

# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019

This edition of our *Flying Pig Adventures* is about the Galápagos Islands part of our Ecuador travels. As you can see on the map to the right, we explored only part of the Galápagos Islands. This means we only partially covered our Galápagos Islands bucket list item, (which in turn means we will have to go back to complete it).

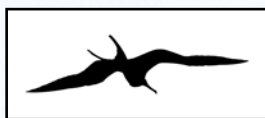
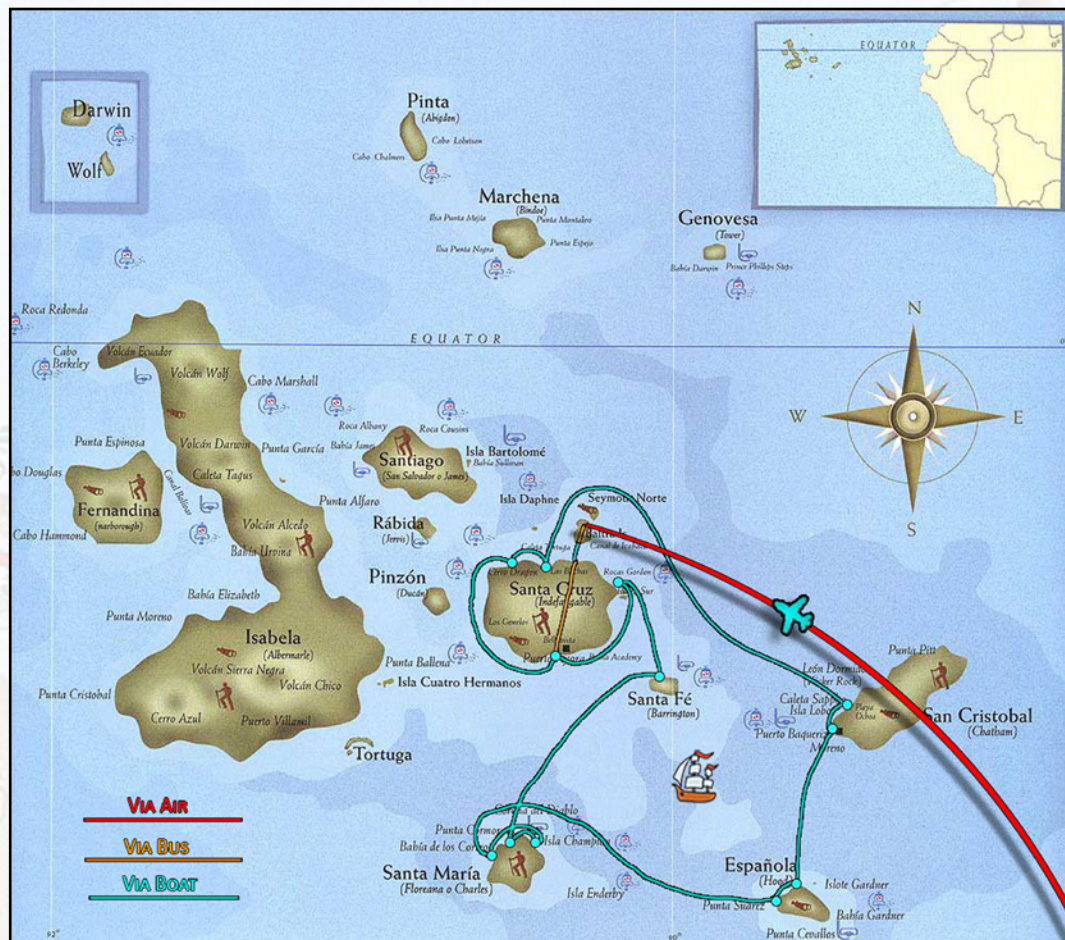
The Galápagos Islands were great, albeit not what we had imagined and/or had been led to believe by the documentaries we had seen by National Geographic and the like. The multiple years of filming efforts and their exclusive access to areas we were not allowed to go, all condensed into half or one hour programs, gives one the impression the wildlife is prolific everywhere... not so.

First, access is very controlled. Each tour boat gets two landings a day at prescribed times and prescribed locations. Tourists are primarily allowed only along short beaches and guide lead walks along a few well marked trails. One is generally not allowed to wander around without an escort guide.

Second, wildlife is not prolific everywhere. From island to island, the geography varies greatly, from desert-like to jungle-like and all of them based upon volcanic rock. Wildlife has adapted and become very localized based upon the areas habitat. There were spots where there were many of one or more species, but that certainly was not the case everywhere.

