Journey to the Galapagos With Naturalist Journeys



Galápagos Islands – Naturalist Journeys Birding and Wildlife Tour Species List – November 6 - 12, 2022

With mainland Ecuador Puembo/Antisana National Park pre-extension November 5

Guide Jon Atwood, with local experts Xavier Muñoz (mainland), and Antonio Adrian & Karina Lopez (Ecoventura, Galápagos).

Participants: Carmen, Chris D, Chris H, Dave, Dottie, Virginia, Dusty, Javier, Jill, Jo, John, Lesa, Mike, Norty, Penny, Polly, Robin, Sheryl, and Summers

Compiled by: Jon Atwood

Summary: Galapagos tour followed the "southern and central" route as used by Ecoventura's boat Letty. Visited islands included San Cristóbal, Española, Floreana, Santa Cruz, Bartolome, South Plaza, and North Seymore. Most activities required that the overall group be split into two, each with an Ecoventura naturalist and one with the Naturalist Journey's guide.

57 SPECIES TOTAL

BIRDS

DUCKS, GEESE, AND SWANS: Anatidae

White-cheeked Pintail Anas bahamensis — Seen twice, at the salt pans on Floreana and the tortoise ranch (Rancho Primicias) on Santa Cruz.

FLAMINGOS: Phoenicopteridae

American Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*— A single individual seen at the salt pans on Floreana. The small Galápagos flock of this species had apparently moved to another location several weeks prior to our visit.

PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae

Galápagos Dove Zenaida galapagoensis (Endemic) — Several seen well along the trail on Isla Española.

CUCKOOS: Cuculidae

Smooth-billed Ani *Crotophaga ani* (I) — This introduced species was seen on 4 days (Islas San Cristóbal, Santa Cruz, and Bartolome). Most observations were near agricultural areas; they were introduced from the mainland to preen ticks from cattle — an idea that has not proven at all successful.

RAILS, COOTS, AND ALLIES: Rallidae

Common Gallinule *Gallinula galeata* — several seen during our visit to Rancho Primicias on Santa Cruz. **Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio martinica* — single bird seen by several observers during our visit to Rancho Primicias on Santa Cruz.

STILTS AND AVOCETS: Recurvirostridae

Black-necked Stilt Himantopus mexicanus – individuals seen at the salt pans on Floreana and on Santa Cruz.

OYSTERCATCHERS: Haematopodidae

American Oystercatcher Haematopus palliates — small numbers seen on beaches at San Cristóbal and Española

PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS: Charadriide

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*—several seen on Floreana and South Plaza. Migrants from tundra breeding range in Alaska and northern Canada.

SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES: Scolopacidae

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* — individuals seen on beach at San Cristóbal and in an agricultural field on Santa Cruz. Migrants from arctic tundra breeding range in Alaska and northern Canada.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* — small numbers on rocky intertidal areas of Española, Santa Cruz, and South Plaza. Migrants from arctic tundra breeding range in Alaska and northern Canada.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* — several individuals seen on sandy beaches on San Cristóbal and Española. Migrants from arctic tundra breeding range in Alaska and northern Canada.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* — single bird seen with a small group of Semipalmated Sandpipers at the salt pans on Floreana. Migrant from tundra breeding range.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* — small group seen at the salt pans on Floreana. Migrants from tundra breeding range.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* — small flocks of about 20 individuals seen in transit on a couple of days. Some in mixed flocks with Red Phalaropes. Migrants from northern Canada and Alaska. All were in non-breeding plumage.

Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* — small flocks of about 20 individuals seen in transit on a couple of days. Some in mixed flocks with Red-necked Phalaropes, but also a couple of instances where this species was the only representative in a flock. Migrants from northern Canada and Alaska. All were in non-breeding plumage.

Wandering Tattler *Tringa incana*— small numbers on rocky intertidal areas of San Cristóbal, Floreana, and Santa Cruz. Seen on 3 days. Migrants from Alaska and northwest Canada.

