



FROM THE DESK OF DR. JAMES GIBBS

Esteemed members of the Galapagos Conservancy community:

This year has seen steadfast progress in our work to safeguard the Galapagos — one of Earth's most extraordinary natural treasures. From restoring giant tortoise populations to monitoring and protecting critical habitats for Waved Albatross and sea lions, our efforts are making a tangible difference.



In the enclosed pages, you will find updates and exciting news about our initiatives. These snapshots from our work 2024 highlight programs advancing each of our core strategic pillars: Rewilding Galapagos, Saving Species, and Achieving Sustainability. Each highlight, and indeed all our accomplishments this past year, are a product of your dedication to our all-important mission. Thank you for your commitment to Galapagos Conservancy and its vital work.

Now on the cusp of our 40th year, I'm thrilled to share exciting news: in the coming months, we will explore new leadership opportunities that will support our dedicated team in shaping the future of this organization, ensuring our continued success in

protecting the archipelago's unique biodiversity — for the next 40 years, and beyond.

My own work has always been focused on the science of conservation in the archipelago, a role I will continue at Galapagos Conservancy. Our accomplished team of conservationists is helping to restore giant tortoises, petrels, albatross, sea lions, seals, and a myriad of other species and ecosystems across this sprawling, volcanic paradise.

For all of us here at Galapagos Conservancy, it is both a privilege and a major responsibility to be leading efforts to protect and revitalize this ecological gem, with you alongside us as our champions.

The future of Galapagos is in our mutual hands, and we are truly excited for the journey ahead, together.



Dr. James Gibbs
President
Galapagos Conservancy



SAVING SPECIES

PINK IGUANAS: A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

One of the world’s most endangered reptiles, the pink iguana clings to existence on the remote slopes of Wolf Volcano on northern Isabela Island. **With only about 300 individuals remaining, these unique creatures face a perilous future.**

As part of our efforts to safeguard this Critically Endangered species, Dr. Jorge Carrión, our Director of Conservation, led an expedition in 2024 focused on understanding the pink iguana’s ecology and the threats it faces. The team spent over 600 hours monitoring pink iguanas, searching for hatchlings, and documenting their habitat. **Over 50 adults were recorded, including five previously unknown to researchers, and several new hatchlings were found.**

The expedition team also installed a network of wildlife cameras throughout the pink iguana’s habitat to provide valuable data on the species’ behavior and the activities of other wildlife on the volcano. Additionally, temperature sensors and rain gauges have been deployed to measure environmental conditions and determine the pink iguana’s climate niche, particularly the conditions required for successful nesting.

This collaborative effort with the Galápagos National Park is providing insights needed to develop appropriate actions to recover this last population of pink iguanas — **one of the world’s most threatened species** — from the brink of extinction.



YELLOW IGUANAS: A RESILIENT POPULATION

A recent expedition to Cartago Bay sought to evaluate the status of the last significant population of yellow land iguanas (*Conolophus subcristatus*) on southern Isabela Island, an area that has not been extensively monitored for decades. **The team captured and measured 288 iguanas, collecting essential biological samples along the way.**

Remarkably, half of the recaptured iguanas had been previously tagged, including several individuals that were last encountered in the 1980’s – indicating that their age was 50 years or older. **The expedition’s findings suggest a healthy population of approximately 600-700 individuals,** demonstrating the success of those earlier reintroduction efforts and the removal of feral goats, which contributed to habitat recovery and improved food availability for the iguanas.

Biological samples collected during the expedition are now being analyzed to gain insights into the



HEART-LEAFED SCALESIA: FIGHTING TO SAVE A STRUGGLING TREE

The heart-leafed Scalesia (*Scalesia cordata*), a magnificent tree endemic to Isabela Island, once covered vast areas of the southern portion of the island. However, **human activities, wildfires, and invasive species have decimated heart-leafed Scalesia forests.**

Galápagos Conservancy, in partnership with the Galápagos National Park Directorate, is engaged in a five-year project to protect and restore this unique species.

Over the past three years, the project has made significant strides. A major investment has revamped the plant nursery, significantly expanding its capacity. **It is now cultivating thousands of heart-leafed Scalesia seedlings.**

Two new populations of heart-leafed Scalesia have also been discovered, generating more than 5,000 seeds. These seeds have been collected to produce young plants and re-establish heart-leafed Scalesia forests on southern Isabela Island.

Through our continued restoration efforts, the heart-leafed Scalesia forests can be revitalized, providing substantial benefits to other Galápagos species that depend on them, for many years to come.



iguanas’ genetic health, diet, and potential diseases. This information will inform future conservation strategies. While no invasive plant species were observed, the presence of feral cats that prey upon juvenile iguanas remains a concern. Addressing this threat appropriately will be essential for the long-term survival of the yellow land iguanas of Cartago Bay.

Scientific expeditions like this play a vital role in our conservation efforts in Galápagos. By providing valuable data on species populations, habitat conditions, and potential threats, our researchers can develop effective strategies to safeguard endangered species like the yellow iguana and its habitats.

REWILDING

RESTORING NESTING HABITATS FOR GALÁPAGOS PETRELS



The Galápagos Petrel (*Pterodroma phaeopygia*), a Critically Endangered seabird, faces threats from invasive plants, predators like rats, cats, and pigs, and human activities. To combat these challenges, Galápagos Conservancy, with substantial support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, has launched nesting habitat restoration and monitoring projects to help the Galápagos Petrel on several islands.

Since the initiative started in April, we have been monitoring petrel nesting areas on Santa Cruz and Santiago Islands. Additionally, **we have surveyed over 200 acres on Isabela Island’s Sierra Negra Volcano to identify potential nesting sites, resulting in the registration of 11 nests within the Galápagos National Park area.**

On the island of Santa Cruz, we are making strong progress clearing invasive plants from across more than 600 acres in petrel nesting areas, giving petrels access to their burrows once again. We are now expanding our efforts to protect petrels on Isabela and Santiago Islands.