Everywhere the wildlife was pretty approachable and not afraid of us. For me, this definitely was **the key** to getting some great photographs. That and as the saying goes, "**f/8 and be there**", (an expression popularly used by photographers as representing the importance of taking the opportunity for a picture rather than concern for the technologies with which one does so).

About 3% of the Galápagos Islands is not part of the Galápagos National Park. I had been under the impression that 100% of the Galápagos Islands were in the Galápagos National Park... not so. I am not sure what parts are not, other than inhabited islands of Santa Cruz, San Cristobal, Isabela, and Floreana, but since Ecuador has given the USA authorization to put an air base on Bartolome Island, I suspect it is not part of the Galápagos National Park either.





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We landed at Seymour Airport on Baltra Island. The airport became the world's first "green" airport in December 2012.

The new terminal consists of recycled steel tubes taken from oil drilling operations in the Amazon. The new complex uses clean, renewable technologies such as solar energy, wind farms, and seawater desalination, among other environmental innovations.

During World War II, the airport (known then as Seymour Island Airfield) was used by the United States Army Air Forces Sixth Air Force defending the South American coastline and the Panama Canal against Japanese submarines.

After the war, the facilities were given to the government of Ecuador. Today the island continues as an official Ecuadorian military base. The foundations of buildings and other remains of the US base including the old airfield can still be seen on the island.



There were all sorts of things we couldn't take to the Galápagos Islands and upon landing, before we were allowed to touch our luggage, this dog checked all the luggage, smelling out contraband and getting his choice of which to do... Throughout the gathered and watching passengers we could hear the murmuring of 'NO! NO! Not on my bag... PLEASE!!'





# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019

We were bused from the airport to a ferry dock on the southern shore of Balta Island where a ferry shuttled us across the small Itabaca Channel to the Galápagos Island of Santa Cruz. From there, we would take a bus across Santa Cruz to the southern port town of Puerto Isidro Ayora. There we would be transferred to our boat Carina (our traveling base around the Galápagos Islands for the next week).

Our luggage was tossed unceremoniously on top of the 'ferry' boat. With no securing, it was left to fate and chance if our luggage would survive the crossing and arrive with us.



The less than functional ferry boats below added to the apprehension of a successful crossing, overriding much of the tension regarding the precarious position of our luggage.



Once on the Santa Cruz side we hung out at the ferry terminal for our bus to take us across the island. We enjoyed checking out the people and cargo going back and forth.

Chickens in boxes brought to mind memories of Wendy's chicken dinner food poisoning experience and our day (just the day before) spent in an emergency care facility getting Wendy well enough for this portion of the trip. These fellows were for sure safe from our dinner plates any time soon... and us from them as well.





# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019

On our way across Santa Cruz Island to Puerto Isidro Ayora we stopped for lunch and a walk to see some Galápagos giant tortoises, which the Galápagos Islands are named after.

The Galápagos giant tortoises are the largest living species of tortoise. With life spans in the wild of over 100 years, it is one of the longest-lived vertebrates. A captive individual lived at least 170 years.

Tortoise numbers declined from over 250,000 in the 16th century to a low of around 3,000 in the 1970s. This decline was caused by overexploiting the species for meat and oil, habitat clearance for agriculture, and introduction of non-native animals to the islands, such as rats, goats, and pigs.

The extinction of most giant tortoise lineages is thought to have also been caused by predation by humans or human ancestors, as the tortoises themselves have no natural predators. 10 species of the original 15 survive in the wild; an 11th species had only a single known living individual, kept in captivity and nicknamed Lonesome George until his death in June 2012. Conservation efforts, beginning in the 20th century, have resulted in thousands of captive-bred juveniles being released onto their ancestral home islands, and the total number of the species is estimated to have exceeded 19,000 at the start of the 21st century. Despite this rebound, the species as a whole is classified as "vulnerable" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.



You can find more information on Wikipedia by clicking this link: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galápagos\\_tortoise](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galápagos_tortoise)

After being ferried out to our boat Carina with our luggage and getting settled in, we were given a couple free hours to go back and wander around the town.

They have a game of three person beach-like volleyball which they take very seriously. It is said large amounts of money flow around these games. I watched for awhile, and for sure they were serious and not playing for fun (team members were not so kind to each other when errors were made and/or plays not). The team I show here had the only female player I saw. She was a setter and very good at it.

I did notice what I thought may have been a bookie or two wandering around the spectators taking names and notes.





# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019

A few more photographs from my short walk around Puerto Isidro Ayora.



Our boat for the next week was the Carina in the photograph to the right.

Some of the other competing tour boats and ships. The larger ships of 100 passengers or so are controversial in that they bring so many tourist into small areas.







# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019

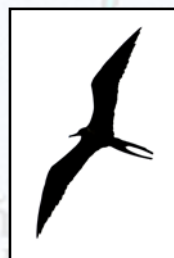
This is how we got from ship to shore, (and back). There was a mysterious dress code and fashion to the crew when attending our landings and return. A sort of modern day pirate attire.



Typical Galapagos Island beaches.



The beach below harbored what is left of a water barge used in an attempt to bring fresh water to some of the dry islands. As you can see, it did not work out as well as they had hoped.





# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019

The wildlife pretty much ignored and tolerated us with only moments of mild curiosity.



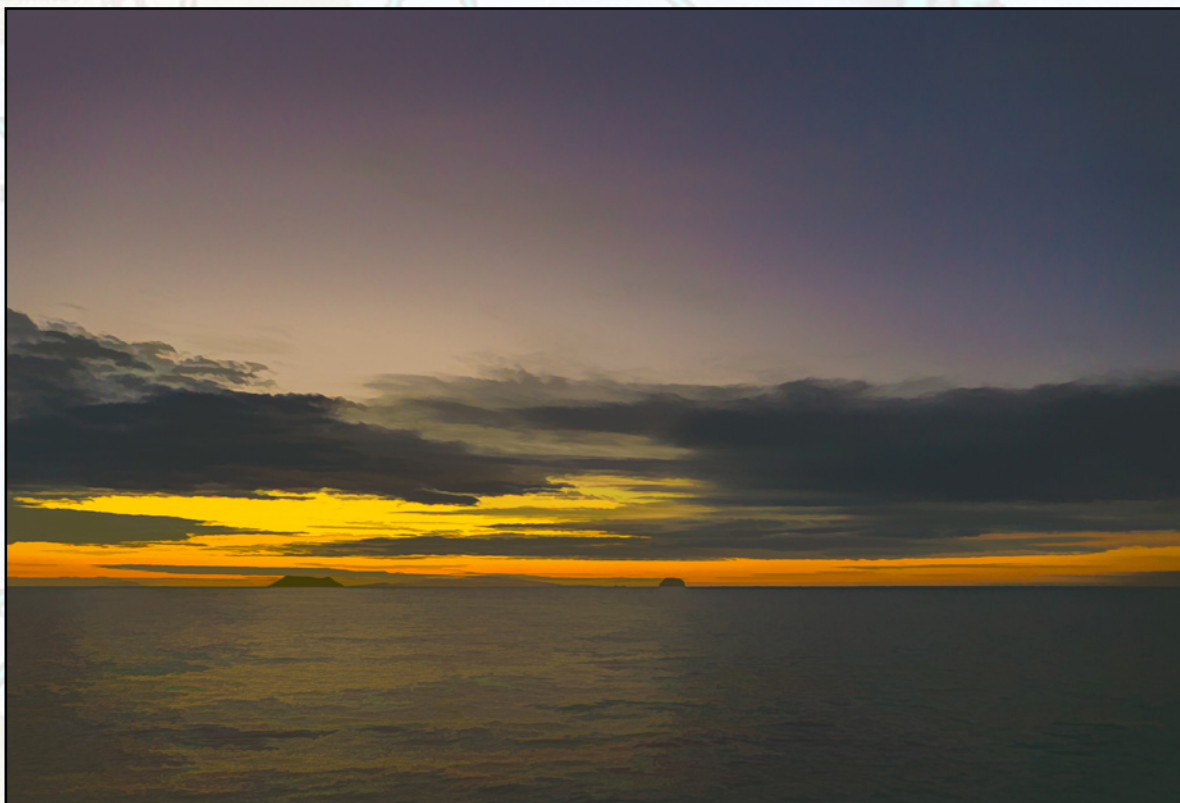
Some beaches offered interesting finds, like whale bones on one beach and an abandoned stone structure on another.





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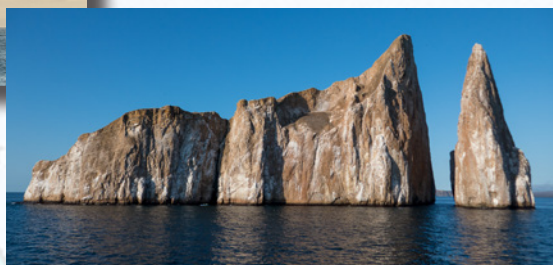
There were a few nice sunsets to inspire some creativity.



