

Green sea turtles, *Chelonia mydas*,  
on Fernandina (Narborough) Island

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Chapter XVII

# GALAPAGOS ARCHIPELAGO

*The Whole Group Volcanic—Numbers of Craters—Leafless  
Bushes Colony at Charles Island—James Island  
Salt-lake in crater—Natural History of the Group  
Ornithology, Curious Finches—Reptiles—Great Tortoises,  
Habits of—Marine Lizard, Feeds on Sea-weed—Terrestrial  
Lizard, Burrowing Habits, Herbivorous—Importance of  
Reptiles in the Archipelago—Fish, Shells, Insects  
Botany—American Types of Organization—Differences  
in the Species or Races on Different Islands—Fameness of  
the Birds—Fear of Man, an Acquired Instinct*

September 15th—This archipelago consists of ten principal islands, of which five exceed the others in size. They are situated under the Equator, and between five and six hundred miles westward of the coast of America. They are all formed of volcanic rocks; a few fragments of granite curiously glazed and altered by the heat, can hardly be considered as an exception. Some of the craters, surmounting the larger islands, are of immense size, and they rise to a height of between three and four thousand feet. Their flanks are studded by innumerable smaller orifices. I scarcely hesitate to affirm, that there must be in the whole archipelago at least two thousand



craters. These consist either of lava or scoriae, or of finely stratified, sandstone-like tuff. Most of the latter are beautifully symmetrical; they owe their origin to eruptions of volcanic mud without any lava: it is a remarkable circumstance that every one of the twenty-eight tuff-craters which were examined, had their southern sides either much lower than the other sides, or quite broken down and removed. As all these craters apparently have been formed when standing in the sea, and as the waves from the trade wind and the swell from the open Pacific here unite their forces on the southern coasts of all the islands, this singular uniformity in the broken state of the craters, composed of the soft and yielding tuff, is easily explained.

Considering that these islands are placed directly under the equator, the climate is far from

being excessively hot; this seems chiefly caused by the singularly low temperature of the surrounding water, brought here by the great southern Polar current. Excepting during one short season, very little rain falls, and even then it is irregular; but the clouds generally hang low. Hence, whilst the lower parts of the islands are very sterile, the upper parts, at a height of a thousand feet and upwards, possess a damp climate and a tolerably luxuriant vegetation. This is especially the case on the windward sides of the islands, which first receive and condense the moisture from the atmosphere.

In the morning (17th) we landed on Chatham Island, which, like the others, rises with a tame and rounded outline, broken here and there by scattered hillocks, the remains of former craters. Nothing could be less inviting than the first

Illustration of Charles Darwin observing a Galápagos tortoise (*Geochelone nigra*), with the *Beagle* offshore



## ~ FROM ~ PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND EXPEDITION, 1831–36

BY ROBERT FITZROY

Gradually rising above the horizon, the greater part of Chatham Island became distinctly visible: in this neighborhood it is not often that the air near the water is clear enough to allow of very distant high land being thus gradually raised above the horizon of an eye at the mast-head; for, in general, clouds hang about these islands, and the atmosphere itself is hazy. Towards evening the higher parts of the land were clouded over, but we were near enough to see that the island was very rugged—in some places quite barren—in others covered with a stunted and sun-dried brushwood—and that the heights, on which the clouds hung, were thickly clothed with green wood. The shores seemed to be bold, and easy to approach, though not to land upon, because of a continual high surf.

A number of little craters (as they appeared to be) and huge irregular-shaped masses of lava rock, gave a strangely misleading appearance to the lower parts of the island; and when first seen through that indistinct glimmer which is usually noticed over land on which a hot sun is shining, were supposed to be large trees and thick wood.\* Hood Island, small and rather low, was seen before dusk, when we tacked and stretched to seaward for a few hours.

\* For volcanoes they certainly have been.

appearance. A broken field of black basaltic lava, thrown into the most rugged waves, and crossed by great fissures, is everywhere covered by stunted, sun-burnt brushwood, which shows little signs of life.

The *Beagle* sailed round Chatham Island, and anchored in several bays. One night I slept on shore on a part of the island, where black truncated cones were extraordinarily numerous: from one small eminence I counted sixty of them, all surmounted by craters more or less perfect. The entire surface

of this part of the island seems to have been permeated, like a sieve, by the subterranean vapors: here and there the lava, whilst soft, has been blown into great bubbles; and in other parts, the tops of caverns similarly formed have fallen in, leaving circular pits with steep sides. The day was glowing hot, and the scrambling over the rough surface and through the intricate thickets, was very fatiguing; but I was well repaid by the strange Cyclopean scene. As I was walking along I met two



large tortoises, each of which must have weighed at least two hundred pounds: one was eating a piece of cactus, and as I approached, it stared at me and slowly walked away; the other gave a deep hiss, and drew in its head. These huge reptiles, surrounded by the black lava, the leafless shrubs, and large cacti, seemed to my fancy like some antediluvian animals. The few dull-colored birds cared no more for me than they did for the great tortoises.