These projects, which include removing invasive plants, monitoring nests, and tracking petrel movements, are crucial for the survival of this species. With the support of our partners and your generosity, we can ensure a future where these majestic birds continue to thrive in Galápagos.

ESTABLISHING A NEW GIANT TORTOISE RESERVE ON ISABELA ISLAND

Galápagos Conservancy is hard at work to create a new giant tortoise reserve on southern Isabela Island. This reserve will act as a “safe harbor” for the last large population of endemic wild tortoises on Sierra Negra Volcano. It will provide additional space for rearing young tortoises hatched in



SEA LION CONSERVATION: A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

Galápagos Conservancy, in partnership with the Universidad San Francisco de Quito and the Galápagos National Park Directorate, is committed to safeguarding the archipelago’s sea lion population.

The Pinniped Research and Monitoring Expedition is a cornerstone of our efforts. This annual expedition collects vital data on sea lion population trends and health to understand the impacts of environmental changes on these marine mammals. **This year, 14 colonies across the archipelago were monitored.** The data collected is informing the development of a first sea lion management plan by the Galápagos National Park to fully protect these marine mammals.

Community involvement is also essential for pinniped conservation, especially since the primary sea lion colonies in Galápagos are in its port settlements. To that end, a conservation education program has engaged local high school students in monthly training sessions. Participants have learned about sea lions and their habitat, and they have actively monitored sea lion colonies. **This program has raised environmental awareness and fostered a sense of responsibility for protecting these iconic animals.**



Conserving Galápagos sea lions helps maintain the overall health of the marine ecosystem. With continued challenges facing these species, global support is more important than ever. Together, we can ensure a thriving future for the pinnipeds of Galápagos.

captivity before their release into the wild, and **act as a staging ground for developing techniques to restore tortoise habitats.**

Having purchased a parcel adjacent to the national park, our team has conducted a baseline ecological evaluation, built a perimeter fence to keep invasive species out and tortoises in, and begun the arduous work of clearing the land of invasive plant species. A guard station is also being constructed to monitor and protect the area. Additionally, we are using satellite tags to track the movements of wild tortoises in the reserve.

The reserve will help alleviate pressure on the Isabela Island breeding and rearing center, allowing many of its young tortoises to be reared in the semi-wild securely and at a low cost. **This will become a laboratory for habitat restoration, where the lessons learned will be shared throughout the island.** We hope to re-establish a verdant forest of heart-leaved Scalesia within the reserve and attract a new colony of Galápagos petrels to nest in several of its small volcanic cones. Once the reserve is fully restored (a decades-long process), the plan is to annex the parcel to the national park, expanding the protected area in Galápagos.

SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY

EMPOWERING YOUNG MARINE CONSERVATIONISTS

In 2024, Galápagos Conservancy funded a community program to train a group of Ocean Scouts in scuba diving. **Eleven scouts successfully completed the training, gaining valuable skills and advancing local expertise in marine conservation.**

Through this program, these young environmental stewards have developed essential conservation techniques and are now actively engaging their local community involving their efforts to protect the ocean.



The training was made possible by generous funding from one of our conservation travel partners, Silversea Cruises. This investment in the next generation of young conservationists is key to contributing to the long-term sustainability of marine conservation efforts in the Galápagos Islands.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY: CULTIVATING FUTURE CONSERVATION STEWARDS

Galápagos Conservancy's Education for Sustainability program continues to empower the next generation of Galápagos conservationists. Through teacher training and a variety of extracurricular activities, including nature field trips, workshops, and citizen science projects, we are equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to protect the archipelago's unique biodiversity.

Recently, more than 380 teachers from all over the archipelago participated in the 15th iteration of the Teachers Institute, focusing on water and sanitation issues critical to the islands. This knowledge will benefit not only these educators but also their more than 7,000 students across Galápagos. By empowering teachers, we aim to foster a culture of sustainable living in Galápagos, helping to create a more resilient future for the Islands.



SUSTAINABLE CHOCOLATE PRODUCTION IN GALÁPAGOS

As part of our small grants program to women entrepreneurs, Galápagos Conservancy has supported Patricia Stucki, a naturalist guide, in establishing a sustainable cacao plantation on Santa Cruz Island.



Pati's farm now houses hundreds of plants and uses eco-friendly production methods to produce a variety of chocolate products, including chocolate tea, nibs, and liquid chocolate.

Galápagos chocolate is not only delicious but also contributes to the local economy while promoting small-scale sustainable agricultural practices and local food security.

GALÁPAGOS MARINE LIFE APP: DISCOVER THE WONDERS OF THE SEA

The Galápagos Marine Life App, developed by Galápagos Conservancy, the Galápagos National Park Directorate, and Professor Cleveland P. Hickman, Jr., is a new tool designed to aid in identifying and monitoring almost 1,000 species of marine animals of the Galápagos Marine Reserve.



This free digital field guide provides detailed information on a wide range of marine invertebrates, fishes, reptiles, and mammals found in the Galápagos Archipelago. Based on decades of research, the app offers stunning visuals and comprehensive coverage of the unique marine life of Galápagos.

Join the community of explorers and researchers by downloading the Galápagos Marine Life App and exploring the underwater wonders of the Galápagos.

iPhone users: Visit our website to download the app by scanning the QR code.

SCAN HERE



CONSERVE. PROTECT. RESTORE.

Our members are the driving force behind our efforts to conserve, protect, and restore the Galápagos Islands. As we work with our partners to tackle some of the biggest challenges Galápagos has ever faced, **we need your support now more than ever.**

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