) – Once we had our eye in, everybody could easily pick these out from the mobs of storm-petrels that often followed the boat. But our best views came on Genovesa, where we stood in a swirling "snow globe" full of storm-petrels, watching as they zoomed past en route to or from their nests.

MARKHAM'S STORM-PETREL (*Oceanodroma markhami*) – Fine views of one, looking big, dark and fork-tailed as it swept back and forth in front of the boat, seen as we sailed from Genovesa towards Santa Cruz.

Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds)

RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD (*Phaethon aethereus mesonauta*) – Relatively common around several of the islands, with particularly nice views of nesting birds in cracks and crevices along Darwin's Bay on Genovesa. We watched several get mugged by passing frigatebirds, including one who had its whole back end grabbed and vigorously shaken by one menacing thug.

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata magnificens*) – Hundreds. Thousands! Seen every day, on every island, in virtually every imaginable plumage -- from downy chick through to adulthood. Despite the book's assertions, this is by far the more common species seen.

GREAT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata minor ridgwayi*) – Wonderful comparisons with the previous species on North Seymour, including several sleepy females brooding young chicks and many males with their blood red pouches at full inflation. We saw many others on Genovesa.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

NAZCA BOOBY (*Sula granti*) – Seen on most days, with especially nice up-close studies of nesting birds on Espanola and Genovesa. This was formerly considered to be a subspecies of the Masked Booby.

BLUE-FOOTED BOOBY (*Sula nebouxii excisa*) – Seen daily, including dozens and dozens beside the path (and sometimes literally right IN the path) on North Seymour, with many sheltering tiny chicks and/or eggs in the shade of their bodies, and others solemnly showing their Technicolor feet to each other. This one was voted "Favorite Bird of the Trip" at the tour's end.

RED-FOOTED BOOBY (EASTERN PACIFIC) (*Sula sula websteri*) – Best seen on Genovesa, where dozens perched in trees or snoozed on stick nests all across the island. We had good views of both color morphs, plus more than a few fluffy babies.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

FLIGHTLESS CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax harrisi*) – Regular around Isabela and Fernandina, including one panting on a seaweed nest near Punta Morena, several drying their stumpy wings along the shores and a few hunting the waters of the Bolivar Channel. We even had one that spent a few moments preening on the step at the back of the Nemo II; it stayed until everyone scrambled on to the back deck with their cameras! [E]

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

BROWN PELICAN (*Pelecanus occidentalis urinator*) – Daily, including one resting on the bowsprit one morning, dozens snoozing on rocks along every coastline and small lines of them flapping ponderously past in the Itabaca Channel.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias cognata*) – A couple along the shoreline near Floreana harbor -- including one standing on the tin roof of one of the only two story buildings -- with others hunting the shorelines of Fernandina and Santa Cruz.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – A few seen, as usual, in the grassy strips along the runways of the Guayaquil airport. More unexpected were the pair we saw in flight on Santa Cruz when we walked the trail at Bahia Ballena one afternoon.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Found across the islands, including a few hovering under the feet of a group of cows on Santa Cruz, a big mob roosting in mangroves along the edge of Floreana, and one poor doomed bird that flapped along beside our boat as we headed south from Genovesa, dropping lower and lower over the waves as the sun set.

STRIATED HERON (GALAPAGOS) (*Butorides striata sundevalli*) – See all but one day, including one that scurried across the lava rocks on North Seymour, its crest raised as it followed a fleeing Galapagos Lava Lizard. Formerly considered to be a separate endemic species, the "Lava Heron" has now been lumped back into the Striated Heron as an endemic subspecies. [E]

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea pauper*) – Great views of one ripping a hapless Sally Lightfoot Crab to bits near the jetty at Punta Suarez on Espanola. We saw others along the base of the cliffs in Darwin's Bay on Genovesa. This subspecies, which is endemic to the Galapagos Islands, is considerably darker than mainland forms.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – Steve and Roy spotted three circling over the Guayaquil airport as we headed back to Quito at the end of the tour.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

GALAPAGOS HAWK (*Buteo galapagoensis*) – Our best views came at Punta Espinosa (Fernandina) when we found a big female perched in a big tree during our late afternoon walk. While we ogled, her mate flew in for a bit of noisy, x-rated action -- and then flew off to gather some sticks for a nest he was building out of sight somewhere. We spotted a couple in flight near Playa Urbina (Isabela) and another pair perched near the albatross colony on Espanola. [E]