23rd—The *Beagle* proceeded to Charles Island. This archipelago has long been frequented, first by the bucaniers, and latterly by whalers, but it is only within the last six years, that a small colony has been established here. The inhabitants are between two and three hundred in number; they are nearly all people of color, who have been banished for political crimes from the Republic of the Equator, of which Quito is the capital. The settlement is placed about four and a half miles inland, and at a height probably of a thousand feet. In the first part of the road we passed through leafless thickets, as in Chatham Island. Higher up, the woods gradually became greener; and as soon as we crossed the ridge of the island, we were cooled by a fine southerly breeze, and our sight refreshed by a green and thriving vegetation. The houses are irregularly scattered over a flat space of ground, which is cultivated with sweet potatoes and bananas. It will not easily be imagined how pleasant the sight of black mud was to us, after having been so long, accustomed to the parched soil of Peru and northern Chile. The inhabitants, although complaining of poverty, obtain, without much trouble, the means of subsistence. In the woods there are many wild pigs and goats; but the staple article of animal food is supplied by the tortoises. Their numbers have of course been

greatly reduced in this island, but the people yet count on two days' hunting giving them food for the rest of the week. It is said that formerly single vessels have taken away as many as seven hundred, and that the ship's company of a frigate some years since brought down in one day two hundred tortoises to the beach.

September 29th—We doubled the south-west extremity of Albemarle Island, and the next day were nearly becalmed between it and Narborough Island. Both are covered with immense deluges of black naked lava, which have flowed either over the rims of the great caldrons, like pitch over the rim of a pot in which it has been boiled, or have burst forth from smaller orifices on the flanks; in their descent they have spread over miles of the sea-coast. On both of these islands, eruptions are known to have taken place; and in Albemarle, we saw a small jet of smoke curling from the summit of one of the great craters. In the evening we anchored in Bank's Cove, in Albemarle Island.

The rocks on the coast abounded with great black lizards, between three and four feet long; and on the hills, an ugly yellowish-brown species was equally common. We saw many of this latter kind, some clumsily running out of the way, and others shuffling into their burrows. I shall presently describe in more detail the habits of both these reptiles. The whole of this northern part of Albemarle Island is miserably sterile.

October 8th—We arrived at James Island: this island, as well as Charles Island, were long since thus named after our kings of the Stuart line. Mr. Bynoe, myself, and our servants were left here for a week, with provisions and a tent, whilst the *Beagle*

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OPPOSITE: Volcanic craters on Isabela Island (Albemarle Island), Galápagos

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went for water. We found here a party of Spaniards, who had been sent from Charles Island to dry fish, and to salt tortoise-meat. About six miles inland, and at the height of nearly 2,000 feet, a hovel had been built in which two men lived, who were employed in catching tortoises, whilst the others were fishing on the coast. I paid this party two visits, and slept there one night. As in the other islands, the lower region was covered by nearly leafless bushes, but the trees were here of a larger growth than elsewhere, several being two feet and some even two feet nine inches in diameter. The upper region being kept damp by the clouds, supports a green and flourishing vegetation. So damp was the ground, that there were large beds of a coarse cyperus, in which great numbers of a very small water-rail lived and bred. While staying in this upper region, we lived entirely upon tortoise-meat:



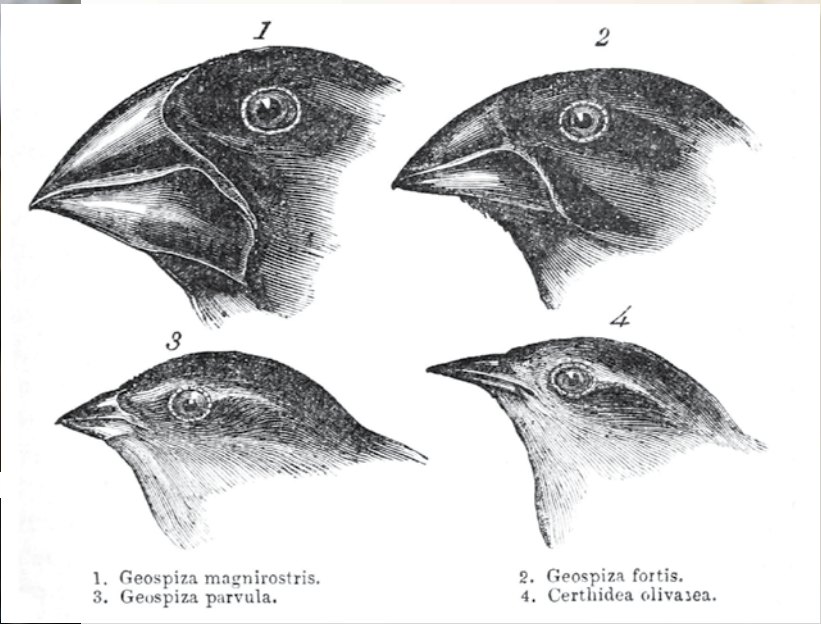
The *Mus darwinii* or *Phyllotis darwini*, known as Darwin's mouse

the breast-plate roasted (as the Gauchos do *carne con cuero*), with the flesh on it, is very good; and the young tortoises make excellent soup; but otherwise the meat to my taste is indifferent.

During the greater part of our stay of a week, the sky was cloudless, and if the trade-wind failed for an hour, the heat became very oppressive. On two days, the thermometer within the tent stood for some hours at 93 degs.; but in the open air, in the wind and sun, at only 85 degs. The sand was extremely hot; the thermometer placed in some of a brown color immediately rose to 137 degs., and how much above that it would have risen, I do not know, for it was not graduated any higher. The black sand felt much hotter, so that even in thick boots it was quite disagreeable to walk over it.