GULLS AND TERNS: Laridae

Swallow-tailed Gull *Creagrus furcatus* (Endemic – breeding; wide non-breeding dispersal away from Galapago-sArchipelago) — Seen on 4 days on Islas San Cristóbal, Española, Floreana, and South Plaza. Most were adults, but some recent fledglings and nearly-fledged chicks also seen.

Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan*— single individuals, in non-breeding plumage, briefly seen by single observers on 2 days. Migrants from North America.

Lava Gull *Leucophaeus fuliginosus* (Endemic)— Seen on 5 days, on Islas San Cristóbal, Santa Cruz, Bartolome, and South Plaza. Never in large numbers; most seen near human activities and boats at harbors.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*— Seen only occasionally (3 days), and not well. Sightings were typically quick appearances in transit between islands, often in association with feeding groups of Galápagos Shearwaters.

TROPICBIRDS: Phaethontidae

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*— seen on 5 days, often in small groups providing great looks. Near Islas San Cristóbal, Española, Floreana, Bartolome, and South Plaza.

PENGUINS: Spheniscidae

Galápagos Penguin *Spheniscus mendiculus* (Endemic)— seen at 2 locations: Islas Floreana and Bartolome. Snorkelers at Bartolome were able to approach an individual loafing on a rock – basically eye-to-eye!

ALBATROSSES: Diomedeidae

Waved Albatross *Phoebastria irrorata* (near Endemic – another breeding colony exists off the coast of Ecuador) — Spectacular views, at Isla Española nesting grounds, of flying, courting, and incubating adults, as well as halfgrown juveniles. Several adults seen at see the following day en route between Islas Española and Floreana.

SOUTHERN STORM-PETRELS: Oceanitidae

Elliot's Storm-Petrel Oceanites gracilis — Seen in good numbers on every day of our trip, including many times where they were immediately adjacent to our boat where, making it easy to see their long legs that extended past the end of the tail. Reminiscent of Wilson's Storm-Petrel; Elliot's more frequently shows some white on the belly that is lacking in Wilson's. Because some of the birds that we saw showed little or no white on the belly, these may have been Wilson's Storm-Petrels mixed in with (we assume) the more common Elliot's. Band-rumped Storm-Petrels (Hydrobatidae) may also have been present, since the species breeds in the Galápagos and sometimes we saw birds where the long legs of Elliot's and Wilson's were not evident (but this may have reflected the difficulty of making detailed observations from a moving boat). Wings of storm-petrels that had been preyed upon by Short-eared Owls (which we never saw) were regularly found on Isla Española.

NORTHERN STORM-PETRELS: Hydrobatidae

Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma tethys*— one individual seen by a single observer: extensive white on rump.

PETRELS AND SHEARWATERS: Procellariidae

Galápagos Petrel *Pterodroma phaeopygia* — 2 individuals seen at the outset of the trip by several trip participants, the Naturalist Journeys guide, and 1 of the Ecoventura guides as we left Isla San Cristóbal's Puerto Baquerizo Moreno; later another observer saw one over deep water in transit between islands. Typical erratic, swooping flight characteristic of this genus, with black markings on the white underwings.

Galápagos Shearwater Puffinus subalaris— commonly seen small shearwater, observed in flight over open ocean, clustered in tight flocks resting on the water, and flying in possible courtship behavior adjacent to possible island nesting sites. Only recently recognized as a full species, it was previously regarded as a distinctive, isolated subspecies of Audubon's Shearwater. From Cornell's Birds of the World: "Until recently, some ten subspecies of the Audubon's Shearwater were generally recognized, distributed throughout much of the world's tropical oceans. However, their taxonomy has been heavily debated over the course of the last couple of decades, and considerable systematic rearrangement is now generally accepted, especially as a result of vocal and molecular research. As currently constituted, Audubon's Shearwater is now considered to comprise just two subspecies, both of which are largely or wholly confined as breeding birds to the Caribbean region, with the exception of populations, provisionally assigned to this species, nesting on islands off eastern Brazil. A third Neotropical taxon, long united with the present species, is now also recognized at species level, namely Galápagos Shearwater (*Puffinus subalaris*). The latter population is distinctly unusual in that the birds are strictly diurnal, never flying around their colonies by night."

