

GALÁPAGOS

POST

THE JOURNEY HOME

Homecoming for the Floreana Giant Tortoise
Tortoises Lead Ecological Recovery on Isabela Island
Restoring the Yellow Iguana to Santiago Island



FROM THE DESK OF HUGO MOGOLLÓN



Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Supporters,

This year, it has been an immense honor to begin my tenure as President & CEO of Galápagos Conservancy—during a moment of profound importance for the archipelago.

Over the course of 2025, I have been witness to our dedicated team and partners battling invasive species, protecting endangered wildlife, and working hand in hand with local communities to build the next generation of conservation leaders in Galápagos. Their passion and perseverance inspire deep optimism for what lies ahead.

The conservation successes we've achieved together, including those featured in this publication, are truly worth celebrating. At the same time, set against the profound changes Galápagos has undergone through its history, we are in many ways barely scratching the surface when it comes to restoring the Islands and their unique ecosystems.

Consider the story of the giant tortoises.

When these islands were first discovered in 1535, an estimated 350,000 giant tortoises of 18 different species roamed the archipelago. Centuries of human exploitation reduced that number to just around 10,000 by the time modern restoration efforts began. Today, thanks to decades of careful protection and breeding, the population has rebounded to approximately 45,000 giant tortoises.

That number represents an incredible conservation success, as these species are now all trending in the right direction—if still far from the thriving populations these islands once knew.

There is so much work left to do. Not only for tortoises — but for all the species and ecosystems that make Galápagos unique. As we look ahead, we are redoubling our efforts around our three pillars: saving species, rewilding the archipelago, and fostering sustainability across the Islands.

Time and resources remain our greatest constraints. With your continued help, we can accelerate our impact and secure the future for this extraordinary place and its unique species.

Thank you for being a part of this imperative work.

Together, we are charting a course toward a better future for Galápagos!

Sincerely,

Hugo Mogollón
President & CEO
Galápagos Conservancy

TOGETHER, WE CAN KEEP GALÁPAGOS WILD FOREVER

Every contribution restores fragile ecosystems, safeguards endangered species, and empowers the people of Galápagos to protect their irreplaceable home.

Your generosity fuels every breakthrough: from restoring giant tortoise populations to replanting native forests and protecting endangered species like the Galápagos Penguin. Whether you give monthly, make a tribute gift, or include the Galápagos in your legacy, you become part of a movement safeguarding the future of one of the planet's most extraordinary places.

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Join our community of Galápagos Guardians with a monthly gift that sustains conservation year-round.
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— give.galapagos.org

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HOMEcomings FOR THE FLOREANA GIANT TORTOISE

*You can read the full story
at [National Geographic](https://www.nationalgeographic.org) or visit
galapagos.org to learn more about
this remarkable journey home.*

In February, a monumental conservation dream will come true: giant tortoises will once again roam the volcanic slopes and plains of Floreana Island for the first time in 150 years.

It is hard to grasp the weight of this accomplishment without taking a step back. National Geographic did just that in its September issue with the article “Resurrecting the Lost Giants of the Galápagos,” where they recount the dramatic story of how giant tortoises—icons of the archipelago—were nearly erased from history.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, whalers, pirates, and other seafarers plundered more than 100,000 tortoises from the Galápagos Islands for food and oil. Fifteen species were pushed to the brink of extinction; three vanished entirely. The first to disappear was the Floreana giant tortoise, last seen in the 1850s.

National Geographic tells the story of one of the greatest recoveries in conservation history: how a chance encounter and decades of work by Galápagos Conservancy and the Galápagos National Park Directorate brought the Floreana giant tortoise back from extinction.

Vestiges of a Lost Lineage

In 2000, a research expedition to Wolf Volcano on Isabela Island uncovered something extraordinary. While surveying the area, our scientists found several giant tortoises with distinctive saddleback shells—an unusual trait for tortoises here and one that immediately drew scientists’ attention.

The team, led by Dr. James Gibbs, our VP of Conservation and Science, soon discovered that these tortoises were genetic hybrids carrying the Floreana lineage. They were descendants of animals that had survived the whaling era, when ships transported tortoises between islands, intentionally or inadvertently. Dr. Gibbs speculated that a shipwreck may have caused some tortoises to drift ashore on Isabela, where they bred and preserved Floreana giant tortoise DNA for generations, largely unnoticed.

