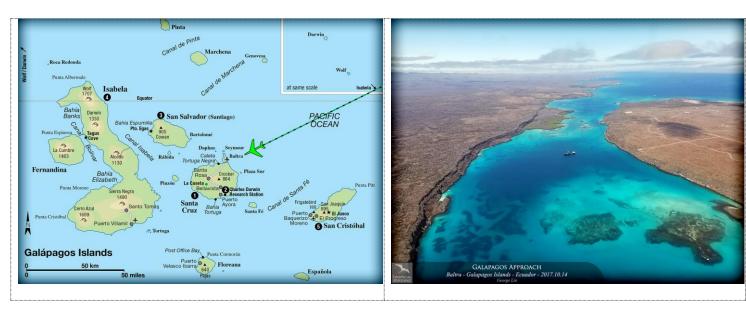
TROPICAL BIRDING

Galapagos Birding and Photo Cruise 13 - 22 October 2017

Guided by Iain Campbell and George Lin Report and photos by George Lin



10/14/2017 - Quito to the Galapagos (Baltra & Santa Cruz)

After a night in Quito, we boarded our plane to Galapagos and flew west over the Pacific. The excitement increased as we approached Baltra, the gateway island to the Galapagos. It's located in the center of the archipelago and has one of the two main airports serving the islands.

The turquoise waters came into view with the inhospitable landscape unfolding before us, promising exciting encounters with the wildlife that evolved to survive here. After landing and sorting out our luggage and camera gear, we got on a ferry and made a short trip across the channel onto the island of Santa Cruz and headed into the highlands.



The habitat changed from the dry costal scrub to the moss drenched wet Scalesia forest. We got out and started scouring the forest for the famed 'Darwin's' Finches. The Galapagos Mockingbird greeted us at the parking lot, and we continued through the forest. The trees were laden with lichens and the trail carpeted with volcanic ashes.



Soon, a Galapagos Flycatcher flew into view; we continued our search and found Vegetarian Finch, Woodpecker Finch, Green Warbler-Finch, Large and Small Tree-Finches, Medium Ground-Finch and even a few Yellow Warblers.



After the initial excitement of seeing our first Galapagos endemics, we headed to El Chato for lunch. El Chato is a ranch that is also the home of hundreds of Santa Cruz Giant Tortoises. This was a sight to behold and it was great observing these ancient creatures grazing on the grass.

After lunch, we headed to *Puerto Ayora*, which is the biggest town on the Galapagos, to board the *Reina Silvia*, our home for the next seven nights. We cruised through the night to the island of *Española*.



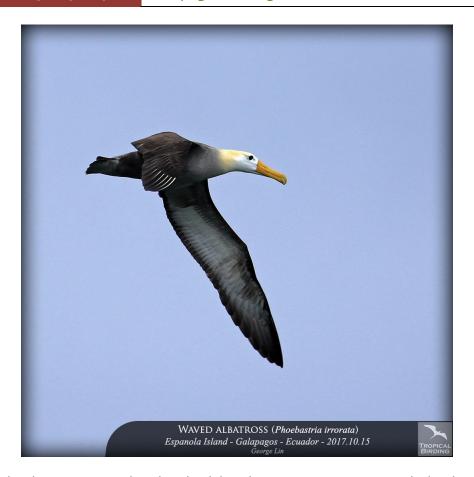
10/15/2017 – Española (AM - Gardener Bay; PM – Punta Suarez)

It was a great start in the morning when a pod of more than 300 **Bottle-nosed Dolphins** greeted us around the boat, splashing and cutting through the waves. Our first stop this morning was on *Gardener Bay* with its immaculate white sandy beaches.

There were several **Galapagos Sea Lions** lounging around on the beach that didn't seem bothered at all when we approached for some photos. The **Española Mockingbird**, an endemic to the island, was plentiful on the beach and very inquisitive. They hopped within a few inches of our shoes, searching for food and water.