FRIGATEBIRDS: Fregatidae

Magnificent Frigatebird Fregata magnificens— frigatebirds were seen daily, in large numbers, throughout the trip. Separating the two species, Magnificent and Great, was difficult, however, especially for adult males! In many cases other birds and wildlife distracted us from attempting to focus our attention on distinguishing the two. On the nesting site we visited on Isla South Plaza, male Magnificents were doing courtship displays with their large, inflated gular pouches, and half-grown Greats were showing their buffy face and throat areas. Occasionally we were able to see the differences in sheen coloration on the backs of the 2 species: purplish on Magnificent and greenish on Great.

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*— frigatebirds were seen daily, in large numbers, throughout the trip. See comments under Magnificent Frigatebird.

GANNETS AND BOOBIES: Sulidae

Nazca Booby *Sula granti*— Common, and seen on 6 days of our trip. Especially good looks on Islas Española and South Plaza.

Blue-footed Booby *Sula nebouxii*— By far the most common booby seen on our trip, being seen on all days. **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula*— The rarest booby seen during our expedition, being restricted entirely to a nesting area on Isla San Cristóbal (Punta Pitt). The species exists in 2 color morphs – brown and white. We saw (at a distance) only a small number of the white birds – the majority of the individuals of this species in the Galápagos are brown morphs. While it was fun to see the birds' red feet as we stood near active nests, it was the brightly colored facial skin (a pastel combination of pink to red, and light blue) that many of us found the species' most attractive feature.

PELICANS: Pelecanidae

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*— Seen daily throughout the trip. The observation (recorded on video by one of the Ecoventura guides) of a bird swallowing the placenta associated with a Galápagos sea lion that had just given birth was remarkable.

HERONS AND EGRETS: Ardeidae

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*— Seen on 4 days of our cruise, including close up views of a nest with halfgrown young that was found in a mangrove clump on a Zodiac ride(Endemic) at Black Turtle Cove on Isla Bartolome. Lava Heron and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron were also present in this site, giving us views of 3 heron species at once.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*— Seen on 4 dates of our trip, mostly as individuals or small groups associated with cattle. Flocks seen coming to evening roost in mangroves on Isla Santa Cruz.

Striated (Lava) Heron Butorides virescens sundevalli— seen daily on our trip, mostly along rocky shores but also in areas dominated by mangroves. As a species, Striated Heron (sometimes considered conspecific with North America's Green Heron) includes many subspecies distributed virtually worldwide. There is extensive plumage variation, sometimes even within a single subspecies. While everyone agreed that the dark gray "Lava Herons' that we saw in the Galápagos were very different in appearance from Green and Striated Herons we were familiar with in North and South America, a perusal of Cornell' s Birds of the World website shows that many populations of this species approach in appearance the birds we saw in the Galápagos (see https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/species/strher/cur/introduction#fieldid). For now, the Lava Heron = the Striated Heron.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron *Nyctanassa violacea*— Seen on 5 days of our trip, and possibly overlooked on others. These birds (all adults) are very dark and dingy in their underparts coloration compared to birds most of us are familiar with in North, Central, and South America.

HAWKS, KITES, AND EAGLES: Accipitridae

Galápagos Hawk *Buteo galapagoensis* (Endemic)— Good looks of this dark *Buteo* on Islas Española and Bartolome. Although some have suggested this species was derived from colonizing Swainson's Hawk (a long-distance Neotropical migrant), current thought indicates a more likely ancestor to be the widely-distributed Whitetailed Hawk, which shows the widest latitudinal distribution of any *Buteo* and discontinuous breeding populations from southern Texas to Argentina. White-tailed Hawk has successfully colonized several Caribbean islands (Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Birds of the World).

OSPREY: Pandionidae

Osprey Pandio haliaetus – Single bird – a rare species in the Galapagos – seen flying over one of the Zodiacs in Black Turtle Cove on Isla Bartolome. Seen well, with good photos. A migrant, reminding us that this species occurs on all continents except Antarctica.