The natural history of these islands is eminently curious, and well deserves attention. Most of the organic productions are aboriginal creations, found nowhere else; there is even a difference between the inhabitants of the different islands; yet all show a marked relationship with those of America, though separated from that continent by an open space of ocean, between 500 and 600 miles in width. The archipelago is a little world within itself, or rather a satellite attached to America, whence it has derived a few stray colonists, and has received the general character of its indigenous productions. Considering the small size of the islands, we feel the more astonished at the number of their aboriginal beings, and at their confined range. Seeing every height crowned with its crater, and the boundaries of most of the lava-streams still distinct, we are led to believe that within a period geologically recent the



TOP LEFT: A Galápagos hawk (*Buteo galapagoensis*), which lives mainly on insects, as well as small lizards, snakes, and rodents  
LEFT: A Galápagos owl with its prey  
ABOVE: A quartet of finches found in the Galápagos archipelago

unbroken ocean was here spread out. Hence, both in space and time, we seem to be brought somewhat near to that great fact—that mystery of mysteries—the first appearance of new beings on this earth.

Of terrestrial mammals, there is only one which must be considered as indigenous, namely, a mouse (*Mus Galapagoensis*), and this is confined, as far as I could ascertain, to Chatham Island, the most easterly island of the group. It belongs, as I am informed by Mr. Waterhouse, to a division of the

family of mice characteristic of America. At James Island, there is a rat sufficiently distinct from the common kind to have been named and described by Mr. Waterhouse; but as it belongs to the old-world division of the family, and as this island has been frequented by ships for the last hundred and fifty years, I can hardly doubt that this rat is merely a variety produced by the new and peculiar climate, food, and soil, to which it has been subjected. Although no one has a right to speculate without distinct facts, yet even with respect to the Chatham Island mouse, it should be borne in mind, that it may possibly be an American species imported here; for I have seen, in a most unfrequented part of the Pampas, a native mouse living in the roof of a newly built hovel, and therefore its transportation in a





vessel is not improbable: analogous facts have been observed by Dr. Richardson in North America.

Of land-birds I obtained twenty-six kinds, all peculiar to the group and found nowhere else, with the exception of one lark-like finch from North America (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*), which ranges on that continent as far north as 54 degs., and generally frequents marshes. The other twenty-five birds consist, firstly, of a hawk, curiously intermediate in structure between a buzzard and the American group of carrion-feeding Polybori; and with these latter birds it agrees most closely in every habit and even tone of voice. Secondly, there are two owls, representing the short-eared and white barn-owls of Europe. Thirdly, a wren, three tyrant-flycatchers (two of them species of *Pyrocephalus*, one or both of which would be ranked by some ornithologists as only varieties), and a dove—all analogous to, but distinct from, American species. Fourthly, a swallow, which though differing from the *Progne purpurea* of both Americas, only in being rather duller colored, smaller, and slenderer, is considered by Mr. Gould as specifically distinct. Fifthly, there are three species of mocking thrush—a form highly characteristic of America. The remaining land-birds form a most singular group of finches, related to each other in the structure of their beaks, short tails, form of body and plumage: there are thirteen species, which Mr. Gould has divided into four sub-groups. All these species are peculiar to this archipelago; and so is the whole group, with the exception of one species of the sub-group *Cactornis*, lately brought from Bow Island, in the Low Archipelago. Of *Cactornis*, the two species may be often seen climbing about the

Darwin's own tagged Galápagos finch specimens displayed on top of his journal

# ~ FROM ~ ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES

BY CHARLES DARWIN

In the Galapagos Archipelago, many even of the birds, though so well adapted for flying from island to island, are distinct on each; thus there are three closely allied species of mocking-thrush, each confined to its own island. Now let us suppose the mocking-thrush of Chatham Island to be blown to Charles Island, which has its own mocking-thrush: why should it succeed in establishing itself there? We may safely infer that Charles Island is well stocked with its own species, for annually more eggs are laid there than can possibly be reared; and we may infer that the mocking-thrush peculiar to Charles Island is at least as well fitted for its home as is the species peculiar to Chatham Island. Sir C. Lyell and Mr. Wollaston have communicated to me a remarkable fact bearing on this subject; namely, that Madeira and the adjoining islet of Porto Santo possess many distinct but representative land-shells, some of which live in crevices of stone; and although large quantities of stone are annually transported from Porto Santo to Madeira, yet this latter island has not become colonized by the Porto Santo species: nevertheless both islands have been colonized by some European land-shells, which no doubt had some advantage over the indigenous species. From these considerations I think we need not greatly marvel at the endemic and representative species, which inhabit the several islands of the Galapagos Archipelago, not having universally spread from island to island. In many other instances, as in the several districts of the same continent, pre-occupation has probably played an important part in checking the commingling of species under the same conditions of life. Thus, the south-east and south-west corners of Australia have nearly the same physical conditions, and are united by continuous land, yet they are inhabited by a vast number of distinct mammals, birds, and plants.

flowers of the great cactus-trees; but all the other species of this group of finches, mingled together in flocks, feed on the dry and sterile ground of the lower districts. The males of all, or certainly of the greater number, are jet black; and the females (with perhaps one or two exceptions) are brown. The most curious fact is the perfect gradation in the size

of the beaks in the different species of *Geospiza*, from one as large as that of a hawfinch to that of a chaffinch, and (if Mr. Gould is right in including his sub-group, *Certhidea*, in the main group) even to that of a warbler. The beak of *Cactornis* is somewhat like that of a starling, and that of the fourth sub-group, *Camarhynchus*, is slightly parrot-shaped. Seeing this



gradation and diversity of structure in one small, intimately related group of birds, one might really fancy that from an original paucity of birds in this archipelago, one species had been taken and modified for different ends.

