

# A WISE Community Fair

by Kelly Weatherman

Walking down Ave. Charles Darwin in Puerto Ayora on Santa Cruz Island, I am in awe as I watch a Sea Lion sleeping on the bench next to the pier where local fishermen are selling their fresh catch. Pelicans and other seabirds surround the fish market hoping for a chance to snatch a morsel. I've been in Galápagos for approximately three hours, and I already know what I have heard is true — this place is enchanting.

I arrive at Plaza Pelican Bay for the Women in Sustainable Entrepreneurship (WISE) Fair. Immediately, the sense of community is infectious. There are tents on either side of the plaza where WISE recipients are featuring their projects and sharing them with fellow Galapagueños. The plaza is bustling on this Friday night with family and friends.

I speak first with Mayra Elizabeth Hernandez Ñacato, creator of Más Arte, Menos Basura (More Art, Less Trash), a project that features unique jewelry and art made of plastics mostly found on Galápagos beaches and streets. One of her displays is an art project she did with local school children of a Hammerhead Shark made with small pieces of plastic and bottle caps. Mayra says, "This project involved children that do not live near the beach and are not aware of all the trash that ends up there. Creating art is a way for them to learn more about the species that live here and take responsibility to recycle." She beams with passion for educating the youth of Galápagos and the importance of taking care of the environment.

The owner of Jardines Nativos (Native Gardens), Miriam Silva, also shares a commitment to education. Her family has been living in Galápagos for many years, and I can feel how strong her dedication is to the Islands as she talks about saving native plants. "I am inspired by my heritage and family. It is so important that we learn about plants that live around us and take action to protect them. We can replant them in the town where they've been taken out and ensure the people and wildlife of Galápagos benefit." Jardines Nativos has done just that. Miriam points out several gardens near the plaza and main street in Puerto Ayora that she helped replant with endemic flora.

Looking around the fair, seeing people gather in support of one another, I feel the sense of pride the community and all the WISE recipients have for their home. The women that run these entrepreneurial projects express their gratitude to Galápagos Conservancy for making their ideas a reality and providing support after COVID-19 deeply impacted many of their businesses. Karina Bautista, another WISE recipient and founder of Huerta Luna, a farm focused on discovering the best growing practices for local produce, expresses her appreciation: "Galápagos Conservancy helped me with marketing and writing a book after losing so much from COVID-19."

These WISE women all share the same aspiration. They wish to create a more sustainable Galápagos for themselves and their families.





“Empowering women has always been one of the key elements of building stronger, more responsible, and healthier communities. And it is very challenging to advance conservation in Galápagos without a strong and supportive local community. I hope that with WISE, we can meaningfully accelerate and deepen our impact in the Archipelago and preserve this incredible ecosystem.”

- Galápagos Conservancy Board Member  
and WISE Sponsor Bartosz Ostenda







## An Open Door to Conservation

by Ivonne Torres and Xavier Castro

On June 6, 2022, the Galápagos National Park Director and Galápagos Conservancy President officially opened the Galápagos Conservation Center in Puerto Ayora, Santa Cruz Island to illustrate the tremendous conservation efforts to save the Galápagos Islands' most iconic species, the Giant Tortoise.

Visitors to the newly unveiled center learn about the inspiring history of Galápagos Giant Tortoises and the incredible ongoing process of restoring and rewilding their populations.

Galápagos Conservancy's President, Dr. Paul Salaman shared, "The creation of the Conservation Center is a joint effort between Conservando Galápagos, Galápagos Conservancy, and the Galápagos National Park as part of Iniciativa Galápagos, a collaborative venture with the goal of scaling-up efforts to save all 13 extant species of Giant Tortoises across the Archipelago."

"The restoration of Giant Tortoises is one of the priorities of our partnership. With the new Conservation Center, we hope that local, national, and international visitors can learn about the history of these iconic species and support the efforts required to protect and restore their populations," Salaman stated.

