

April 28th, 2014

Dear Lab of Ornithology members and friends,

The Galápagos Archipelago is a unique wonder of the natural world, a place where we can stand face to face with venerable land tortoises, fearless and playful sea lions, comical blue-footed boobies, and scientifically influential Darwin's finches. Evolution has produced spectacles at every turn within this dramatic landscape where stark volcanic islands rise from richly productive marine waters.



Join us on a journey through the Enchanted Isles. Beyond the typical tourist experience of simply observing wildlife, we – as expert naturalists and evolutionary biologists – will guide you through the deeper biological, geological, and historical significance of Galápagos.

By its very nature, a visit to Galápagos creates a wealth of lasting memories. On my first visit to the islands, I camped for six months on tiny Isla Daphne while studying its various populations of Darwin's finches. Now as a Cornell professor, I return to continue my own evolutionary research on the Galápagos mockingbirds and to teach an evolutionary biology curriculum for

Cornell undergraduates. I look forward to sharing these first-hand experiences with you on our special trips for Lab members, which go beyond a typical natural history-oriented tour: our journey will be enhanced by expert guidance, readings, and lectures on relevant research, historical connections, and biological discoveries.



We will wake every morning ready to explore stunning island and marine habitats, interact with endemic wildlife, and learn about the biological and evolutionary processes that underlie the many wildlife spectacles that surround us. Although our observations and discussions will cover all aspects of Galápagos natural history, birds are the most ubiquitous and conspicuous component of the local fauna. In addition to an exuberance of seabirds, we will search out many charismatic endemics—ranging from Darwin's Finches to the elusive Galápagos Petrel.



These trips for Lab members are organized and offered by Galápagos Best, a boutique tour operator. Our local leader and expedition operator, Fausto Rodriguez, is a skilled naturalist and guide with infectious enthusiasm and deep local knowledge; we have worked together often and I know of no better ambassador to the islands.

Unlike my undergrads, you won't have to worry about grades or homework if you join our Lab member's trip to Galápagos, but during this inspiring and intellectually enriching voyage, I hope to impart to you an equally rich and satisfying understanding of the natural history, ecology, evolution, and behavior of Galápagos wildlife.

Best regards,

IRBY LOVETTE

Irby Lovette

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LAB MEMBER GALÁPAGOS EXPEDITION INFORMATION

In April 2015 we are offering two Galápagos itineraries, each spanning a full week in the islands.

- Each journey has been customized with Lab members in mind – these are not the standard tours undertaken by most visitors to the archipelago.
- Since we travel in a group of only 14 participants, we are able to access less frequented sites that larger groups are not allowed to visit.
- Our high ratio of leaders to participants means that experts with first-hand knowledge of the local biology are always at hand to answer your questions.

Galápagos fauna very likely to be seen on both itineraries:

MAMMALS

Galápagos sea lions, Galápagos fur seals, possibility of various species of dolphins and whales



REPTILES

Giant tortoises, Galápagos land iguanas, marine iguanas, lava lizards



BIRDS

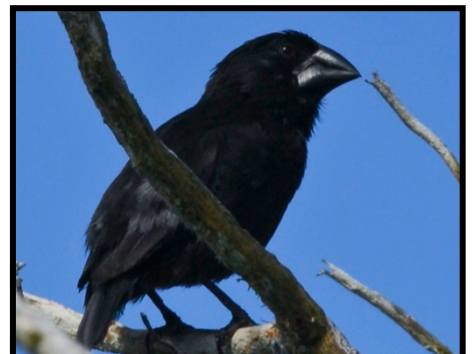
Many **seabirds**, including Galápagos specialties like Blue-footed and Nazca Boobies, Great and Magnificent Frigatebirds, Lava and Swallow-tailed Gulls, Red-billed Tropicbirds, Galápagos Shearwaters, and Galápagos Petrels.