Of waders and water-birds I was able to get only eleven kinds, and of these only three (including a rail confined to the damp summits



A male Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*), Galápagos

of the islands) are new species. Considering the wandering habits of the gulls, I was surprised to find that the species inhabiting these islands is peculiar, but allied to one from the southern parts of South America. The far greater peculiarity of the land-birds, namely, twenty-five out of twenty-six, being new species, or at least new races, compared with the waders and web-footed birds, is in accordance with the greater range which these latter orders have in all parts of the world. We shall hereafter see this law of aquatic forms, whether marine or fresh-water, being less peculiar at any given point of the earth's surface than the terrestrial forms of the same classes, strikingly illustrated in the shells, and in a lesser degree in the insects of this archipelago.

With the exception of a wren with a fine yellow breast, and of a tyrant-flycatcher with a scarlet tuft and breast, none of the birds are brilliantly colored, as might have been expected in an equatorial district. Hence it would appear probable, that the same causes which here make the immigrants of some peculiar species smaller, make most of the peculiar Galapageian species also smaller, as well as very generally more dusky colored. All the plants have a wretched, weedy appearance, and I did not see one beautiful flower. The insects, again, are small-sized and dull-colored, and, as Mr. Waterhouse informs me, there is nothing in their general appearance which would have led him to imagine that they had come from under the equator.<sup>1</sup> The birds, plants, and insects have a desert character, and are not more brilliantly colored than those from southern Patagonia; we may, therefore, conclude that the usual gaudy coloring of the intertropical productions, is not related either to the heat or

light of those zones, but to some other cause, perhaps to the conditions of existence being generally favorable to life.



We will now turn to the order of reptiles, which gives the most striking character to the zoology of these islands. The species are not numerous, but the numbers of individuals of each species are extraordinarily great. There is one small lizard belonging to a South American genus, and two species (and probably more) of the *Amblyrhynchus*—a genus confined to the Galapagos Islands. There is one snake which is numerous; it is identical, as I am informed by M. Bibron, with the *Psammophis temminckii* from Chile.<sup>2</sup> Of sea-turtle I believe there are more than one species, and of tortoises there are, as we shall presently show, two or three species or races. Of toads and frogs there are none: I was surprised at this, considering how well suited for them the temperate and damp upper woods appeared to be. It recalled to my mind the remark made by Bory St. Vincent,<sup>3</sup> namely, that none of this family are found on any of the volcanic islands in the great oceans. The absence of the frog family in the oceanic islands is the more remarkable, when contrasted with the case of lizards, which swarm on most of the smallest islands. May this difference not be caused, by the greater facility with which the eggs of lizards, protected by calcareous shells might be transported through salt-water, than could the slimy spawn of frogs?

I will first describe the habits of the tortoise (*Testudo nigra*, formerly called *Indica*), which has been so frequently alluded to. These animals



A Galápagos giant tortoise (*Geochelone nigra*)

continued on page 338



~ FROM ~  
*PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
SECOND EXPEDITION, 1831–36*

BY ROBERT FITZROY

Mr. Stokes made some notes about the tortoises (terrapin), while with me, and as he and I are satisfied as to the facts, I will add them. Fresh water was first discovered on Charles and on James Islands, by following the terrapin paths. These animals visit the low, warm ground to seek for food and deposit their eggs; but it must be a toilsome journey indeed for them to ascend and descend the rugged heights.

Some that Mr. Stokes saw in wet, muddy places, on high ground, seemed to enjoy themselves very much, snuffling and waddling about in the soft clayey soil near a spring. Their manner of drinking is not unlike that of a fowl: and so fond do they appear to be of water, that it is strange they can exist for a length of time without it; yet people living at the Galapagos say that these animals can go more than six months without drinking. A very small one lived upwards of two months on board the *Beagle* without either eating or drinking: and whale-ships have often had them on board alive for a much longer period. Some few of the terrapin are so large as to weigh between two and three hundred weight; and, when standing up on their four elephantine legs, are able to reach the breast of a middle-sized man with their snake-like head.\* The settlers at Charles Island do not know any way of ascertaining the age of a terrapin, all they say is, that the male has a longer neck than the female.† On board *Beagle* a small one grew three-eighths of an inch, in length, in three months; and another grew two inches in length in one year. Several were brought alive to England. The largest we killed was three feet in length from one end of the shell to the other: but the large ones are not so good to eat as those of about fifty pounds weight—which are excellent, and extremely wholesome food. From a large one upwards of a gallon of very fine oil may be extracted. It is rather curious, and a striking instance of the short-sightedness of some men, who think themselves keener in discrimination than most others, that these tortoises should have excited such remarks as—“well, these reptiles never could have migrated far, that is quite clear,” when, in simple truth, there is no other animal in the whole creation so easily caught, so portable, requiring so little food for a long period, and at the same time so likely to have been carried, for food, by the aborigines who probably visited the Galapagos Islands on their balsas, or in large double canoes, long before Columbus saw that twinkling light, which, to his mind, was as the keystone to an arch.