What was thought to be lost forever was, in fact, waiting to be brought back.

The Road to Reintroduction

Building on this breakthrough, our team and partners carefully relocated a number of these hybrid tortoises from Wolf Volcano to the National Park’s breeding center on Santa Cruz Island. There, guided by genetic analysis, we bred and raised hundreds of tortoises with strong Floreana ancestry, nurturing them until they were big and strong enough to thrive in the wild.

This February, more than 300 of these young giants will be ready to return to Floreana Island—a historic first step in restoring a missing piece of the island’s ecosystem. Additional releases and monitoring will follow in the years ahead to build a self-sustaining population. This work—more than two decades in the making—has only been possible thanks to the generosity of supporters who share our vision for restoring the Galápagos.



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*Above: Floreana hybrid giant tortoise
on Floreana island; below left:
Floreana hybrid tortoise hatchlings
at the Santa Cruz Breeding Center;
below right: Wolf Volcano giant
tortoise with Floreana tortoise genes
© Galápagos Conservancy*



NATURE’S ARCHITECTS: TORTOISES LEAD ECOLOGICAL RECOVERY ON ISABELA ISLAND

On Isabela Island, a delicate balance is slowly returning. Landscapes once choked with invasive plants are beginning to thrive again, and native species are finding the space to grow and flourish – all thanks to the remarkable efforts of an unwitting gardener: the giant tortoise.

At sunrise in southern Isabela, **111 young tortoises recently took their first steps into the wild**—a milestone in the decades-long effort to restore this island’s fragile ecosystem. Their shells, still smooth from years of care, gleamed under the soft light of dawn as they moved slowly into the green foothills of Cerro Cazuela, at the base of Sierra Negra Volcano.

Each of these tortoises from Sierra Negra spent the first five to seven years of their lives at the Arnaldo Tupiza Breeding Center in Puerto Villamil on Santa Cruz Island. There, under the care of the Galápagos National Park Directorate and Galápagos Conservancy, they grew strong enough to survive in the wild. Without that protection, many would not have made it past their first months, a fragile stage when feral pigs can destroy nests and invasive rats and pigs prey on hatchlings.

Now back in their native terrain, these young tortoises are beginning their essential role rebuilding the ecosystems that once depended on them. As they move across the terrain, they disperse seeds, clear paths through dense vegetation, and create space for new growth. Their presence restores balance to the land, reviving the processes that sustain Galápagos’ unique landscapes.

“Restoration doesn’t happen overnight,” says Dr. James Gibbs, Vice President of Science and Conservation at Galápagos Conservancy. “It’s the result of decades of science, commitment, and collaboration. **Every tortoise walking on Isabela today is living proof that recovery is possible when we stay the course.**”

Galápagos Conservancy, together with the Galápagos National Park Directorate, has led research, breeding programs, and habitat restoration for decades. Every release is grounded in data and guided by experience, ensuring that each young tortoise contributes to the long-term recovery of the land — a process that benefits not only tortoises but plants, birds, and other wildlife.

This achievement is made possible thanks to the generosity of supporters who believe in the power of ecological restoration. Your contributions fund hatchling care, research, and the complex logistics needed to return these giants to their ancestral home.

Each tortoise carries with it the efforts of many and the promise of a living future. Watching them walk again on their native soil is to witness what hope looks like when it finally comes home.

*Above: Giant tortoise hatchlings released on Southern Isabela Island
© Galápagos Conservancy*

MEET OUR TEAM

LEADING WITH SCIENCE AND HEART: CAROLINA LOYOLA JOINS GALÁPAGOS CONSERVANCY’S CONSERVATION TEAM

At Galápagos Conservancy, we believe that conservation succeeds when it is rooted in community, when those who call the archipelago home lead the way. Among these rising leaders is Carolina Loyola, the newest member of our conservation team and part of a growing generation shaping the islands’ future.

As the Conservancy’s Galápagos Petrels and Birds Coordinator, Carolina leads efforts to protect some of the archipelago’s most threatened bird species, including the critically endangered Galápagos Petrel. Her work spans Santiago, Santa Cruz, and Isabela Islands, where she works with the Galápagos National Park Directorate to monitor nests, restore native vegetation, and control invasive species that threaten breeding and nesting sites.