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

GALAPAGOS RAIL (*Laterallus spilonotus*) – Those who braved the slimy, muddy trail up to the highlands of Santa Cruz were rewarded with brief glimpses of this furtive species as it wove its way through the tangled undergrowth. This tiny rail isn't much bigger than some of the Galapagos finches! [E]

PAINT-BILLED CRAKE (*Neocrex erythrops*) – A pair on Floreana played a bit hard to get to start with, but eventually cooperated marvelously, walking slowly across a clearing near the tortoise feeding area. One eventually climbed four feet up into a tree (!) while the other called quietly from nearby bushes.

COMMON GALLINULE (*Gallinula galeata*) – Common on the brackish lagoons at Punta Moreno, with a few others on one of the ponds at Rancho Promicias.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – A couple, already in the drab winter plumage, hunted the chartreuse tide pools along the northern fringe of Fernandina.

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – A trio rested, tucked into hiding places, on the northern end of Fernandina -- good spotting, Roy! These were the vanguard of the birds that will overwinter throughout the islands in the coming months.

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus palliatus galapagensis*) – Scattered individuals and pairs on the shorelines of several islands, always in rocky areas. This subspecies is endemic to the Galapagos.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – A handful strode on their long pink legs around several brackish ponds near the start of the trail at Dragon's Hill.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

WANDERING TATTLER (*Tringa incana*) – At least two different birds hunted along the edges of the algae-covered rocks at the north end of Fernandina, and most of the group saw another at Punta Suarez.

WHIMBREL (AMERICAN) (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*) – Single birds flew past or hunted along the shorelines as we walked on Isabela, Fernandina and Santa Cruz.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – Small numbers seen gleaning along the rocky coasts -- sometimes right in among the sea lions -- on several islands.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

SWALLOW-TAILED GULL (*Creagrus furcatus*) – Very common on Daphne Major, North Seymour and Genovesa, including a fair number of half-grown youngsters waiting patiently for mom or dad to bring back a belly full of fish and a pair perched precariously "double-decker" on a windy afternoon, seen as we waited for our panga.

LAVA GULL (*Leucophaeus fuliginosus*) – Three different birds drifted past as we walked the trail on North Seymour, another did the same at Playa Urbina, and one near Santa Cruz spent several minutes sitting on the boat's railings. This is one of the world's rarest gulls, with numbers estimated to be as low as 200 pairs. [E]

BROWN NODDY (*Anous stolidus galapagensis*) – Common throughout, with especially lovely views of several pairs hunting right near the harbor pier on Baltra, seen while we waited for our boat to pick us up when we arrived on the islands. We also saw a huge boiling mass of them swirling over the water (and -- presumably -- a bait ball) as we motored towards North Seymour.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – A few seen in Quito, between the airport and our hotel, as we returned from the islands at the end of the tour. [I]

GALAPAGOS DOVE (*Zenaida galapagoensis*) – Common throughout, with especially nice views of one mooching at edge of a little cliff along the

path up to Lake Darwin on Isabela (not far from where the Galapagos Sea Lion with the runny nose was guarding the path), and of others foraging near the paths on North Seymour, Espanola and Genovesa. [E]

EARED DOVE (*Zenaida auriculata*) – A couple poked along the base of a metal fence at the Quito airport, looking for tidbits.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

DARK-BILLED CUCKOO (*Coccyzus melacoryphus*) – One buried deep in a bush at Playa Urbina was a testament to Peter's spotting skills; fortunately, we saw others out in the open, including one beside pools at the start of the Dragon's Hill track, and one sharing a trackside tree with some tree-finches at Bahia Ballena.

SMOOTH-BILLED ANI (*Crotophaga ani*) – Sadly, common throughout the archipelago. This species was introduced to Santa Cruz some 30 years ago in an effort to control ticks, and has colonized many other islands since. It is a major predator on eggs and nestlings, and has contributed to the sharp decline of several of the Galapagos finches and the Vermilion Flycatcher. [I]

Strigidae (Owls)

SHORT-EARED OWL (GALAPAGOS) (*Asio flammeus galapagoensis*) – Fantastic views of several birds hunting along the fringes of the Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel colony on Genovesa, including one resting on a rock in one large crevice and a second -- with a bloody carcass clutched in one foot -- along the path.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

VERMILION FLYCATCHER (GALAPAGOS) (*Pyrocephalus rubinus nanus*) – A male hunting low in the daisy forest around the sinkholes at Los Gemelos was a surprise; the species has become very rare on Santa Cruz. Curt and Jackie spotted another one, even closer, as our bus pulled out of the parking lot there.