\* When their long necks and small heads are seen above low bushes they look just like those of snakes.

† Their eggs were found in great numbers in cracks of a hard kind of clayey sand; but so small were the cracks that many of the eggs could not be got out without being broken. The egg is nearly round, of a whitish color, and measures two inches and a half in diameter—which is about the size of a young one when first hatched.



A group of Galápagos tortoises (*Geochelone elephantopus*) wallowing in seasonal pond on Isabela Island



are found, I believe, on all the islands of the archipelago; certainly on the greater number.

They frequent in preference the high damp parts, but they likewise live in the lower and arid districts. I have already shown, from the numbers which have been caught in a single day, how very numerous they must be. Some grow to an immense size: Mr. Lawson, an Englishman, and vice-governor of the colony, told us that he had seen several so large, that it required six or eight men to lift them from the ground; and that some had afforded as much as two hundred pounds of meat. The old males are the largest, the females rarely growing to so great a size: the male can readily be distinguished from the female by the greater length of its tail. The tortoises which live on those islands where there is no water, or in the lower and arid parts of the others, feed chiefly on the succulent cactus. Those which frequent the higher and damp regions, eat the leaves of various trees, a kind of berry (called *guayavita*) which is acid and austere, and likewise a pale green filamentous lichen (*Usnera plicata*), that hangs from the boughs of the trees.

The tortoise is very fond of water, drinking large quantities, and wallowing in the mud. The larger islands alone possess springs, and these are always situated towards the central parts, and at a considerable height. The tortoises, therefore, which frequent the lower districts, when thirsty, are obliged to travel from a long distance. Hence broad and well-beaten paths branch off in every direction from the wells down to the sea-coast; and the Spaniards by following them up, first discovered the watering-places. When I landed at Chatham Island, I could not imagine what animal traveled so methodically along well-chosen tracks. Near the springs it was a curious spectacle

to behold many of these huge creatures, one set eagerly traveling onward with outstretched necks, and another set returning, after having drunk their fill. When the tortoise arrives at the spring, quite regardless of any spectator, he buries his head in the water above his eyes, and greedily swallows great mouthfuls, at the rate of about ten in a minute. The inhabitants say each animal stays three or four days in the neighborhood of the water, and then returns to the lower country; but they differed respecting the frequency of these visits. The animal probably regulates them according to the nature of the food on which it has lived. It is, however, certain, that tortoises can subsist even on these islands where there is no other water than what falls during a few rainy days in the year.

The tortoises, when purposely moving toward any point, travel by night and day, and arrive at their journey's end much sooner than would be expected. The inhabitants, from observing marked individuals, consider that they travel a distance of about eight miles in two or three days. One large tortoise, which I watched, walked at the rate of sixty yards in ten minutes, that is 360 yards in the hour, or four miles a day—allowing a little time for it to eat on the road. During the breeding season, when the male and female are together, the male utters a hoarse roar or bellowing, which, it is said, can be heard at the distance of more than a hundred yards. The female never uses her voice, and the male only at these times; so that when the people hear this noise, they know that the two are together. They were at this time (October) laying their eggs. The female, where the soil is sandy, deposits them together, and covers them up with sand; but where the ground is rocky she drops them indiscriminately in any hole: Mr. Bynoe found seven placed in a

fissure. The egg is white and spherical; one which I measured was seven inches and three-eighths in circumference, and therefore larger than a hen's egg. The young tortoises, as soon as they are hatched, fall a prey in great numbers to the carrion-feeding buzzard. The old ones seem generally to die from accidents, as from falling down precipices: at least, several of the inhabitants told me, that they never found one dead without some evident cause.

The inhabitants believe that these animals are absolutely deaf; certainly they do not overhear a person walking close behind them. I was always amused when overtaking one of these great monsters, as it was quietly pacing along, to see how

suddenly, the instant I passed, it would draw in its head and legs, and uttering a deep hiss fall to the ground with a heavy sound, as if struck dead. I frequently got on their backs, and then giving a few raps on the hinder part of their shells, they would rise up and walk away—but I found it very difficult to keep my balance. The flesh of this animal is largely employed, both fresh and salted; and a beautifully clear oil is prepared from the fat. When a tortoise is caught, the man makes a slit in the skin near its tail, so as to see inside its body, whether the fat under the dorsal plate is thick. If it is not, the animal is liberated and it is said to recover soon from this strange operation. In order to secure the tortoise, it is not sufficient to turn them like turtle, for they are often able to get on their legs again.

There can be little doubt that this tortoise is an aboriginal inhabitant of the Galapagos; for it is

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A Galápagos tortoise hatchling emerging from nest on Isabela Island

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found on all, or nearly all, the islands, even on some of the smaller ones where there is no water; had it been an imported species, this would hardly have been the case in a group which has been so little frequented. Moreover, the old Bucaniers found this tortoise in greater numbers even than at present: Wood and Rogers also, in 1708, say that it is the opinion of the Spaniards, that it is found nowhere else in this quarter of the world.