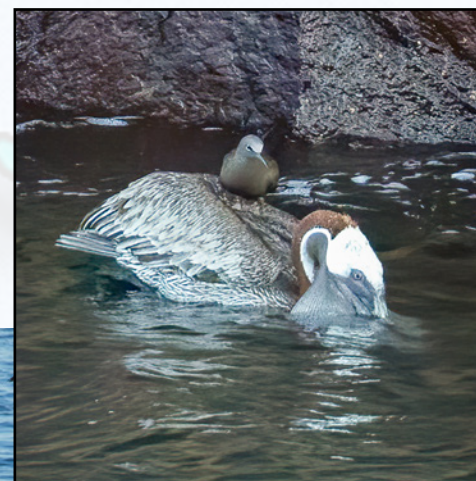


# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019

There were lots of small islands, some of which we spent some time going around, snorkeling at, and/or bird watching.



Below is a feeding frenzy off one of those small islands. I saw small birds landing on pelicans after the pelicans had made a dive and came up to the surface with their pouches full. I could not figure out just what was going on. The guide said these birds would land on the pelicans and capture the small fish that would escape the pelicans pouch. Not so much stealing the fish from the pelicans, but catching the overflow and escaping ones. I had never seen this behavior before, but a month or so later on our way to Tucson, we stopped in Brookings, Oregon. While watching some pelicans feeding there, I mentioned this odd behavior to a local bird watcher there and he said it was common.







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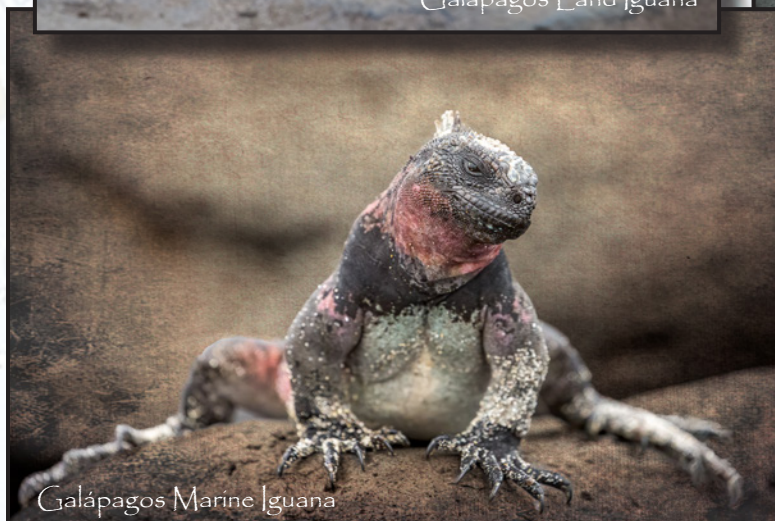
The Galápagos Iguanas and other lizard-like creatures...



Galápagos Land Iguana



Galápagos Marine Iguana



Galápagos Marine Iguana



Galápagos Marine Iguana



Galápagos Marine Iguana



Galápagos Land Iguana





# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019



Galapagos Marine Iguana

Galapagos Marine Iguana



Galapagos Marine Iguana



Galapagos Lava Lizard



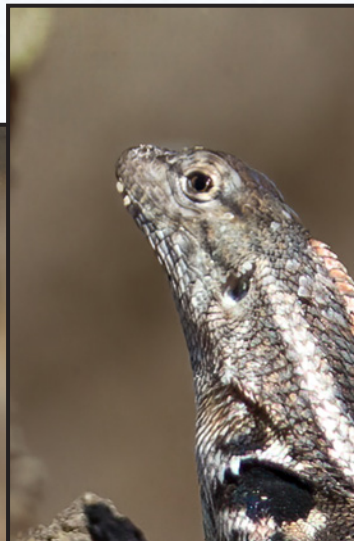


# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019

When editing the photograph of this Lava Lizard I noticed the pattern of an extra eye on it.