Born and raised in Galápagos, and driven by curiosity and a love for nature, Carolina began volunteering on conservation projects at just eighteen years of age. Over the past few years, she has worked with renowned ornithologists in the islands, contributing to multiple studies of land bird health, while monitoring species across the islands. Carolina has also twice received support from Galápagos Conservancy’s Small Grants Program to advance avian disease studies. Her first scientific publication documented the presence of microfilaria (a parasitic nematode) in Galápagos land birds for the first time, marking an important milestone for bird conservation in the islands.

For Carolina, leading this work is deeply personal. “These are the species I grew up with,” she says. “I’ve seen how fragile they are, and how much people here care about protecting them. That connection makes every long day in the field worthwhile.”

Carolina’s story mirrors a larger change taking place in Galápagos, where more women are stepping into leadership roles in science, conservation and sustainability. Their work blends technical expertise with a commitment to community that is shaping a more resilient future for the archipelago.

For Galápagos Conservancy, Carolina’s work embodies the essence of conservation: when science and community come together, lasting change follows. The future of Galápagos depends on those who know and love these islands best — the people who call them home.



As Carolina and her colleagues continue to lead with both science and heart, each petrel that takes flight over the islands becomes a symbol of what’s possible when dedication and local knowledge come together to protect life in Galápagos for generations to come.

*Above: Carolina Loyola; below: Carolina (circled) on the ground with the conservation team.
© Galápagos Conservancy*



SAVING SEA LIONS IN A CHANGING OCEAN

Along the volcanic shores of Galápagos, the first rays of sunlight reveal sea lions stretched across the rocks, their gruff barks carrying through the morning air. These moments—familiar and timeless—remind us what makes these islands so extraordinary.

Here, two endemic pinnipeds—the Galápagos sea lion and the Galápagos fur seal—coexist under demanding and highly specific conditions. Both are endangered, their lives shaped by the rhythm of the ocean and the pressures of a warming world.

Over the past decade, scientists have been tracking populations of both species through extensive surveys led by the Galápagos National Park Directorate, Galápagos Conservancy, and the Universidad San Francisco de Quito. Researchers estimate that there are between 17,200 and 24,200 sea lions and 14,000 to 19,000 fur seals across the archipelago.

The data collected tell a story of contrast and resilience. While some eastern rookeries are showing signs of recovery, others closer to human settlements continue to decline. Events like El Niño, which warm the ocean and reduce fish availability, can devastate entire populations in a matter of months. Still, amid these challenges, the work of scientists is revealing the remarkable capacity of these species to respond and endure.

For Dr. Diego Páez-Rosas, researcher at Universidad San Francisco de Quito and Research Associate at Galápagos Conservancy, long-term monitoring is crucial. “Continuous monitoring doesn’t just tell us how many animals remain—it shows us how they’re responding to a changing environment. It’s an essential tool for reacting in time, especially when El Niño events can threaten entire populations,” he explains.



Recent research analyzing the isotopic signatures in the whiskers of pups has revealed something extraordinary: mothers move between feeding zones throughout the year to find food for their young. This trophic flexibility allows them to survive in one of the planet’s most unpredictable ecosystems. Health monitoring of pups also shows encouraging results—most are in good condition—but subtle changes in body fat and immune function could affect their future if warming trends continue.

For many, the experience of seeing a newborn pup for the first time was life-changing—a spark that turned curiosity into purpose. This blend of science, education, and commitment defines the mission of Galápagos Conservancy: to protect wildlife through knowledge, collaboration, and shared responsibility. With the help of our donors, these programs are creating measurable impact—stronger data, engaged youth, and a renewed sense of stewardship across the islands.

Each data set, each student, and each pup born in Galápagos shores carries a message of hope: even in a changing ocean, collaboration and compassion can help life endure. Together, we’re helping ensure that the songs of these coastal guardians will continue to echo across the islands for generations to come.

Beyond the science, this effort is also nurturing a new generation of conservationists. Through a program supported by Galápagos Conservancy, more than 40 local high-school students joined researchers and park rangers to learn field methods, conduct population counts, and design community projects that raise awareness about marine conservation.