The *Amblyrhynchus*, a remarkable genus of lizards, is confined to this archipelago; there are two species, resembling each other in general form, one being terrestrial and the other aquatic. This latter species (*A. cristatus*) was first characterized by Mr. Bell, who well foresaw, from its short, broad head, and strong claws of equal length, that its habits of life would turn out very peculiar, and different from

those of its nearest ally, the Iguana. It is extremely common on all the islands throughout the group, and lives exclusively on the rocky sea-beaches, being never found, at least I never saw one, even ten yards in-shore. It is a hideous-looking creature, of a dirty black color, stupid, and sluggish in its movements. The usual length of a full-grown one is about a yard, but there are some even four feet long; a large one weighed twenty pounds: on the island of Albemarle they seem to grow to a greater size than elsewhere. Their tails are flattened sideways, and all four feet partially webbed. It must not, however, be supposed that they live on fish. When in the water this lizard swims with perfect ease and quickness, by a serpentine movement of its body and flattened tail—the legs being motionless and closely collapsed on its sides. Their limbs and

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A Galápagos marine iguana  
(*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*)

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strong claws are admirably adapted for crawling over the rugged and fissured masses of lava, which everywhere form the coast. In such situations, a group of six or seven of these hideous reptiles may oftentimes be seen on the black rocks, a few feet above the surf, basking in the sun with outstretched legs.

I opened the stomachs of several, and found them largely distended with minced sea-weed (*Ulvæ*), which grows in thin foliaceous expansions of a bright green or a dull red color. I do not recollect having observed this sea-weed in any quantity on the tidal rocks; and I have reason to believe it grows at the bottom of the sea, at some little distance from the coast. The intestines were large, as in other herbivorous animals. The nature of this lizard's food, as well as the structure of its tail and feet, and the fact of its having been seen voluntarily swimming out at sea, absolutely prove its aquatic habits; yet there is in this respect one strange anomaly, namely, that when frightened it will not enter the water. Hence it is easy to drive these lizards down to any little point overhanging the sea, where they will sooner allow a person to catch hold of their tails than jump into the water. They do not seem to have any notion of biting; but when much frightened they squirt a drop of fluid from each nostril. During our visit (in October), I saw extremely few small individuals of this species, and none I should think under a year old. From this circumstance it seems probable that the breeding season had not then commenced. I asked several of the inhabitants if they knew where it laid its eggs: they said that they knew nothing of its propagation, although well acquainted with the eggs of the land kind—a fact, considering how very common this lizard is, not a little extraordinary.



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ABOVE: A Galápagos land iguana (*Conolophus suberistatus*)

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We will now turn to the terrestrial species (*A. Demarlii*), with a round tail, and toes without webs. This lizard, instead of being found like the other on all the islands, is confined to the central part of the archipelago, namely to Albemarle, James, Barrington, and Indefatigable islands. To the southward, in Charles, Hood, and Chatham islands, and to the northward, in Towers, Bindloes, and Abingdon, I neither saw nor heard of any. It would appear as if it had been created in the centre of the archipelago, and thence had been dispersed only to a certain distance. Some of these lizards inhabit the high and damp parts of the islands, but they are much more numerous in the lower and sterile districts near the coast. I cannot give a more forcible proof of their numbers, than by stating that when we were left at James Island, we could not for some time find a spot free from their burrows on which to pitch our single tent. Like their brothers the sea-kind, they are ugly animals, of a yellowish



orange beneath, and of a brownish red color above: from their low facial angle they have a singularly stupid appearance. They are, perhaps, of a rather less size than the marine species; but several of them weighed between ten and fifteen pounds. In their movements they are lazy and half torpid. When not frightened, they slowly crawl along with their tails and bellies dragging on the ground. They often stop, and doze for a minute or two, with closed eyes and hind legs spread out on the parched soil.

They inhabit burrows, which they sometimes make between fragments of lava, but more generally on level patches of the soft sandstone-like tuff. The holes do not appear to be very deep, and they enter the ground at a small angle; so that when walking over these lizard-warrens, the soil is constantly giving way, much to the annoyance of the tired walker. This animal, when making its burrow, works alternately the opposite sides of its body. One front leg for a short time scratches up the soil, and throws it towards the hind foot, which is well placed so as to heave it beyond the mouth of the hole. That side of the body being tired, the other takes up the task, and so on alternately.

They feed by day, and do not wander far from their burrows; if frightened, they rush to them with a most awkward gait. Except when running down hill, they cannot move very fast, apparently from the lateral position of their legs. If this *Amblyrhynchus* is held and plagued with a stick, it will bite it very severely; but I caught many by the tail, and they never tried to bite me. If two are placed on the ground and held together, they will fight, and bite each other till blood is drawn.

The individuals, and they are the greater number, which inhabit the lower country, can

scarcely taste a drop of water throughout the year; but they consume much of the succulent cactus, the branches of which are occasionally broken off by the wind. They eat very deliberately, but do not chew their food. The little birds are aware how harmless these creatures are: I have seen one of the thick-billed finches picking at one end of a piece of cactus (which is much relished by all the animals of the lower region), whilst a lizard was eating at the other end; and afterwards the little bird with the utmost indifference hopped on the back of the reptile.