Galápagos Lava Lizard

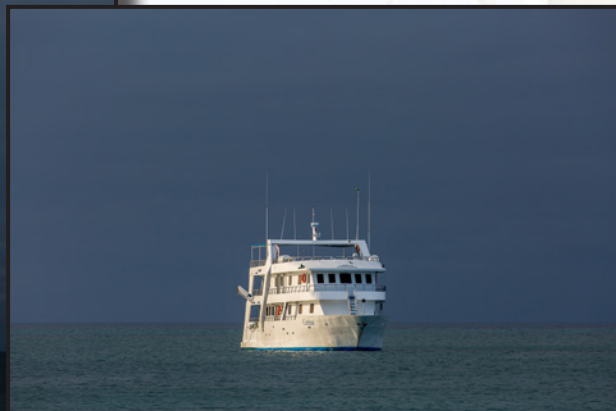
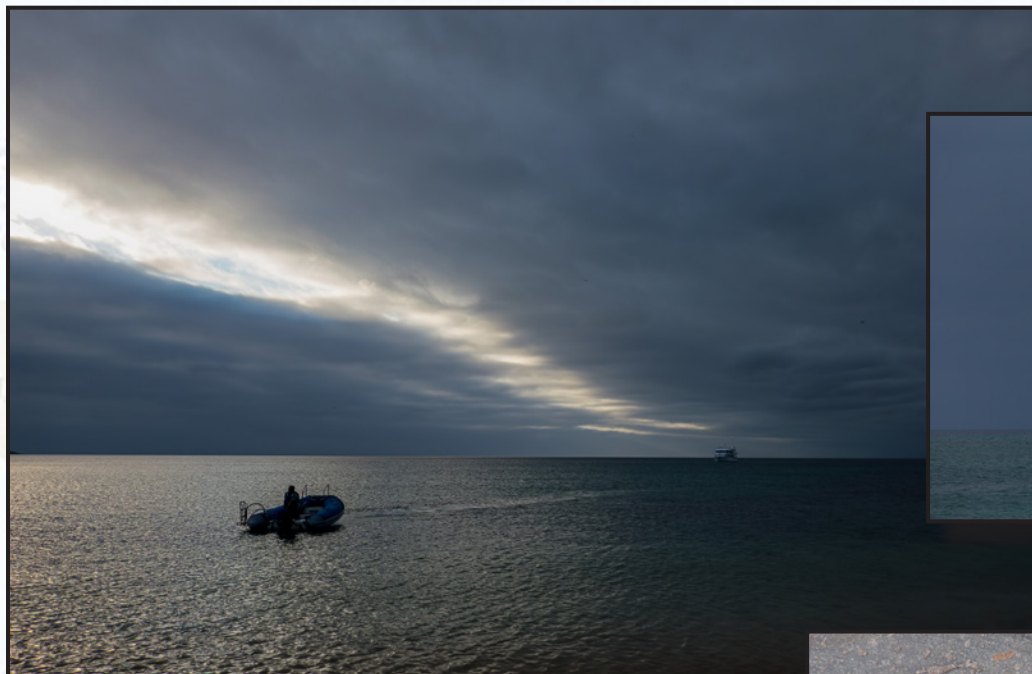


Galápagos Marine Iguana





# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019



We went ashore on San Cristobal and ran into someone familiar on the street... *Darwin I presume?*







# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019

## The Birds



Magnificent Frigate



Brown Pelican



Darwin Finch (One of 12 Species)