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS: Tyrannidae

Galápagos Flycatcher *Myiarchus magnirostris* (Endemic)—individuals seen on all days of our visit. A smallish, somewhat nondescript *Myiarchus*, reminiscent of Dusky-capped or Ash-throated flycatchers of the southwestern U.S. Often quite tame, allowing observers to closely approach.

MOCKINGBIRDS AND THRASHERS: Mimidae

Galápagos Mockingbird *Mimus parvulus* (Endemic)— seen on 2 dates during visits to Isla Santa Cruz and Bartolome.

Floreana Mockingbird *Mimus trifasciatus* (Endemic)— the difficult-to-see mockingbird of the Galápagos, requiring a special Zodiac ride to a small islet off the coast of Isla Floreana; landing at this site was not permitted, but after a short vocal playback by one of our Ecoventura guides, a single bird popped into view.

Española Mockingbird *Mimus macdonaldi* (Endemic)— like the Floreana Mockingbird, the Española Mockingbird is restricted to a single island. It was a little bit difficult to pay much attention to the tame, cooperative mocking-birds while we were surrounded by albatrosses, tropicbirds, boobies and frigatebirds. At least initially, however, Charles Darwin was more impressed by the inter-island differences in mockingbirds than he was by the small diverse black finches that we now associate with the theory of evolution via natural selection.

San Cristóbal Mockingbird *Mimus melanotis* (Endemic)— seen on 2 dates while exploring different areas on Isla San Cristóbal.

NEW WORLD WARBLERS: Parulidae

Yellow (Galápagos) Warbler Setophaga petechia aureola— Taxonomists are still debating how to handle the various populations of Yellow Warbler, which show greater morphological variation than within any other wood-warbler. Cornell's Birds of the World lists 4 broad groups: Yellow Warbler (Aestiva Group), Mangrove Warbler (Erithachorides Group), Galápagos Yellow Warbler (Aureola Group), and Golden Warbler (Petechia Group). We commonly saw Yellow Warblers daily on our trip, often so close that our binoculars couldn't focus on them. Unlike Yellow Warblers that most of us are familiar with in North America, males of the Galápagos population had a distinct rufous cap. And, perhaps even more surprising than this plumage characteristic was their behavior — we regularly watched them catching flies while running around on barren lava or sandy beaches — I can't remember any times that I've seen a Yellow Warbler in North America feeding on the ground!

TANAGERS AND ALLIES: Thraupidae

First we have to clear up some naming issues. For a start, it turns out that Darwin's Finches (aka Galápagos Finches) aren't finches. Regardless of what name is ascribed to this group (subfamily Geospizinae or tribe Geospizini are oft-mentioned), they belong to the tanager family and are not closely related to true finches. The assemblage is currently thought to include 18 species, including one (the Cocos Finch, which does not occur in the Galápagos but occurs only on Cocos Island, located approximately 360 miles south of Costa Rica).

Michael Harris, author of the *Field Guide to the Birds of the Galápagos*, writes "It is only a very wise man or a fool who thinks that he is able to identify all the finches which he sees." Of the 17 Darwin's "finches" currently recognized within the archipelago, our itinerary gave us the potential to see 12. Within our group, 11 of these 12 species were observed by at least one person, and most species were seen by at least half of the group.

Green Warbler-Finch *Certhide olivacea* (Endemic)— several seen during our visit to the highland area of Isla Santa Cruz near Los Gemelos sinkholes. Both warbler-finches do, in fact, look like warblers, and use their thin, pointed bills for capturing insects rather than cracking open seeds.

Gray Warbler-Finch *Certhidea fusca* (Endemic)—seen in arid lowland habitats on Islas Española and Santa Cruz. **Vegetarian Finch** Platyspiza crassirostris (Endemic)—briefly seen, and photographed by Polly, by about half of our group during our visit to the highland area of Isla Santa Cruz near the Los Gemelos sinkhole. A large and bulky species with a thick yet rounded bill that is used to feed on leaves and fruits. Compared with other Darwin's finches, the Vegetarian Finch perches with a rather upright posture and has a longish tail.