The Center presents chronological information on the history of tortoises — from before the arrival of humans and the first threats caused by their presence, through the decimation of all Giant Tortoise populations — including the extinction of the Pinta species with the death of Lonesome George — to current efforts to achieve the recovery of surviving species. It also reveals how the Galápagos Giant Tortoise Breeding Centers operate, where tortoises are incubated and raised until they are five years old, after which the little tortoises are repatriated to their native islands. "This outstanding Conservation Center illustrates that almost all species of Giant Tortoises are





Grand Opening. Left: Dan Sherman, Galápagos Conservancy Board Chair. Right: Danny Rueda, Director of Galápagos National Park

endangered,” noted Washington Tapia, Conservando Galápagos General Director. “We are especially concerned for the plight of the Sierra Negra and Cerro Azul Giant Tortoises on Isabela Island, while hope for the Fernandina Giant Tortoise is fast running out with Fernanda as the lone known survivor of her species.”

But thanks to the efforts of the Galápagos National Park Directorate, Conservando Galápagos, and Galápagos Conservancy, Giant Tortoises throughout the Archipelago are on the path to recovery. Restoring endemic tortoise populations supports the recovery of native vegetation and the entire ecosystems that all amazing species of Galápagos depend. *done*

Ivonne Torres, Coordinator of the Galápagos Conservation Center stated, “The Center is an open door to conservation and it has come to fill a niche of information about tortoises and the restoration programs that most visitors do not receive elsewhere

on the Islands. We are delighted to give interpretive talks and share our knowledge of these unique animals with our visitors.”

Galápagos Conservancy is grateful to our generous supporters who helped facilitate the creation of this interpretive space, and we especially want to thank the Manitou Fund for making this dream a reality.



# ANSWER THE CALL OF CONSERVATION

## VOLUNTEER WITH GALÁPAGOS CONSERVANCY

The Galápagos Islands consist of 13 major islands, six smaller islands, and more than a hundred smaller rocks and outcroppings, situated 600 miles west of mainland Ecuador. When taken in totality, this isolated Archipelago contains just over 3,000 square miles — area which is populated by some of the most awe-inspiring lifeforms on Earth.

Protecting all this land, its inhabitants, and the surrounding seascape is certainly no easy feat as any of us here at Galápagos Conservancy can tell you. In fact, the truth is...

### We need your help.

That is why we at Galápagos Conservancy are thrilled to announce an opportunity unlike any other: a once-in-a-lifetime chance to experience Galápagos' natural heritage while participating directly in the work necessary to conserve these Islands' unique biodiversity.

Through our new volunteer program, participants who can dedicate a minimum of two months will stay free of charge in exclusive villas within the Galápagos National Park headquarters property on Santa Cruz Island near the breeding center. Volunteers will contribute to hands-on projects such as Giant Tortoise caretaking at the Santa Cruz Breeding Center and visitor interpretation at the newly opened Conservation Center. Assistance on other projects and activities will be possible when available.

Volunteer applications are only open to our supporters with preference to our Ambassador Society members (\$1000+ donors) and are accepted on a rolling basis.

As a member of our dedicated community of supporters, your love for the Galápagos Archipelago runs deep, and now you have the opportunity to turn that passion into action.

Galápagos needs you. Will you answer the call?