Yellow Warbler

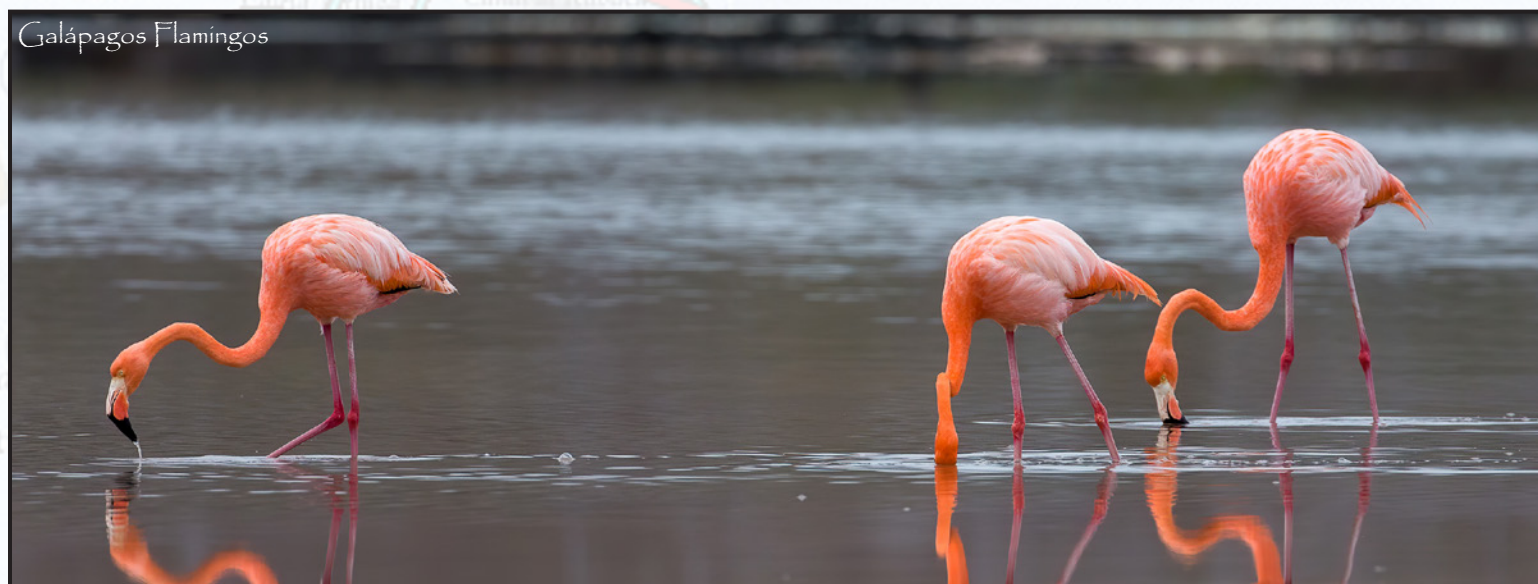




# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019



Galápagos Flamingo



Galápagos Flamingos



Darwin Finch (One of 12 Species)



Darwin Finch (One of 12 Species)





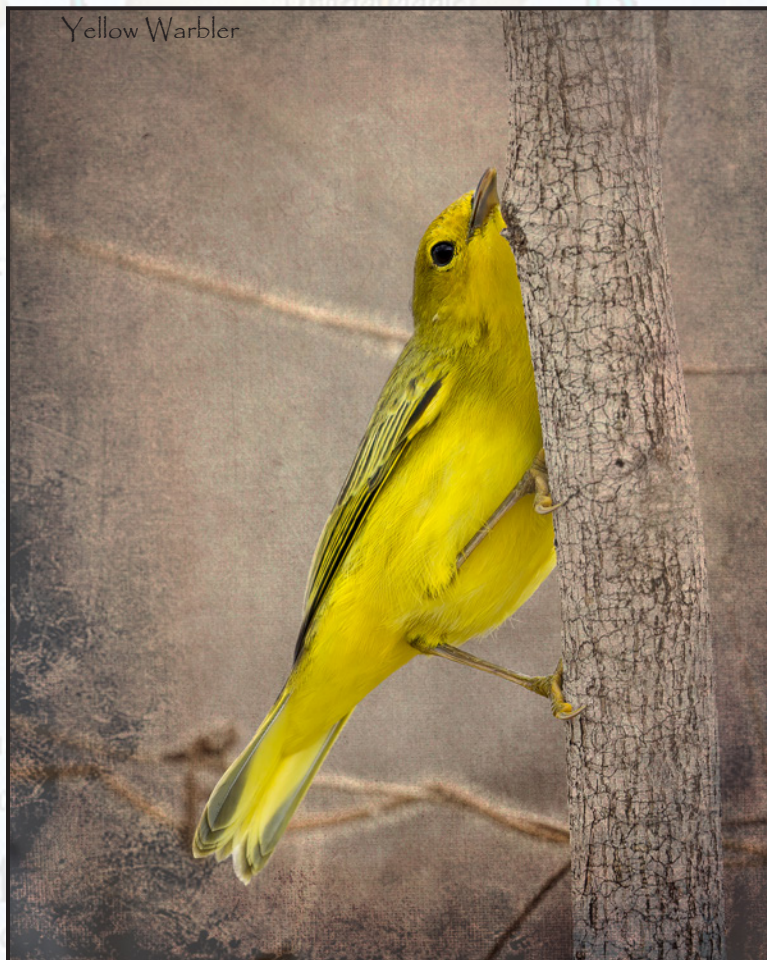
# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019



Darwin Finch (One of 12 Species)



Yellow Warbler



Yellow Warbler



Darwin Finch (One of 12 Species)



# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019

## The Mockingbird Birds





# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019



Galápagos Dove



Whimbrel



Swallow-Tailed Gull



Brown Noddy



# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019



Yellow Warbler



Nasca Booby



Nasca Booby





# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019

## Waved (Galápagos) Albatross

Taxiing and stretching for take off...