Abundant **waterbirds** including Galápagos Penguins, American Flamingos, Lava Gulls, Swallow-tailed Gulls, Brown Noddies, Brown Pelicans, White-cheeked Pintails, American Oystercatchers, Lava Herons, and various migratory shorebirds.



Land birds including Galápagos Hawks, Galápagos Doves, Galápagos Flycatchers, and Galápagos Mockingbirds. Various Galápagos Finch species ("Darwin's finches"), including the Woodpecker Finch and other highland tree finches that require dedicated searching.





Northern Voyage

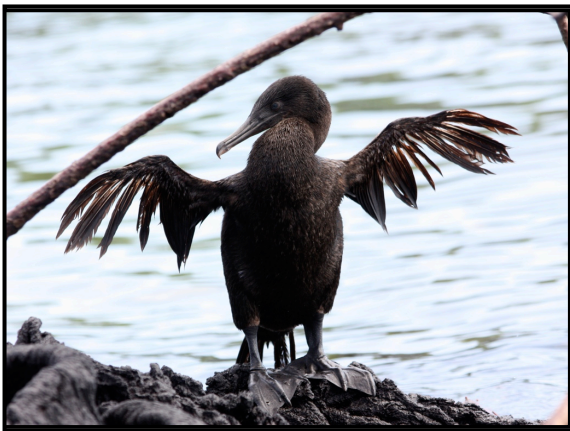
April 10-17, 2015 in Galápagos

Total duration: depart USA on April 8th or 9th, return to USA on April 18th.

Specialties:

Waved Albatross, Española Mockingbird, San Cristobal Mockingbird, Red-footed Booby, Short-eared Owl, Sharp-beaked Ground Finch, many seabird colonies

- Day 1: Baltra Island (arrive) & Santa Cruz Island: Cerro Dragón
- Day 2: Santa Fe Island & South Plazas Island
- Day 3: San Cristobal Island: Cerro Brujo, Kicker Rock, El Junco Lagoon
- Day 4: Española (Hood) Island: Gardner Bay & Punta Suarez
- Day 5: Santa Cruz Island: Puerto Ayora & Highlands
- Day 6: Santiago Island: Chinese Hat & Sullivan Bay
- Day 7: Genovesa (Tower) Island: Darwin Bay and Prince Phillips steps
- Day 8: Santa Cruz Island: Turtle Cove; Baltra Island (depart)



Southern Voyage

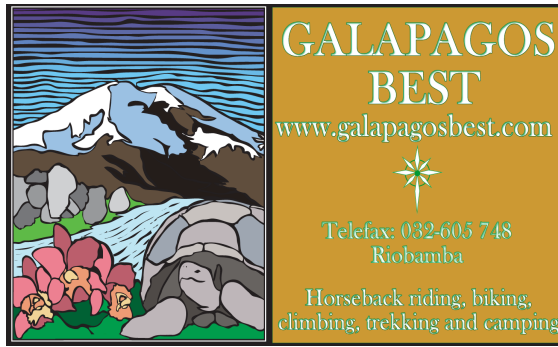
April 17-24, 2015 in Galápagos

Total duration: depart USA on April 15th or 16th, return to USA on April 25th.

Specialties:

Flightless Cormorant, Galápagos Fur Seal, Galápagos Penguin, Medium Tree Finch, Galápagos Martin, the largest Marine Iguanas, highest possibility of whales and dolphins

- Day 1: Baltra Island (arrive) & Santa Cruz Island: highlands
- Day 2: Floreana Island: Punta Cormorant & highlands
- Day 3: Isabela Island: Puerto Villamil & Sierra Negra
- Day 4: Isabela Island: Punta Moreno & Elizabeth Bay
- Day 5: Isabela Island: Urbina Bay & Tagus Cove
- Day 6: Fernandina Island: Punta Espinoza; Isabela Island: Punta Vicente Roca
- Day 7: Santiago Island: Puerto Egas & Bartolome Island
- Day 8: North Seymour Island; Baltra Island (depart)



Accommodations, Amenities, and Travel Information

THE YACHT BELUGA

In Galápagos we will be traveling and sleeping aboard the *Beluga*, a First Class 110' motor yacht. Amenities include double cabins, each with a private bathroom and shower, air conditioning, spacious indoor lounges and outdoor deck areas, expansive windows, and full modern safety and navigation equipment. Two double cabins have single matrimonial style beds, while the others are outfitted with separate upper and lower berths.