I opened the stomachs of several, and found them full of vegetable fibers and leaves of different trees, especially of an acacia. In the upper region they live chiefly on the acid and astringent berries of the guayavita, under which trees I have seen these lizards and the huge tortoises feeding together. To obtain the acacia-leaves they crawl up the low stunted trees; and it is not uncommon to see a pair quietly browsing, whilst seated on a branch several feet above the ground. These lizards, when cooked, yield a white meat, which is liked by those whose stomachs soar above all prejudices.

These two species of *Amblyrhynchus* agree, as I have already stated, in their general structure, and in many of their habits. Neither have that rapid movement, so characteristic of the genera *Lacerta* and *Iguana*. They are both herbivorous, although the kind of vegetation on which they feed is so very different. Mr. Bell has given the name to the genus from the shortness of the snout: indeed, the form of the mouth may almost be compared to that of the tortoise: one is led to suppose that this is an adaptation to their herbivorous appetites. It is very interesting thus to find a well-characterized genus, having its marine and terrestrial species, belonging

to so confined a portion of the world. The aquatic species is by far the most remarkable, because it is the only existing lizard which lives on marine vegetable productions. As I at first observed, these islands are not so remarkable for the number of the species of reptiles, as for that of the individuals, when we remember the well-beaten paths made by the thousands of huge tortoises—the many turtles—the great warrens of the terrestrial *Amblyrhynchus*—and the groups of the marine species basking on the coast-rocks of every island—we must admit that there is no other quarter of the world where this Order replaces the herbivorous mammalia in so extraordinary a manner.

To finish with the zoology: the fifteen kinds of sea-fish which I procured here are all new species; they belong to twelve genera, all widely distributed, with the exception of *Prionotus*, of which the four previously known species live on the eastern side of America. Of land-shells I collected sixteen kinds (and two marked varieties), of which, with the exception of one *Helix* found at Tahiti, all are peculiar to this archipelago: a single fresh-water shell (*Paludina*) is common to Tahiti and Van Diemen's Land. Mr. Cuming, before our voyage procured here ninety species of seashells, and this does not include several species not yet specifically examined, of *Trochus*, *Turbo*, *Monodonta*, and *Nassa*. He has been kind enough to give me the following interesting results: Of the ninety shells, no less than forty-seven are unknown elsewhere—a wonderful fact, considering how widely distributed seashells generally are. Of the forty-three shells found in other parts of the world, twenty-five inhabit the western coast of America, and of these eight are distinguishable as varieties; the remaining eighteen (including one variety) were found by

Mr. Cuming in the Low Archipelago, and some of them also at the Philippines. I may here add, that after the comparison by Messrs. Cuming and Hinds of about 2,000 shells from the eastern and western coasts of America, only one single shell was found in common, namely, the *Purpura patula*, which inhabits the West Indies, the coast of Panama, and the Galapagos. We have, therefore, in this quarter of the world, three great conchological sea-provinces, quite distinct, though surprisingly near each other, being separated by long north and south spaces either of land or of open sea.

I took great pains in collecting the insects, but excepting Tierra del Fuego, I never saw in this respect so poor a country. Even in the upper and damp region I procured very few, excepting some minute *Diptera* and *Hymenoptera*, mostly of common mundane forms. As before remarked, the insects, for a tropical region, are of very small size and dull colors. Of beetles I collected twenty-five species (excluding a *Dermestes* and *Corynetes* imported, wherever a ship touches); of these, two belong to the *Harpalidæ*, two to the *Hydrophilidæ*, nine to three families of the *Heteromera*, and the remaining twelve to as many different families.

This circumstance of insects (and I may add plants), where few in number, belonging to many different families, is, I believe, very general. Mr. Waterhouse, who has published<sup>d</sup> an account of the insects of this archipelago, and to whom I am indebted for the above details, informs me that there are several new genera: and that of the genera not new, one or two are American, and the rest of mundane distribution. With the exception of a wood-feeding *Apate*, and of one or probably two water-beetles from the American continent, all the species appear to be new.







The botany of this group is fully as interesting as the zoology. Dr. J. Hooker will soon publish in the “Linnean Transactions” a full account of the Flora, and I am much indebted to him for the following details. Of flowering plants there are, as far as at present is known, 185 species, and 40 cryptogamic species, making altogether 225; of this number I was fortunate enough to bring home 193. Of the flowering plants, 100 are new species, and are probably confined to this archipelago. Dr. Hooker conceives that, of the plants not so confined, at least 10 species found near the cultivated ground at Charles Island, have been imported. It is, I think, surprising that more American species have not been introduced naturally, considering that the distance is only between 500 and 600 miles from the continent, and that (according to Collnet, p. 58) drift-wood, bamboos, canes, and the nuts of a palm, are often washed on the south-eastern shores. The proportion of 100 flowering plants out of 183 (or 175 excluding the imported weeds) being new, is sufficient, I conceive, to make the Galapagos Archipelago a distinct botanical province; but this Flora is not nearly so peculiar as that of St. Helena, nor, as I am informed by Dr. Hooker, of Juan Fernandez. The peculiarity of the Galapageian Flora is best shown in certain families—thus there are 21 species of *Compositæ*, of which 20 are peculiar to this archipelago; these belong to twelve genera, and of these genera no less than ten are confined to the archipelago!