This runway was closed...



Not exactly liftoff, more like plunge off...



The Waved (or Galápagos) Albatrosses are medium-sized albatrosses, measure about 31" to 35" in length, with a wingspan of 7' to 8' and weigh 6 to 9 pounds. A massive wingspan relative to the rest of it's body.





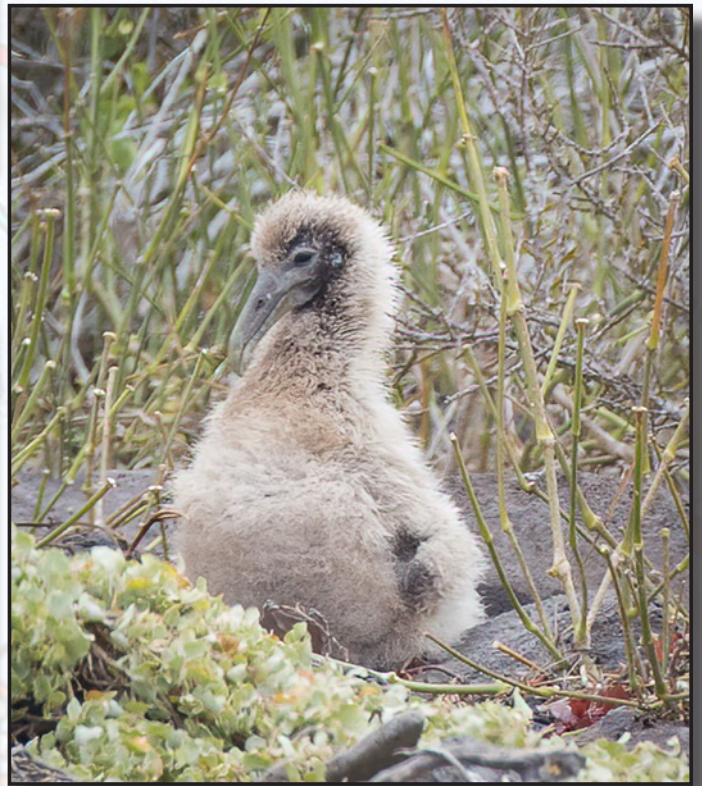
# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019

## Waved (Galápagos) Albatross

A little of Waved Albatross this...



Makes a little Waved Albatross like this...



Which eventually becomes a Waved Albatross like this...







# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019



Red-Billed Tropicbird



American Oystercatchers



Galápagos Hawk (Juvenile)



Galápagos Hawks (Juvenile & Parent)



# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019

## Frigate Birds





# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019



Brown Pelican



Galápagos Shearwater



Galápagos Shearwater







# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019



Great Blue Heron



Galápagos Hawk



Swallow-Tail Gull



Darwin Finch (One of 12 Species)







# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019

## Lava Herons







# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019



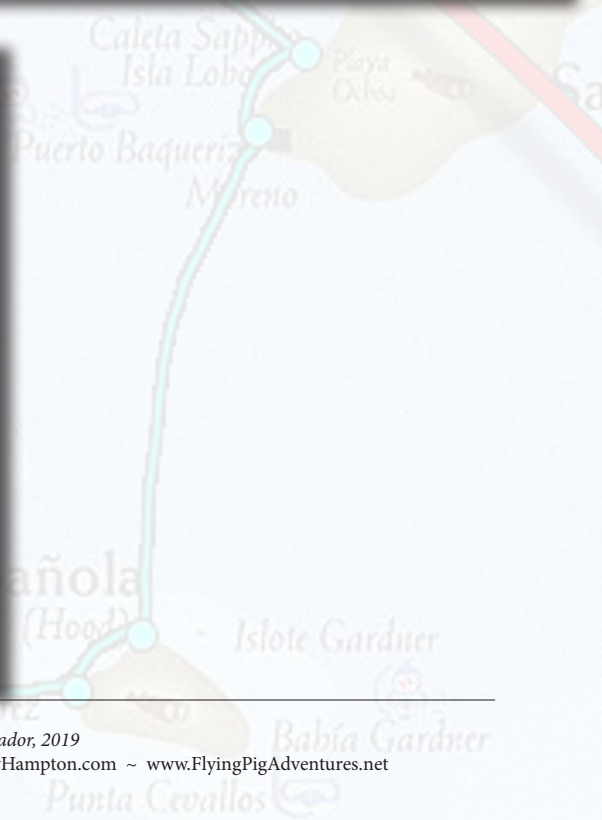
And finally the Blue-Footed Booby photographs...