FOOD

The chef aboard the *Beluga* will indulge our group with locally inspired dishes, including fresh fish, salads, and local fruits. We are happy to cater to most dietary needs.



HOTEL IN GUAYAQUIL

We will transit to and from Galápagos via the coastal Ecuadorian city of Guayaquil, which has direct air service from several US cities. In Guayaquil we will lodge at the Oro Verde, a five-star hotel located close to the international and Galápagos airports.

ACTIVITY LEVEL

This trip is best suited for participants who are in good general health and mobility. We transit between ship and shore in small boats, and although all outings are optional, you won't want to miss out on our strolls on the islands nor on the many opportunities to swim and snorkel. By way of comparison, most of our walks are equivalent in difficulty to a morning-long bird-walk along your local beach or forest preserve back at home.



DAILY SCHEDULE

As experienced ornithologists, we take full advantage of the times when birds and other animals are most active. A typical day will begin with an early morning excursion during the peak of animal activity. Although each day is different, most involve several trips by Zodiac to special locations on the islands, as well as one or two opportunities for snorkeling or other water activities. We will return to the *Beluga* for all meals. In keeping with the intellectually enhanced theme of this trip, we will take advantage of our time in transit and in the evenings for lectures and informal discussions of our daily encounters with geology and nature.

EXPEDITION LEADERS



Fausto Rodriguez is one of the most experienced and biologically knowledgeable guides in Galápagos. Fausto was raised in the countryside of the Ecuadorian Andes, just south of Quito. He visited Galápagos for the first time in 1990 and immediately fell in love with the islands. After working as a mate aboard various boats, he completed the rigorous training to become a licensed Galápagos National Park naturalist guide in 1996, and later was awarded a degree in Languages and Tourism in London, South Bank College, UK. Fausto has particular interests and strengths in geology, plants, birds, and mammals. He is especially passionate about guiding and teaching, still just as excited about the Galápagos Islands and their natural history as when he first visited them. His animated sense of wonder and discovery is infectious! Fausto is the owner/operator of Galápagos Best, and has served as the sponsor and co-leader for previous visits of Lab of Ornithology groups, as well as Cornell undergraduate courses.



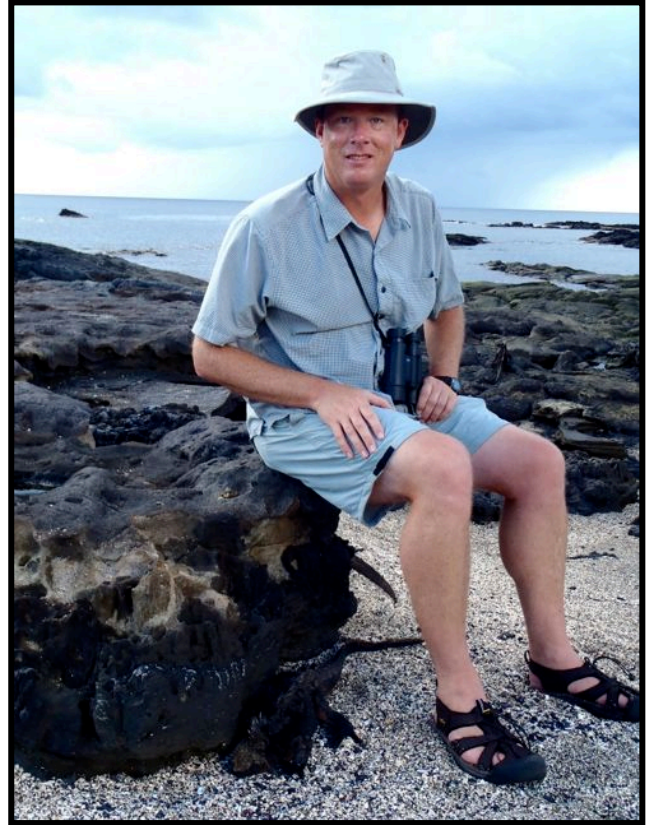
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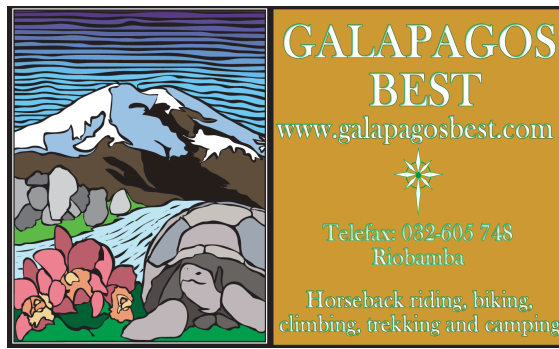
Horseback riding, biking,
climbing, trekking and camping