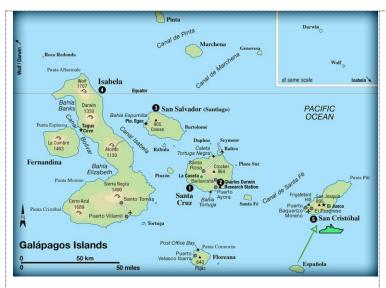
Another curious sight to behold was the humble Yellow Warbler hopping around the Galapagos Sea Lions, looking for flies and other insects to eat. There were also Galapagos Doves, Gray Warbler-Finches, Galapagos Hawks, and Española Cactus-Finches on the beach. There were also some interesting shorebirds as well like Baird's Sandpiper, Sanderling, and Wandering Tattler.



After lunch onboard the ship, we returned to the island, but this time to *Punta Suarez* which is located on the southern end. Here, we witnessed our first iconic **Marine Iguanas**. There were many of them basking in the sun and swimming in the ocean off the beach.



Punta Suarez is also the location where **Waved Albatross** nests and we got to see them flying majestically across the skies and clumsily taking off as well. There were **Galapagos Lava Lizards** and **Nazca Boobies** and our first **Blue-footed Booby** on the island as well. A **Galapagos Hawk** nest was also seen, with a juvenile within it that was flapping its wings, no doubt practicing for its first flight in the near future.



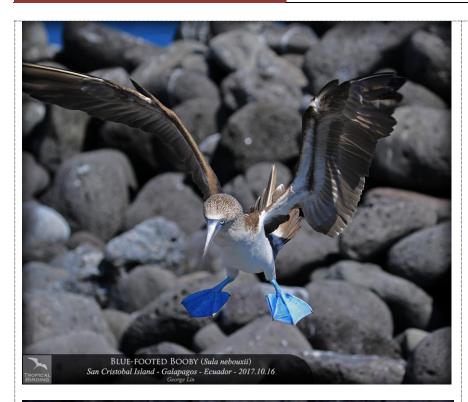


10/16/2017 - San Cristobal (Morning - Isla Lobos; Afternoon - Punta Pitt)

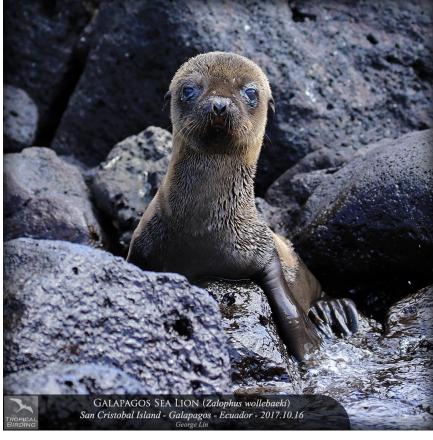
We started off the day by cruising around a small island just off the coast of the main island of *San Cristobal*. We saw **Lava Herons** (an endemic subspecies of *Striated Heron*) and the rare and endangered **Lava Gull** while a whole chorus of **Galapagos Sea Lions** barked at us.



We made landfall and hiked up to the top of the island. This was where we saw both **Magnificent** and **Great Frigatebirds** nesting. Several males, with the red puffed-out pouches were seen, desperately trying to attract females.



There were many Blue-footed Boobies nesting on the island as well, some with large, downy sub-adults and we even saw one that was merely a few days old.



After a brief break, some of us went snorkeling for the first time in the surprisingly chilly waters of the Galapagos. It was well worth it because we were rewarded with a few young Galapagos Sea Lions swimming in the water and playing with us. There were several times where one swam right towards my face only to turn away about a foot away which was both scary and exhilarating all at the same time.



In the afternoon, we headed to the main island of *San Cristobal* in search of the endemic **San Cristobal Mockingbird**. Upon landing, we photographed some **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Wandering Tattler**, **Sanderling** and a **Semipalmated Plover** along the beach. After searching for a while for the **San Cristobal Mockingbird**, we finally saw one sitting on a monolith. We continued up into the hills blanketed with bright red coastal succulents and photographed **Yellow Warbler**, **Bluefooted Boobies**, and our first **Red-footed Boobies**, which were nesting in this area of the island.



10/17/2017 - Santa Fe and South Plazas

This morning started off on the island of *Santa Fe* where we walked through a forest of giant **Opuntia Cacti**. This is where we encountered our first **Land Iguanas**. The large yellowish iguanas with their long snouts basked in the sun and ignored our approach. Along the volcanic path, we found a **Short-eared Owl** pellet, which contained a small skull of the *Galapagos Rice Mouse*. Down further on the beach while we were waiting for our ferry, we encountered the scarce **White-rumped Sandpiper**.