Above: Students in the field; right: Diego Páez and his students © Galápagos Conservancy; background: sea lions on the beach © Daniel Fitter



CITIZEN SCIENCE: CAN YOU SPOT THE SPECIES IN SANTA FÉ’S WILDLIFE LINE-UP?

A century ago, the giant tortoises of Santa Fé Island disappeared. Today, through an ambitious conservation experiment—and a little help from you—they may once again be shaping the future of this unique island ecosystem.

On a rocky outcrop in the Galápagos archipelago, a camera silently clicks. The sun beats down on dark volcanic stone. An iguana—ashen, prehistoric, and strangely elegant—crosses the frame. Later, a Galápagos rice rat, small and elusive, darts through a patch of cactus. And lumbering behind them all: a giant tortoise, ancient and determined, forging a slow path across the landscape.

Each image, frozen in time, is a clue. And somewhere in those images might lie the answer to a radical conservation question: **Can a species lost to history be “replaced”—and can that help revive an entire island ecosystem?**

Now, scientists are inviting **you** to help find the answer.

The Missing Keystone

Santa Fé Island once echoed with the footsteps of a now-extinct species: the Santa Fé giant tortoise. Like all Galápagos tortoises, these long-lived reptiles were “ecosystem engineers,” shaping their habitat through grazing, seed dispersal, and trail-making.

As with the Floreana tortoise, in the 18th and 19th centuries, passing sailors hunted the Santa Fé tortoise into extinction. And with it went one of the island’s ecological cornerstones. Things got worse in the 20th century, when invasive goats—introduced by humans—ravaged the island’s vegetation for nearly 100 years. The goats were finally eradicated in the 1970s, giving Santa Fé a fighting chance at recovery. Yet something was still missing.

Without tortoises, the island’s web of life—including Darwin’s finches, lava lizards, pallid iguanas, and the Galápagos rice rat—struggled to fully rebound.

Rewilding with a Close Cousin

Since 2015, the Galápagos National Park Directorate and Galápagos Conservancy have been working to restore that missing link—by introducing a close relative of the extinct tortoise: the Española giant tortoise.

More than 700 have now been released on Santa Fé. These newcomers are expected to fill the ecological role once

held by their extinct cousins—grazing, dispersing seeds, and reengineering the environment as they go.

To find out if these “replacement” tortoises are doing their job, scientists have deployed 60 motion-sensitive cameras across Santa Fé Island. These cameras have been quietly capturing life in action—thousands upon thousands of images of native species, 24 hours a day.

Some are placed in tortoise-inhabited zones; others in tortoise-free areas. By comparing these two sets, researchers hope to answer a deceptively simple question: **Are tortoises helping the island become more biodiverse?**



But scientists can’t analyze all those images alone.