Woodpecker Finch *Camarhynchus pallidus* (Endemic)— seen well by about half of our group during our visit to the highland area of Isla Santa Cruz near Los Gemelos sinkholes. No opportunity to watch these birds actually use

tools to extract insect prey from tree bark crevices, but definitely used its longish bill to flick off pieces of bark as it investigated tree trunks and branches.

Large Tree-Finch Camarhynchus psittacula (Endemic)— seen by one observer near Los Gemelos on Isla Santa Cruz Small Tree-Finch Camarhynchus parvulus (Endemic)— seen by several members of our group near Los Gemelos on Isla Santa Cruz. The most common tree-finch that we observed, but not in any numbers.

Small Ground-Finch Geospiza fuliginosa (Endemic)— The most common ground-finch that we observed, seen on 6 days of our visit. The Small Ground-Finch is one of the most common and highly adaptable, as well as wide-spread of the Darwin's Finches of the Galápagos Islands. In towns and villages they forage on dusty margins of streets and act very much like House Sparrows in other parts of the world. Yet in higher and moister areas we saw them perched on a Galápagos Tortoise, waiting for bugs or seeds to be uncovered by the movements of the large reptile. It eats the smallest seeds available. During years of high rainfall (El Niño), fast growing annual grasses quickly grow and seed on the Galápagos. In these situations small seed is abundant and this finch has a very easy time! In dry years small seed becomes more difficult to find, as hard and large seeds are the ones that remain longest in the seed bank.

Large Ground-Finch *Geospiza magnirostris* (Endemic)— seen once, by a single observer, near Los Gemelos on Isla Santa Cruz

Common Cactus-Finch *Geospiza scandens* (Endemic)— seen on 3 dates during our tour on Islas Floreana, Santa Cruz, and San Cristóbal.

Medium Ground-Finch Geospiza fortis (Endemic)— seen on 2 dates on Islas Floreana and Santa Cruz. From Cornell's Birds of the World: "The Medium Ground-Finch has been studied closely with respect to how bill size adjusts depending on ecological situations on the Galapagos. When it is rainy (El Niño) and lots of grass and other small seed bearing plants are abundant the smaller billed individuals of the Medium Ground-Finch are more successful than the larger billed individuals as small bills are more efficient at foraging for small seeds. On the small island of Daphne Major, the average bill size of the Medium Ground-Finch shifted down after a strong El Niño. The opposite occurs during dry La Niña years, now bigger and thicker shelled seeds become more easily available than small seeds and the mean bill size can increase to adapt to this resource; smaller billed birds just cannot eat large, thick seeds, at least not easily. On the island of Santa Cruz, there are smaller and larger billed individuals on the same island, suggesting that adaptively speaking there are two "peak" bill sizes that do well, and these are being selected for over extremes or intermediates! Just understanding the Medium Ground- Finch on the Galapagos allows one to see how these birds and these islands are such a natural place to be studying evolution — as it can happen right in front of someone's eyes, not over the span of thousands of years." Because of these interesting features, we struggled to confidently separate Small and Medium ground-finches!

Española Ground-Finch *Geospiza conirostris* (Endemic)— formerly known as Española Cactus-Finch, now recognized by genetic analysis to be more closely related to the Large Ground-Finch. We saw a couple of individuals during our single visit to Isla Española.

Mammals

Galápagos Sea Lion Zalophus wollebaeki— commonly seen on every day of our expedition.

Reptiles

Santa Cruz Giant Tortoise *Chelonoidis porteri*— seen in abundance on Rancho Primicias on Santa Cruz. One of the highlights for many of us on the trip.

Green Sea Turtle *Chelonia mydas*— seen at several of the snorkeling locations.

Marine Iguana *Amblyrhynchus cristatus*— common along rocky shores of most islands that we visited. Amazing creatures!