Some of us braved the chilly water and snorkeled and were rewarded with a **Hawksbill Turtle** along with a school of more than 30 **King Angelfish** and a few **Trumpet Fish** as well.



In the afternoon, we headed out to the island of *South Plaza* which is off the east coast of the *Santa Cruz Island*. We were accompanied by a flock of **Red-footed Boobies** on approach of the island. We first had a quick tour of a small island off *South Plaza* where we saw **Swallow-tailed Gulls**, **Red-billed Tropicbirds**, and **Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrels**. On the main island of *South Plaza*, we were greeted by several **Small Ground-Finches**, a **Wandering Tattler**, and also a **Semipalmated Plover**.



Santa Fe Land Iguanas were plentiful on this island as well as more Opuntia Cacti and the endemic Common Cactus Finch. The cliffs on *South Plaza* offered great opportunities of photographing seabirds like the Swallow-tailed Gulls and a flight of Red-billed Tropicbirds and Galapagos Petrel.





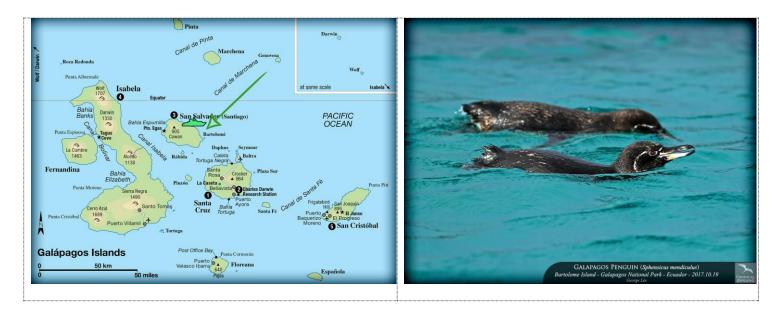
10/18/2017 - Genovesa (AM - Darwin's Beach; PM - Prince Philip's Steps)

The morning started off on Darwin's Beach where the nickname of "Bird Island" was well earned. There were tons of birds nesting everywhere – on the ground, in the trees, along the cliffs. These birds included **Red-footed Boobies**, **Great** Frigatebirds, Swallow-tailed Gulls, Lava Gulls, and some Yellow-crowned Night-Herons too. On the top of the lava trail, there were a few Swallow-tailed Gulls with chicks, Genovesa Cactus-Finch, and even a Large Ground-Finch.

The early morning ended with breakfast on the boat and then continued on with several people taking a snorkeling trip into the water where more than 30 species of fish were seen.



The afternoon continued on this birdy island at Prince Philip's Steps. We were rewarded with nesting Nazca Boobies after a steep climb on the stairs and then followed the trail that cut through a forest of cacti into an open cliff area. Along the way, we saw Red-footed Boobies, a Genovesa Ground-Finch, and Great Frigatebirds. At the open lava field that ends with the cliff, we saw a Short-eared Owl along with Band-rumped Storm-petrel, and hundreds of birds flying including the Red-footed Boobies (both normal and white morphs), Red-billed Tropicbird, Blue-footed Boobies, and Great Frigatebirds that were trying to steal from the all the other birds. We returned to the ship while watching a spectacular sunset on the way back.