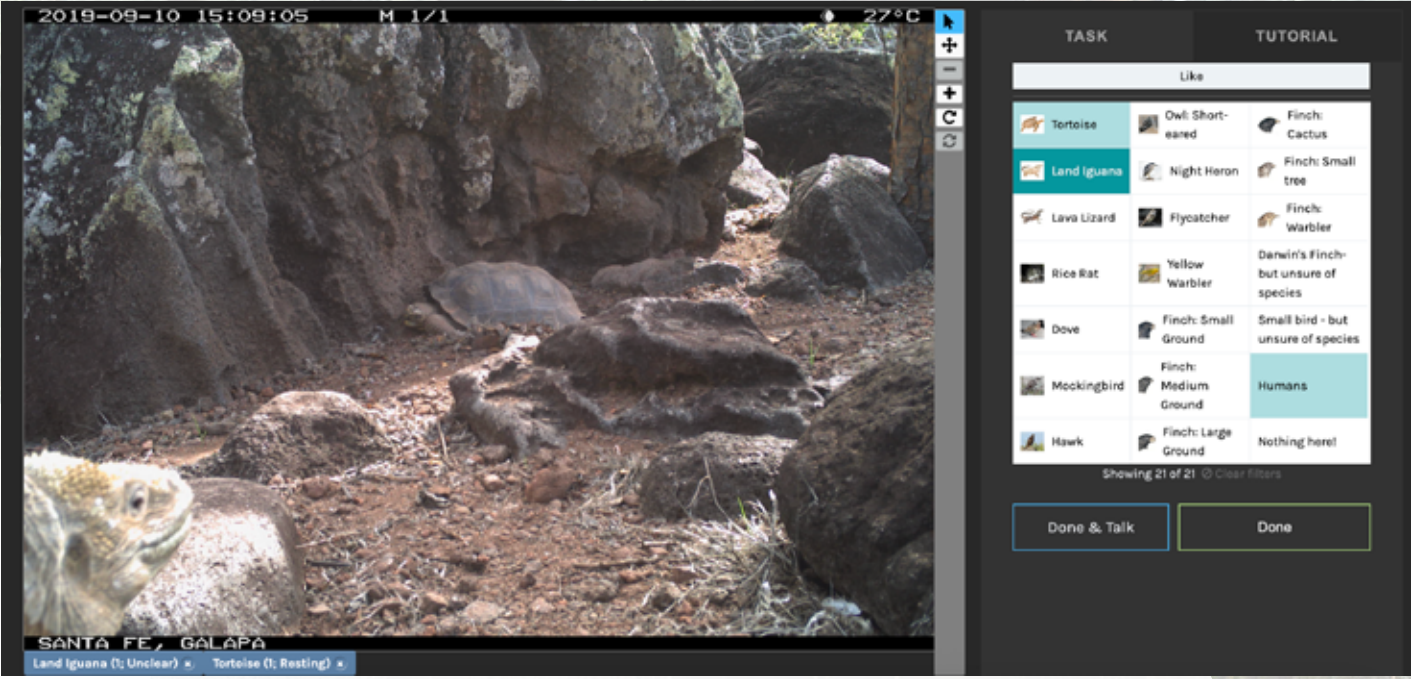
Enter: YOU

Thanks to **Zooniverse**, a free online platform for global citizen science projects, you can help classify these wildlife photos from anywhere in the world.

Whether you're a seasoned naturalist or just curious, your efforts count.

You don’t need to know a rice rat from a lava lizard (yet). Each image includes an ID guide and tips. All it takes is a sharp eye and a few spare minutes.

This project doesn't just ask whether tortoises can return. It asks whether we can help restore the fabric of nature, one thread at a time.



A yellow land iguana and a giant tortoise photographed side by side by a trap camera, on view in the Zooniverse platform; opposite: camera trap view of a giant tortoise on Española Island.

Every photo you review adds to a growing dataset that could shape the future of Santa Fé Island—and along the way, you’ll get to know some of its most fascinating inhabitants. Some images are sharp and clear. Others are blurs, shadows, or the flash of a tail. But each one contributes to the larger picture.

Science With a Purpose

“This is innovative conservation management,” says Dr. Jorge Carrión, Director of Conservation at Galápagos Conservancy. “Introducing a species analogous to an extinct one to restore lost ecosystem functions—it’s a bold and hopeful approach.”

Indeed, Santa Fé could become a model for ecological restoration—especially in places like Galápagos, where isolation has created both extraordinary biodiversity and complex conservation challenges. This work is cautious, science-led, and grounded in decades of ecological research. It’s part of Galápagos’s legacy as a living laboratory—a place where big ideas are tested for the benefit of life on Earth.

Why Your Help Matters

The data you help generate won’t just sit in a spreadsheet. It will directly shape how Santa Fé is managed—whether more tortoises should be released, which habitats need protection, and how to support the species that live there.

At a time when many feel disconnected from the natural world, this project offers a rare chance to be part of its renewal. No plane ticket needed—just a screen, your attention, and a few minutes of your time.

The idea that “somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known” captures the essence of citizen science. **On Santa Fé Island, that something might be in the next image you classify.**

This project is a collaboration between Galápagos Conservancy, the Galápagos National Park Directorate, and the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF).

Ready to Begin?

Scan the QR code on this page or visit **Zooniverse.org** to get started.



Your clicks can help bring an island back to life.

THE JOURNEY HOME: RESTORING THE YELLOW IGUANA TO SANTIAGO ISLAND

Nearly a century ago, scientists in Galápagos faced an urgent problem. Human activity on the small island of Baltra was increasing, and they feared the island's yellow land iguanas could soon disappear. In a bold effort to save the species, they relocated several dozen individuals across the narrow channel to North Seymour Island, a place where land iguanas had never existed before. It was a decision that, a hundred years later, would become one of Galápagos' most remarkable restoration stories.