Dr. Irby Lovette is the Director of the Fuller Evolutionary Biology Program and Associate Director of Academic Affairs at the Lab of Ornithology, and a Professor in Cornell's Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. His experiences in Galápagos began in 1991 on a six-month visit as a young field assistant on the now-famous study of Darwin's Finches on tiny Isla Daphne, a project later featured in the Pulitzer Prize-winning book *The Beak of the Finch*. In more recent years, Irby has studied the evolution of island birds, including the Galápagos mockingbird radiation that was an important inspiration for Charles Darwin. More generally, Irby's research addresses questions about the ecology, evolution, behavior, and conservation of birds and other animals. He has published more than 130 scientific papers and is the lead editor of the forthcoming revision of the Lab of Ornithology's *Handbook of Bird Biology* textbook.



At Cornell, Irby annually teaches introductory evolutionary biology, graduate seminars, and intellectually rigorous field courses. He has won several awards for undergraduate teaching and mentoring. His undergraduate "Galápagos curriculum" is now in its fourth year. This unique program engages freshman students from minority backgrounds; as part of their Spring Semester experience, they take both a Galápagos-themed version of Cornell's core Evolutionary Biology course and a special Freshman Writing Seminar that addresses human perspectives on this islands, from the earliest explorers to today's residents and visitors. As part of this curriculum, the students visit Galápagos with Irby and Fausto during Cornell's spring break.





FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

The fee for the expedition is **\$6650** per person in double occupancy. This includes nearly all costs from the time we arrive in Ecuador until we leave: all airport transfers, hotel nights in Guayaquil on the arrival and departure days, the flight to and from mainland Ecuador to Galápagos, National Park entrance and other Galápagos visitor fees, room and board on the Beluga, and all tips and gratuities.

This price does not include airfare from your home to Guayaquil, Ecuador. It also does not include alcoholic beverages, phone calls, souvenirs, meals in mainland Guayaquil other than breakfasts, or other items of a personal nature.

EXPEDITION REGISTRATION

All payments and official registration should be made directly with the expedition operator, Galápagos Best. As these trips are open only to members and friends of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, please initiate this process by sending an email to Lynn Swain (MLS539@cornell.edu) at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. She will take your reservation and put you in contact with Galápagos Best to make logistical and financial arrangements.

EXTENSIONS IN MAINLAND ECUADOR

Galapagos Best is often able to arrange special extensions on mainland Ecuador, ranging from day-trip natural history excursions from Guayaquil to longer adventures at preeminent birding destinations in the Amazonian lowlands and the Andes. Please let us know if you would like us to help arrange a customized visit to any of these destinations as part of your travels to Galápagos .