VISIT [GALAPAGOS.ORG/VOLUNTEER](https://GALAPAGOS.ORG/VOLUNTEER) TO LEARN MORE



Replica, Diego the Super Tortoise



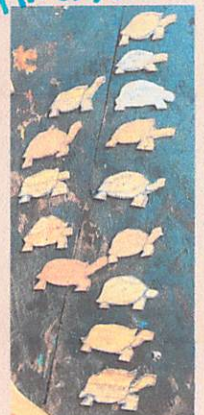


## Galapagueño Artist Profile by Cecil Hynds-Riddle

When the new Galápagos Conservation Center needed a life-sized, hand-carved replica of Lonesome George, complete with his pensive gaze and missing toenail (pictured on page 16), there was one artist clearly up to the task: Jorge Torres. In their tidy and expansive woodshop on the outskirts of Puerto Ayora on Santa Cruz Island, Jorge Torres and Patricia Solano lovingly transform invasive Cuban Cedar trees into lifelike miniature representations of Giant Tortoises, Blue-footed Boobies, Scalloped Hammerhead Sharks, and the other charismatic wildlife sought-after in the shops along Charles Darwin Ave. But for Jorge, this work is more than his vocation. He takes pride in perfecting each sculpture, chiseling texture into each tortoise's shell and skin, and capturing the serious yet whimsical nature of the Blue-footed Booby dance in his captivating artwork.

While visiting the Artesanias Torres Naysara shop, I learned that the following \*extremely simple steps\* are all you need to accomplish such remarkable artistry. (Our lawyers say, "Don't try this at home.")

- 1) Slice a hunk of invasive *Cedrela odorata* (Cuban Cedar) from a tree trunk with a chainsaw.
- 2) Make the general form of the animal you want to produce on a whirring bandsaw. Sidenote: if you want to make an exact replica of a particular Giant Tortoise species, such as Isabela, Santa Cruz, Fernandina, etc., first trace a stencil onto your wood, then cut the outline precisely and deftly, with said bandsaw.
- 3) Sit down at your home-made, lathe-like, high-speed spinning sandpaper machine and, without seeming to bat an eye as to the incredible difficulty of this task, proceed to shape the remainder of your piece.
- 4) Paint or stain if you care to, but not necessary. Polish. Polish some more.  
Y listo! Tienes una tortuga, una iguana, un tiburón, etc.!



Tortoise Stencils

In all seriousness, Jorge Torres and Patricia Solano are incredible artists who call the Enchanted Isles home. We are so lucky to have a true masterpiece of theirs to greet visitors in the Conservation Center.



# Learning Through and About Galápagos

by Richard Knab

“The old saying is true: it is hard to love and care about something you don’t know. Education for Sustainability helps teachers and students understand our special surroundings and how the Islands fit into the broader world. We learn that everything we do has consequences and that by better understanding the place we live, all of us — individually and collectively — can make more responsible decisions.”

Mayra Flores, school principal and teacher on Isabela Island, shared these thoughts following Galápagos



Teacher and Principal,  
Mayra Flores

Conservancy’s June Teacher Institute — the 11th weeklong professional development event presented by our Education for Sustainability of Galápagos (ESG) Program.

Through ESG, all 400 teachers in Galápagos are helping students to learn core subjects in the context of local and global

sustainability issues. This involves interdisciplinary approaches, experiential learning outside of the classroom, connections with sources of expertise in the local community, and learning while conducting projects focused on real-life issues.

Since 2017, the ESG Program has been developing a cadre of 60 teacher-leaders able to replicate the instructional coaching provided by program staff throughout the year. In addition to supporting their

peers, teacher-leaders now play active roles in program delivery. For the past two Institutes, teams of leaders worked with program staff to develop model interdisciplinary units connected to essential topics and learning standards of the new Contextualized Curriculum for Galápagos. In October 2021, the month-long units focused on issues related to invasive species. In June, marine and terrestrial biodiversity was the integrating theme. During the Institutes, leaders explained their thinking behind the design of the units and helped their peers adapt them for specific grades and islands, adjusting or redesigning activities and developing new supporting materials.

In June, teacher-leaders also served as training facilitators, each responsible for groups of approximately 30 teachers throughout the week, replacing facilitators previously contracted from outside of the Islands. Mayra reports, “[Being a facilitator] has helped me strengthen my skills related to collaborative interdisciplinary planning, contextualized learning, and tapping local sources of expertise, including scientists, naturalist guides, and other members of the community.”