The relocation worked beyond anyone's expectations. While Baltra's land iguanas vanished soon after, the relocated colony on North Seymour thrived. From just a handful of animals in the 1930s, their numbers grew to more than 6,000. The island became an unexpected source of renewal for the rest of the archipelago.

Meanwhile, on Santiago Island, the story had taken an opposite turn. Yellow land iguanas had faded from existence. The last recorded sighting was made by none other than Charles Darwin in 1835. Just a few years later, they were gone. Invasive goats destroyed the vegetation while feral pigs dug up the iguanas' nests, erasing a species that had once shaped the landscape. For nearly 180 years, Santiago's environment remained altered—its soil compacted and its native flora stripped away.

Five years ago, **Galápagos Conservancy and the Galápagos National Park Directorate** joined forces to return land iguanas to Santiago. The plan was to move thousands of individuals from the now-crowded North Seymour to the island that had lost them. The first large-scale transfer in 2020 brought more than 1,400 iguanas back to Santiago from North Seymour. Early monitoring has yielded encouraging signs. Park rangers and scientists are already reporting active burrows and juveniles in the wild—clear signs that the species was not only surviving but reproducing naturally.

In 2025, it was time to continue the process. In August and September, another **1,500 iguanas** made the trip from North Seymour to Santiago. Each transfer followed a meticulous process: capture, veterinary checks, deworming, biometric recording, and microchipping for long-term monitoring. To prevent the accidental introduction of invasive species, the iguanas then spent several days in quarantine at the Park's facilities in Santa Cruz, allowing time to purge any plant seeds eaten on North Seymour before their release on Santiago.

Only after passing every test were the iguanas cleared for the journey. Conservation technician Adrián Cueva recalls one of those moments vividly. Holding an iguana by the base of its tail, he gently placed it on the volcanic soil. The animal paused, lifted its head, and moved forward with quiet determination until it disappeared into the brush. "It was a powerful feeling," he says, "as if it knew it was finally home."

Each iguana released represents a step toward restoring the ecological processes that make these islands thrive. Wherever they dig, the soil loosens and breathes again. Wherever they roam, seeds find new ground. Already, young *Opuntia* cacti are sprouting in

places where the ground once seemed lifeless.

For **Dr. Jorge Carrión**, Director of Conservation at Galápagos Conservancy, this long-term effort reflects what effective conservation truly means. **"This project embodies what science and collaboration can achieve when guided by a shared vision for restoration,"** he explains. Under his leadership, Galápagos Conservancy and the Galápagos National Park Directorate have ensured that every stage—from capture to release—is grounded in science and cooperation.

The results are visible on both sides of the story. On **North Seymour**, the relocation eases the pressure of an overgrown population, allowing vegetation and nesting birds to recover. On **Santiago**, the iguanas' return is reactivating essential ecological functions that had been dormant for nearly two centuries.

What began as an improvised rescue almost a century ago has become a model of science-based restoration and cooperation.

Below: yellow land iguana feeding on an Opuntia cactus; opposite: yellow land iguana climbing lava rocks on Santiago Island
© Galápagos Conservancy



Galápagos Conservancy's conservation team and Galápagos National Park rangers releasing iguanas on Santiago Island © Galápagos Conservancy

EMPOWERING ISLANDS FROM WITHIN: GALÁPAGOS CONSERVANCY'S COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM



In Galápagos, many of the best ideas for protecting nature don't come from laboratories or offices, but from the local people who know their islands best. Teachers, artisans, farmers, and entrepreneurs are finding new ways to weave conservation into everyday life. Their creativity and commitment are building a stronger, more sustainable Galápagos from the ground up.

Every year, Galápagos Conservancy supports these initiatives through its Conservation Action Grants Program, providing direct funding for community-led conservation and sustainability projects throughout the archipelago. Now in its seventh round, the program has cumulatively invested over five million dollars in 198 projects since 2021—each project finding a new way to care for the environment.

These grants, ranging from \$100 to \$10,000, were designed to make conservation accessible to everyone. With this support, communities have launched recycling projects, restored native forests, advanced sustainable farming practices, and educated children about caring for their islands.