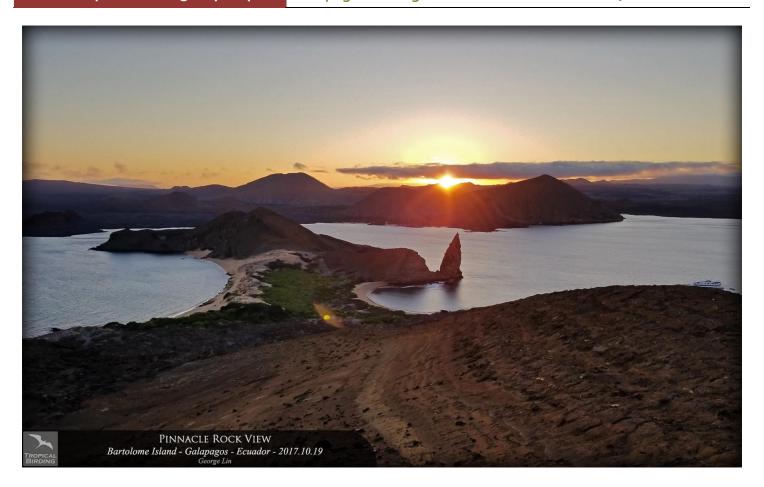
10/19/2017 - Santiago and Bartolome

This morning, we had an early morning cruise to look for **Galapagos Penguin**. We cruised around large volcanic towers and craggy shorelines and eventually spotted one *penguin* sitting on a rock, trying to warm up. Further along the coast, we eventually spotted a small family of three *penguins* on the edge of the water that jumped in soon after in search of food. The parents and the young were "snorkeling" on top of the water, frequently looking up and then back down. Eventually, after a few minutes, they dove down and started their chase of the fish below the surface. It was an amazing experience to be so close and observe this behavior. We felt like we were part of a natural history documentary, rather than mere observers!



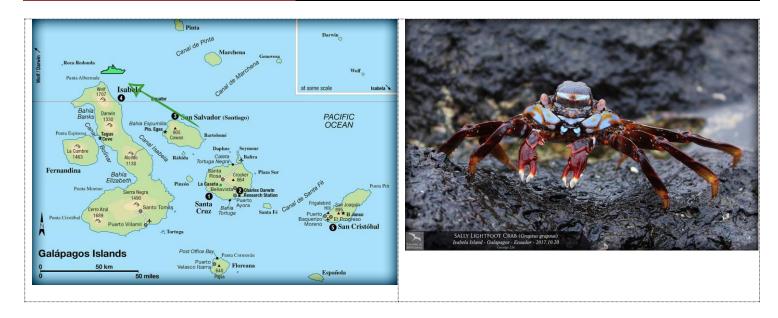


We then visited a lava flow off Sullivan Bay where the lava formed very interesting patterns after solidifying. Life had already begun here as we saw a few plants sprouting amongst the cracks. There was a Lava Heron on land with us chasing after the large grasshoppers that we stirred up out of the old lava.



In the afternoon, some people went snorkeling again and were rewarded with a *penguin* swimming amongst them. Although the encounter was brief, it was a memory that will last a lifetime.

After the snorkel and a bit of a rest, we hiked up the famed Pinnacle Rock which has an almost 360-degree view of the surrounding landscape, and makes a beautiful place to watch the sunset.



10/20/2017 - Isabela Island - Punta Albemarle

We were lucky enough to get permission from the national park to visit the northern Isabela Island. This gave us the chance to find the Flightless Cormorant. The day started off with a morning cruise where we soon spotted a single Flightless Cormorant fishing in the ocean. We spent some time observing the bird diving and gulping down fish before headed off to look for more birds.





We eventually found a nesting colony of the **Flightless Cormorant** and had some good photo opportunities with them. After returning to the ship for breakfast, we set off for a hike on Punta Albemarle. This used to be a location for a US Radar Base during World War II and some of the buildings were still there. There were two Green Turtles sunning on the sand at our landing spot. We hiked a little bit inland and then looped around to the shoreline again where we saw the large Isabela form of the Marine Iguana. There were also a few turtles soaking in the shallow waters and a big bonus was another Flightless Cormorant colony which gave us even better looks at these unique birds.



We soon headed back on the ship for lunch and started our cruise back to Baltra to wrap up our trip. Some Galapagos Shearwaters and Elliot's Storm-Petrel were seen along the way, and eventually we docked at Baltra for dinner. It was a very successful and fun trip with our main targets seen, along with beautiful photos and great memories of this amazingly biodiverse hotspot.

LIST OF SPECIES SEEN

All but a few of these were also photographed

r=permanent resident - can be seen year round in the right area.

b=breeding resident - normally present during the breeding season only.

m=northern migrant - normally only present from about August - April. Some individuals may stay longer.

v=vagrant - few records and never to be expected.