GALAPAGOS FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus magnirostris*) – Seen very well on several islands, including one on the luggage rack atop our "chicken truck" on Floreana, another hunting with the tree-finches along the trail at Bahia Ballena, and more along the track we walked on San Cristobal. [E]

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

GALAPAGOS MARTIN (*Progne modesta*) – Our best views came near the brackish lagoons at Punta Moreno, where a quartet flew back and forth, chasing dragonflies and occasionally dropping down to the water for a drink or an on-the-wing bath. We also saw at least three birds as they coursed back and forth along the ridgeline at the top of Daphne Major on our first afternoon. [E]

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

GALAPAGOS MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus parvulus*) – Nice views on many of the islands, with particularly good studies of one checking out Ann's shoes on Fernandina, and of several along the trail at Playa Urbina, including one checking out some tortoise poop for any tidbits, and another peering down at us from a tree just over the path. [E]

FLOREANA MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus trifasciatus*) – An adult with a full-grown (but still begging) fledgling rummaged through the leaf litter along the edge of Champion-by-Floreana -- great spotting, Roy! A circumnavigation of the island yielded quick views of several other mockers as they perched up on Opuntia cacti or leafless trees. [E]

ESPANOLA MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus macdonaldi*) – Quite common -- and enchantingly tame -- on Espanola, where they bounced across beaches and trails and prodded the ground under trailside bushes, looking for tidbits. [E]

SAN CRISTOBAL MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus melanotis*) – One at San Cristobal's municipal cemetery proved cooperative, as it alternated between several trees and several mausoleums. [E]

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

YELLOW WARBLER (MANGROVE) (*Setophaga petechia aureola*) – Almost ridiculously common throughout, with dozens and dozens bouncing through vegetation on every island except Genovesa.

Emberizidae (Buntings, Sparrows and Allies)

GREEN WARBLER-FINCH (*Certhidea olivacea*) – Nice studies of several along the track we walked on San Cristobal, with others in the highlands of Santa Cruz. This species was recently split from the Gray Warbler-Finch, which is found in the lowlands. [E]

GRAY WARBLER-FINCH (*Certhidea fusca*) – Common -- and very tame -- on Espanola, where they flitted through bushes all around us and bounced across sandy beaches, and on Genovesa. [E]

VEGETARIAN FINCH (*Platyspiza crassirostris*) – A half dozen or so nibbled fruits and leaves in trees along the track we walked on San Cristobal. This species has a disproportionately large gizzard and a very long intestine, which help it break down its high-cellulose diet. [E]

WOODPECKER FINCH (*Camarhynchus pallidus*) – Super views of one rummaging through trees along the edge of the path around Lake Darwin on Isabela. Its behavior was surprisingly nuthatch-like -- clinging upside down to branches as it examined each potential feeding site. It spent long minutes energetically prising the bark off one nearby branch, and was rewarded with a huge, fat, white grub. We saw another -- of the distinctively stripey-breasted subspecies *striatipectus* -- in the San Cristobal cemetery. [E]

LARGE TREE-FINCH (*Camarhynchus psittacula*) – A ramble along the muddy trails of Rancho Promicias (Santa Cruz) yielded super views of a calling male sitting in a tree beside the track. [E]

MEDIUM TREE-FINCH (*Camarhynchus pauper*) – One male and several females flicked through the trees at Asilo de la Paz, showing well -- and allowing nice comparisons with several nearby Small Tree-Finches. [E]

SMALL TREE-FINCH (*Camarhynchus parvulus*) – Regular throughout, with small numbers seen on many of the islands -- including a couple bouncing through trees along the Bahia Ballena path and a handful with our first Woodpecker Finch above Playa Urbina. [E]

SMALL GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza fuliginosa*) – Common and widespread, with multiple fine views of birds at our boot tips. This was certainly among the most common of the islands' finches, seen in good numbers on all but one day -- including the little gang that came to see us off at the airport on our final morning. [E]