Mayra says teachers are becoming much more comfortable with sustainability education. “Six years ago, when the program began to talk to us about sustainability, it seemed like an abstract and complex concept that had little to do with our work as teachers. But now we know that understanding sustainability is essential for everyone living in Galápagos. And for teachers, it provides a powerful framework for teaching and learning.”





# Thank you to our Platinum Travel Partners!

Celebrity **X** Cruises®

Celebrity Cruises seeks to preserve and protect Galápagos species and habitats through the Celebrity Xpedition Galápagos Fund. Since 2006, <sup>done</sup> Celebrity has encouraged guests to donate, and as a gift for their contributions, donors are given vouchers for future Celebrity cruises. More than 60 projects have been executed through this partnership, thanks to cruise guests, who have contributed over \$1.3 million.

"We are proud to work with our guests, staff, partners, and the local community on long-term projects with significant impact to keep this unique World Heritage Site for future generations," said Fausto Arcos, Associate Vice President at Celebrity Cruises.

 SILVERSEA®

The Silversea Fund for Galápagos promotes healthy and sustainability-minded communities in Galápagos through funding initiatives related to children and youth empowerment, education and training, and science, technology, and conservation. Donors on board the M/N Silver Origin are encouraged to support Galápagos Conservancy and are then awarded a travel voucher that applies to future cruises to Silversea destinations around the world.

<sup>not done</sup> "Our new partnership with Silversea is a shining example of collaboration that ensures their guests can make a real and lasting impact to <sup>protected</sup> ensure the precious treasure trove of Galapagos wildlife is forever preserved for future visitors," said Dr. Paul Salaman, President of Galápagos Conservancy,





Galápagos Conservancy and Conservando Galápagos staff left to right: Walter Chimborazo, Cecil Hynds-Riddle, Cristian Gil Jaramillo, Ivonne Torres, Yolanda Bulick, Aaron Provencio, Judith Moreira, Williams Castro, Kelly Weatherman, Dr. Jorge Carrión, Cathy Blowers, Liza Saracina. Not Pictured: Dr. Paul Salaman, Dr. James Gibbs, Washington Tapia, Amy Doherty, Alex Antram, Xavier Castro, Tim Dobyns, Richard Knab, Gabriela Vivas

## The most impactful species in Galápagos is our own.

We often celebrate the exceptional wildlife and wild places of Galápagos, but they only persist because people near and far tirelessly invest in their future.

From Galápagos National Park Rangers to scientists<sup>done</sup> and conservation volunteers, passionate people dedicate themselves to protecting and restoring Galápagos. But they cannot continue doing the hard work of conservation without proper resources, like well-maintained boats to patrol the marine reserve and high-quality camping gear for fieldwork in the harsh habitats of Galápagos.

It's true that<sup>done</sup> humans<sup>extra space</sup> abused the Archipelago's natural wonders, but now we humans are painstakingly restoring Galápagos ecosystems to health. Through innovative rewilding programs, vital ecosystem restoration projects, and community-based conservation initiatives, local people are at the forefront of rebuilding what's been lost in Galápagos. Together, by supporting their critical conservation work, we can ensure the ecosystems and wildlife of the Galápagos Islands flourish forever.

**Thank you for protecting Galápagos with us.**



**VISIT [GALAPAGOS.ORG/SUMMER2022](https://galapagos.org/summer2022) TO DONATE NOW.  
OR, SCAN THE QR CODE.**





"Local conservation initiatives are important because they fulfill the role of adapting conservation concepts and paradigms that are used in the world to the reality of Galápagos, and it is at this point that the Galapaguenses play an important role." - Cristian Gil Jaramillo





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Please enjoy the Summer 2022 edition of Galápagos Post, a biannual publication of conservation news from the Galápagos Islands for Galápagos Conservancy supporters and friends. Your support for Galápagos Conservancy is the driving force behind our efforts to preserve, protect, and restore Galápagos for today and forever. Thank you!

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Image: Joshua Vela

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