Galápagos Land Iguana *Conolophus subcristatus*— several seen on Isla South Plaza.

Española Lava Lizard Microlophus delanonis— seen on (guess where?) Isla Española.

San Cristóbal Lava Lizard Microlophus bivittatus— seen on (guess where?) Isla San Cristóbal.

Floreana Lava Lizard Microlophus grayii— seen on (guess where?) Isla Floreana.

Santa Cruz Lava Lizard Microlophus indefatigabilis— seen on (guess where?) Isla Santa Cruz.

Santiago Lava Lizard Microlophus jacobii— seen on (guess where?) Isla Santiagio

Mainland Ecuador Pre-Extension to Antisana Ecological Reserve and Puembo Birding Garden

Compiled by: Jon Atwood

42 SPECIES TOTAL

DUCKS, GEESE, AND SWANS: Anatidae

Andean Teal *Anas andium*Andean Duck *Oxyura ferruginea*

GREBES: Podicipedidae

Silvery Grebe Podiceps occipitalis

PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*Black-winged Ground-Dove *Metriopella melanoptera*Eared Dove *Zenaida auriculata*

HUMMINGBIRDS: Trochilidae

Sparkling Violetear Colibri coruscans
Ecuadorian Hillstar Oreotrochilus chimborazo
Black-tailed Trainbearer Lesbia victoriae
Tyrian Metaltail Metallura tyrianthina
Shining Sunbeam Aglaeactis cupripennis
Giant Hummingbird Patagona gigas

RAILS, COOTS, AND ALLIES: Rallidae

Slate-colored Coot Fulica ardesiaca

SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES: Scolopacidae

Baird's Sandpiper Calidris bairdii

GULLS AND TERNS: Laridae

Andean Gull Chroicocephalus serranus

IBIS AND SPOONBILLS: Threskiornithidae

Andean Ibis Theristicus branickii

NEW WORLD VULTURES: Cathartidae

Andean Condor Vulture gryphus

HAWKS, KITES, AND EAGLES: Accipitridae

Cinereous Harrier *Circus cinereus*Variable Hawk *Geranoaetus polyosoma*Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle *Geranoaetus melanoleucus*

FALCONS AND CARACARAS: Falconidae

Carunculated Caracara Phalcoboenus carunculatus

American Kestrel Falco sparverius

ANTPITTAS: Grallariidae

Tawny Antpitta Grallaria quitensis (Heard only)

OVENBIRDS AND WOODCREEPERS: Furnariidae

Chestnut-winged Cinclodes *Cinclodes albidiventris*Stout-billed Cinclodes *Cinclodes excelsior*Many-striped Canastero *Aesthenes flammulata*Azara's Spinetail *Synallaxis azarae*

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS: Tyrannidae

Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet *Camptostoma obsoletum* Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant *Orchthoeca fumicolor*

SWALLOWS AND MARTINS: Hirundinidae

Blue-and-white Swallow *Pygochelidon cyanoleuca* Brown-bellied Swallow *Orochelidon murina*

MOCKINGBIRDS AND THRASHERS: Mimidae

Tropical Mockingbird Mimus gilvus

THRUSHES: Turdidae

Great Thrush Turdus fuscaster

FINCHES AND EUPHONIAS: Fringillidae

Hooded Siskin Spinus magellanicus

NEW WORLD SPARROWS: Emberizidae

Rufous-collared Sparrow *Zonotrichia capensis* Yellow-breasted Brushfinch *Atlapetes latinuchus*

NEW WORLD WARBLERS: Parulidae

Spectacled Redstart Myioborus melanocephalus

CARDINALS, GROSBEAKS, AND ALLIES: Cardinalidae

Golden Grosbeak Pheucticus chrysogaster

TANAGERS AND ALLIES: Thraupidae

Cinereous Conebill *Conirostrum cinereum*Black Flowerpiercer *Diglossa humeralis*Plumbeous Sierra-Finch *Phrygilus plebejus*Plain-colored Seedeater *Catamenia inornata*

MAMMALS

White-tail Deer Odocoileus virginianus