One of those changemakers is Mayra Hernández, an entrepreneur from Santa Cruz Island who has been a participant in the Women in Sustainable Entrepreneurship (WISE) program supported by Galápagos Conservancy. Her small business transforms plastic waste collected from local beaches into colorful artwork and educational souvenirs that raise awareness about ocean pollution.

"I saw an opportunity where others only saw waste," Mayra says. "Galápagos Conservancy helped me turn that idea into something meaningful. Every piece I create tells a story of conservation and hope for the islands."



Top: Ashleigh Klingman, grant recipient, presenting her book, *Pepe the Petrel*; middle: Ecological Corner project; bottom: Belén Vasquez, WISE recipient © Galápagos Conservancy

Stories like Mayra's are multiplying across Galápagos. Through the WISE program—developed with partners including Goldman Sachs, Silversea Cruises, Intrepid, and Golden Galapagos—women receive small grants to lead projects that teach environmental education, reduce plastic use, and promote livelihoods that work in harmony with nature. Their leadership shows that empowering women is not just about equality; it's about building communities that thrive alongside the ecosystems they protect.

For Gabriela Vivas, Director of Operations at Galápagos Conservancy, this approach reflects the organization's belief that conservation and community are inseparable. "We can't protect Galápagos without its people," she explains. "Every project we support, especially those led by women, creates local allies for conservation. These are the people who ensure that change lasts."

Year after year, Galápagos Conservancy continues to strengthen this partnership between science and society, channeling resources directly to local communities. It's a reminder that true sustainability takes root when conservation is shaped by the people of Galápagos themselves.

PADDLING TOWARD CONSERVATION

As the sun rises over Puerto Ayora on Santa Cruz Island, kayaks glide silently across the turquoise waters of Academy Bay. From their seats, Galapagos youth watch pelicans skim the ocean surface and rays glide beneath their kayaks. For many of the paddlers, it's their first time seeing their hometown from this side of the water. That's because for many young people who live in Galápagos, these places are surprisingly out of reach. Access to gear is limited, and local families often can't afford recreational outings on the water. Many island youth grow up surrounded by beauty they rarely get to see up close.

What began as a few borrowed kayaks and a handful of volunteers has grown into a grassroots movement for conservation. With support from Galápagos Conservancy's Community Grants Program, the initiative *Cuidemos la Bahía* ("Let's Take Care of the Bay") gained the momentum it needed to thrive. The grant allowed the team to purchase new kayaks, safety gear, and snorkel equipment, and to train nine young environmental stewards in water rescue and first aid. These upgrades made the outings safer and transformed the project into a platform for leadership, teamwork, and marine education. What began as an informal weekend activity is now a community experience that connects people of all ages to the ocean in a meaningful way.

Since 2024, the project has organized more than sixty free kayaking trips, welcoming nearly a thousand participants—children, parents, students, and elders alike. Each outing blends discovery with care: short talks about the bay's ecology, small coastal cleanups, and quiet moments that remind everyone how extraordinary it is to call Galápagos home. Many participants finish the day with new skills and new eyes for their surroundings. Some return week after week, volunteering as guides and helping others feel what they felt the first time they dipped a paddle into the water.

For Robert Clay Guerra Calderón, who leads the initiative, the impact is tangible. "People realize that protecting Galápagos



Robert Guerra, Galápagos Conservancy grant recipient, with a group of kayakers © Galápagos Conservancy

isn't only about research or big projects," he says. "It begins here—when you paddle, look around, and feel how alive our bay really is."

This is the kind of citizen-led conservation that Galápagos Conservancy strives to nurture—initiatives born from the community, strengthened through collaboration, and sustained by the generosity of our supporters. By providing equipment, training, and visibility, Galápagos Conservancy helped transform a local dream into a model for environmental education and community pride. The kayaks remain available for community use, and plans are already underway to expand routes beyond Puerto Ayora to other parts of Santa Cruz and neighboring islands, inspiring new generations to discover the same joy and purpose in caring for their home.

Each paddle stroke carries meaning. It's a gesture of unity between people and nature, between past and future. Thanks to this partnership, local residents are not only enjoying their bay; they're protecting it.



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For 40 years, Galápagos Conservancy has been the only U.S.-based nonprofit solely dedicated to safeguarding the Galápagos Islands—and we can't do it without you.

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