LARGE GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza magnirostris*) – There was definitely some angst developing over this one, as it eluded us on island after island. Fortunately, we finally found one near the top of Prince Philip's Steps on Genovesa -- and it proceeded to nibble weed seeds at the edge of the path only inches from our feet. Talk about a willing photographic subject! [E]

SHARP-BEAKED GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza difficilis*) – Common on Genovesa, with particularly nice views of several pairs foraging with the

Large Ground-Finch near Prince Philip's Steps. [E]

COMMON CACTUS-FINCH (*Geospiza scandens*) – Some of the group spotted one on North Seymour, and a few folks spied another in the bushes near the hotel on Floreana's Black Beach, but most had to wait until we reached Santa Cruz to get a proper look. One in a cactus along the Dragon's Hill trail gave us brief -- but satisfying -- views. [E]

MEDIUM GROUND-FINCH (*Geospiza fortis*) – Widespread throughout, missed only on the day we visited Genovesa. Just to make life complicated, there are "Large-billed" Medium Ground-Finches and "Small-billed" Medium Ground-Finches, and we saw plenty of examples of both, often in good comparison with nearby Small Ground-Finches. [E]

LARGE CACTUS-FINCH (*Geospiza conirostris*) – A small group near the end of the trail on Espanola showed nicely, particularly when one dark male perched up in some trailside sticks; the subspecies *conirostris* is found only on Espanola. We saw others -- including one with several big growths on its face -- on Genovesa, where the subspecies *propinqua* is endemic. There is some thought that these two subspecies may, in reality, be distinct species. Stay tuned! [E]

RUFIOUS-COLLARED SPARROW (*Zonotrichia capensis*) – Two bounced through a Norfolk pine outside the terminal building at the Quito airport, seen by most as we waited for our bus to pick us up. This widespread species is found throughout most of Central and South America.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – Steve spotted several along the runways at the Guayaquil airport, during our stop there on our flight back to Quito.

MAMMALS

HOUSE MOUSE (*Mus musculus*) – A few folks spotted one mooching along the edge of the "rock face" near the pirate cave on Floreana. This is an introduced species in the Galapagos.

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (*Tursiops truncatus*) – Regular in the waters around the islands, including one mega-pod of well over 100 animals. The ones that spent long minutes riding our bow waves -- occasionally rolling over to peer up at us as we watched from the bowsprits -- were particularly entertaining.

COMMON MINKE WHALE (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) – At least two -- seen only as long, sleek black backs with a tiny recurved dorsal fin -- swam in the Bolivar Channel between Isabela and Fernandina, seen as we steamed away from Punta Espinosa.

HUMPBACK WHALE (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) – Some of the group spotted the distinctive "bushy" blow of this species on our sea crossing between Floreana and Isabela, but our best views came in the harbor at San Cristobal, when we spotted a mom and calf cavorting near one of the channel markers beyond the boat as we returned from our time on shore.

"GALAPAGOS" SEA LION (*Zalophus californianus wollebacki*) – Fine views daily of these endearing creatures -- often from mere yards away as they lay sprawled on beaches and rocky coastlines throughout. The snorkelers got up close and personal with acrobatic youngsters on several occasions, as the latter zoomed in to play "chicken" with the swimmers.

GALAPAGOS FUR SEAL (*Arctocephalus galapagoensis*) – Far less common than the previous species, seen in small numbers only around Genovesa. These are smaller than the Galapagos Sea Lions, with longer fur, shorter noses and long, yellow whiskers. [E]

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The reptiles of the islands are nearly as famous as the birds. Here's a list of the ones we saw:

Marine Iguana (*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*)

Land Iguana (*Conolophus subcristatus*)

Galapagos Lava Lizard (*Microlophus albemarlensis*)

Floreana Lava Lizard (*Microlophus grayi*)

Espanola Lava Lizard (*Microlophus delanonis*)

San Cristobal Lava Lizard (*Microlophus bivittatus*)

Galapagos Tortoise (*Geochelone elephantopus*)

Pacific Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas agassizi*)

Galapagos Snake (*Philodryas biserialis hoodensis*)

Butterflies:

Sulphur (*Phoebis sennae marcellina*)

Queen (*Danaus gilippus thersippus*)

Galapagos Blue (*Leptodes parrhasioides*)

Large-tailed Skipper (*Urbanus dorantes*)

Totals for the tour: 68 bird taxa and 6 mammal taxa