	PENGUINS	SPHENISCIDAE
r	Galapagos Penguin (E)	Spheniscus mendiculus
	ALBATROSSES	DIOMEDEIDAE
b	Waved Albatross	Phoebastria irrorata
	SHEARWATERS & PETRELS	PROCELLARIIDAE
r	Galapagos Petrel	Pterodroma phaeopygia
V	Gould's Petrel	Pterodroma leucoptera
r	Sooty Shearwater	Puffinus griseus
r	Galapagos Shearwater	Puffinus subalaris
	STORM-PETRELS	HYDROBATIDAE
r	Elliot's (White-vented) Storm-Petrel	Oceanites gracilis galapagoensis
r	Band-rumped Storm-Petrel	Oceanodroma castro
r	Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel	Oceanodroma tethys tethys
	TROPICBIRDS	PHAETHONTIDAE
r	Red-billed Tropicbird	Phaethon aethereus
	FRIGATEBIRDS	FREGATIDAE
r	Magnificent Frigatebird	Fregata magnificens
r	Great Frigatebird	Fregata minor
	BOOBIES & GANNETS	SULIDAE
r	Nazca Booby	Sula granti
r	Blue-footed Booby	Sula nebouxii excisa
r	Red-footed Booby	Sula sula websteri
	CORMORANTS & SHAGS	PHALACROCORACIDAE
r	Flightless Cormorant	Phalacrocorax harrisi
	PELICANS	PELECANIDAE
r	Brown Pelican	Pelecanus occidentalis urinator
	HERONS, EGRETS & BITTERNS	ARDEIDAE
r	Great Blue Heron	Ardea herodias cognata
r	Cattle Egret	Bubulcus ibis
r	Striated (Lava) Heron	Butorides striata sundevalli
r	Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	Nyctanassa violacea pauper
	HAWKS, EAGLES & KITES	ACCIPITRIDAE
r	Galapagos Hawk (E)	Buteo galapagoensis
	OYSTERCATCHERS	HAEMATOPODIDAE
r	American Oystercatcher	Haematopus palliatus galapagensis
	PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS	CHARADRIIDAE
m	Semipalmated Plover	Charadrius semipalmatus
	SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES	SCOLOPACIDAE

m	Whimbrel	Numenius phaeopus
m		Arenaria interpres
V	Red Knot	Calidris canutus
m		Calidris canatas Calidris alba
V	Baird's Sandpiper	Calidris bairdii
V	White-rumped Sandpiper	Calidris fuscicollis
m	144	Calidris mauri
m	<u> </u>	Phalaropus lobatus
m		Tringa incana
	GULLS, TERNS & SKIMMERS	LARIDAE
r	Swallow-tailed Gull	Creagrus furcatus
r	Lava Gull (E)	Leucophaeus fuliginosus
r	Brown Noddy	Anous stolidus galapagensis
	PIGEONS & DOVES	COLUMBIDAE
r	Galapagos Dove (E)	Zenaida galapagoensis galapagoensis
	CUCKOOS	CUCULIDAE
r	Smooth-billed Ani (I)	Crotophaga ani
	OWLS	STRIGIDAE
r	Short-eared Owl	Asio flammeus galapagoensis
	TYRANT FLYCATCHERS	TYRANNIDAE
r	Galapagos Flycatcher (E)	Myiarchus magnirostris
	SWALLOWS	HIRUNDINIDAE
r	Galapagos Martin (E)	Progne modesta
m	Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica
	MOCKINGBIRDS & THRASHERS	MIMIDAE
r	Galapagos Mockingbird (E)	Mimus parvulus
r	Española (Hood) Mockingbird (E)	Mimus macdonaldi
r	San Cristobal (Chatham) Mockingbird (E)	Mimus melanotis
	NEW WORLD WARBLERS	PARULIDAE
r	Yellow Warbler	Setophaga petechia aureola
	TANAGERS & ALLIES	THRAUPIDAE
r	Green Warbler Finch (E)	Certhidea olivacea
r	` ,	Certhidea fusca
r	Vegetarian Finch (E)	Platyspiza crassirostris
r	Woodpecker Finch (E)	Camarhynchus pallidus
r	Large Tree-Finch (E)	Camarhynchus psittacula
r	Small Tree-Finch (E)	Camarhynchus parvulus
r	Small Ground-Finch (E)	Geospiza fuliginosa
r	Large Ground-Finch (E)	Geospiza magnirostris
r	Genovesa Ground-Finch (E)*	Geospiza acutirostris
r	Sharp-beaked Ground-Finch (E)*	Geospiza scandons
r	Common Cactus-Finch (E)	Geospiza scandens
r	Medium Ground-Finch (E)	Geospiza contractric
r	Española Cactus-Finch (E)	Geospiza propingua
r	Genovesa Cactus-Finch (E)	Geospiza propinqua
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	REPTILES	