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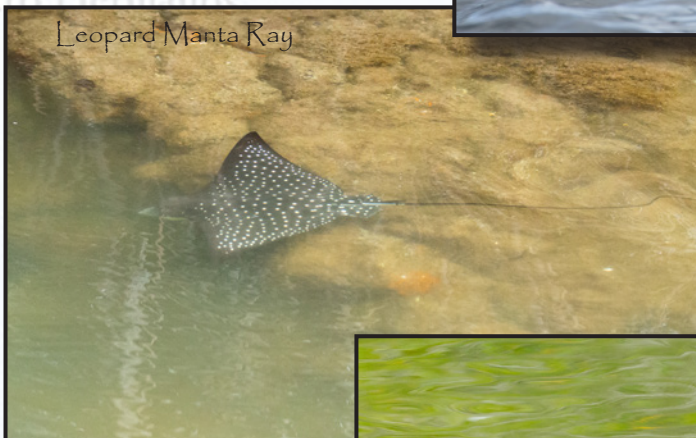


# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019

## Miscellaneous Mammals and Fish



Galapagos Penguin



Leopard Manta Ray



SHARK!



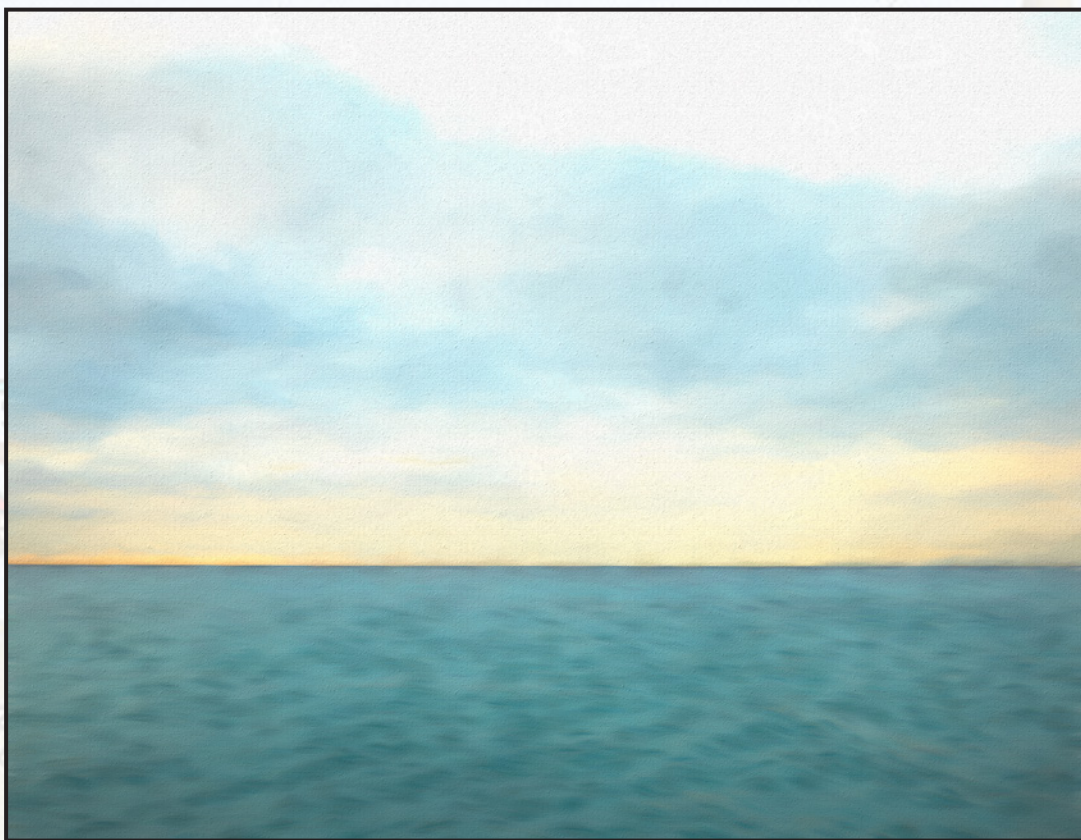
Turtle



# GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR ~ 2019

And now we end this issue with a couple of sunset inspired images....

Our next issue will be about our drive south from Quito, Ecuador along the Andes mountains.



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