1	r	Galapagos Tortoise (E)	Geochelone elephantophus
	r	Pacific Green Turtle	Chelonia midas agassisi
	m	Hawksbill Turtle	Eretmochelys imbricata bissa
	m	Olive Ridley Turtle	Lepidochelys olivacea
	r	Marine Iguana (E)	Amblyrhynchus cristatus
	r	Land Iguana (E)	Conolophus subcristatus
	r	Santa Fe Land Iguana (E)	Conolophus pallidus
		Galapagos Lava Lizard (E)	Microlophus albemarlensis
	r	San Cristobal Lava Lizard (E)	Microlophus bivattatus
	r		,
	r	Española Lava Lizard (E) MAMMALS	Microlophus delanonis
	-		Zalambura salifamilianna mallabashi
	r	California (Galapagos) Sea Lion	Zalophus californianus wollebacki
	r	Galapagos Fur Seal	Arctocephalus galapagoensis
	r	Bottle-nosed Dolphin	Tursiops truncatus
		FISH	
		King Angelfish	Holacanthus passer
		Barracuda	Sphyraena idiastes
		Yellowtailed Mullet	Mugil rammelsbergi
\vdash		Bumphead Parrotfish	Scarus perrico
		Bumphead Parrotfish Trumpetfish	
		Trumpetfish Manta Ray	Scarus perrico
		Trumpetfish	Scarus perrico Aulostomus chinensis
		Trumpetfish Manta Ray	Scarus perrico Aulostomus chinensis
		Trumpetfish Manta Ray TERRESTRIAL INVERTEBRATES	Scarus perrico Aulostomus chinensis Manta hamiltoni
		Trumpetfish Manta Ray TERRESTRIAL INVERTEBRATES Fire Ant	Scarus perrico Aulostomus chinensis Manta hamiltoni Wasmannia auropunctata
		Trumpetfish Manta Ray TERRESTRIAL INVERTEBRATES Fire Ant Darwin Carpenter Bee	Scarus perrico Aulostomus chinensis Manta hamiltoni Wasmannia auropunctata Xylocopa darwini
		Trumpetfish Manta Ray TERRESTRIAL INVERTEBRATES Fire Ant Darwin Carpenter Bee Yellow Paper Wasp	Scarus perrico Aulostomus chinensis Manta hamiltoni Wasmannia auropunctata Xylocopa darwini Polistes versicolor
		Trumpetfish Manta Ray TERRESTRIAL INVERTEBRATES Fire Ant Darwin Carpenter Bee Yellow Paper Wasp Spot-winged Dragonfly	Scarus perrico Aulostomus chinensis Manta hamiltoni Wasmannia auropunctata Xylocopa darwini Polistes versicolor Pantala hymaena
		Trumpetfish Manta Ray TERRESTRIAL INVERTEBRATES Fire Ant Darwin Carpenter Bee Yellow Paper Wasp Spot-winged Dragonfly Galápagos Painted Locust	Scarus perrico Aulostomus chinensis Manta hamiltoni Wasmannia auropunctata Xylocopa darwini Polistes versicolor Pantala hymaena
		Trumpetfish Manta Ray TERRESTRIAL INVERTEBRATES Fire Ant Darwin Carpenter Bee Yellow Paper Wasp Spot-winged Dragonfly Galápagos Painted Locust MARINE INVERTEBRATES	Scarus perrico Aulostomus chinensis Manta hamiltoni Wasmannia auropunctata Xylocopa darwini Polistes versicolor Pantala hymaena Schistocerca literosa