It was most striking to be surrounded by new birds, new reptiles, new shells, new insects, new plants, and yet by innumerable trifling details of structure, and even by the tones of voice and plumage of the birds, to have the temperate plains

of Patagonia, or rather the hot dry deserts of Northern Chile, vividly brought before my eyes. Why, on these small points of land, which within a late geological period must have been covered by the ocean, which are formed by basaltic lava, and therefore differ in geological character from the American continent, and which are placed under a peculiar climate—why were their aboriginal inhabitants, associated, I may add, in different proportions both in kind and number from those on the continent, and therefore acting on each other in a different manner—why were they created on American types of organization?

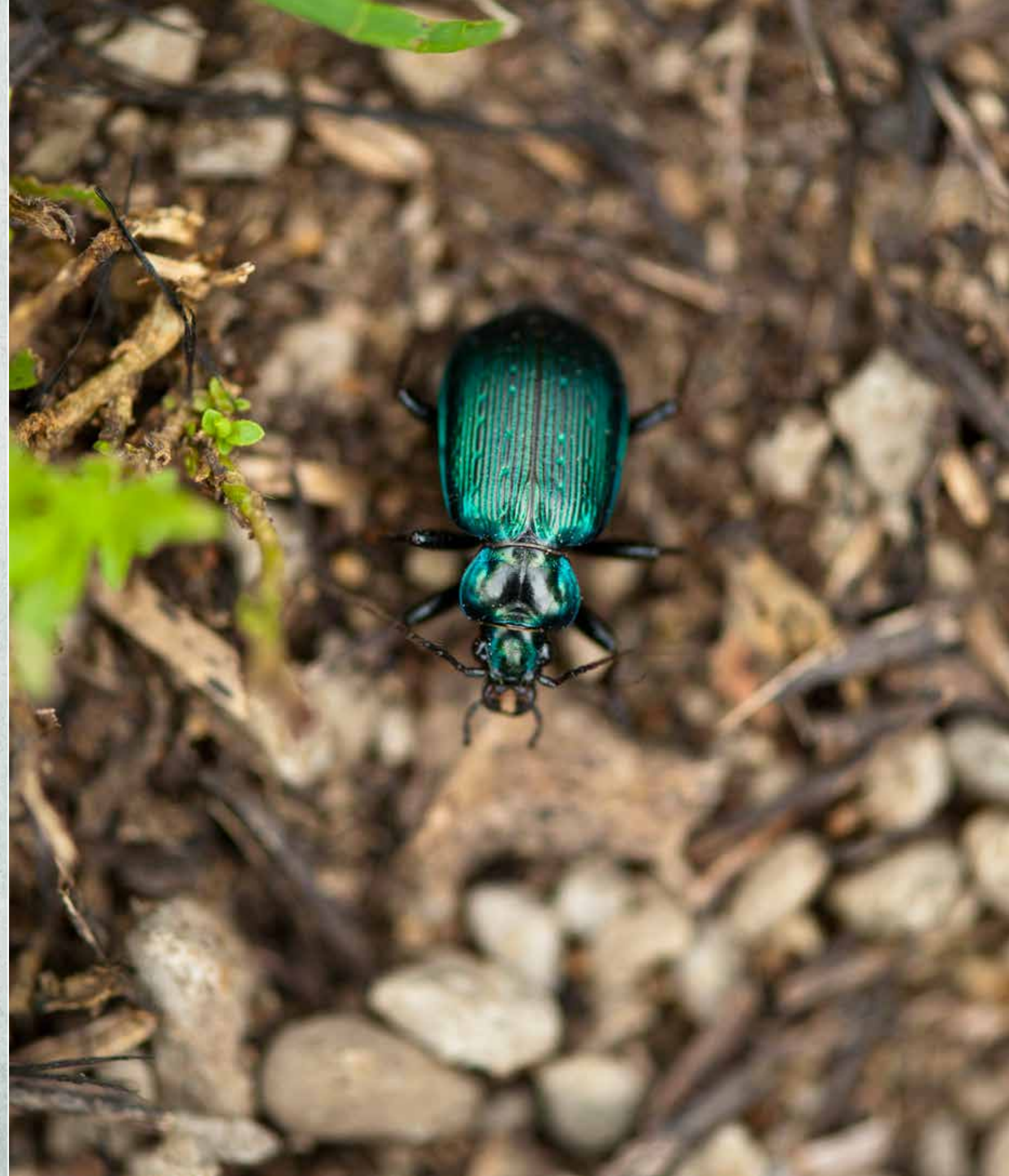


I have not as yet noticed by far the most remarkable feature in the natural history of this archipelago; it is, that the different islands to a considerable extent are inhabited by a different set of beings. My attention was first called to this fact by the Vice-Governor, Mr. Lawson, declaring that the tortoises differed from the different islands, and that he could with certainty tell from which island any one was brought. I did not for some time pay sufficient attention to this statement, and I had already partially mingled together the collections from two of the islands. I never dreamed that islands, about 50 or 60 miles apart, and most of them in sight of each other, formed of precisely the same rocks, placed under a quite similar climate, rising to a nearly equal height, would have been differently tenanted; but we shall soon see that this is the case. It is the fate of most voyagers, no sooner to discover what is most interesting in any locality,

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OPPOSITE: Beetle from Urbina Bay, Isabela Island, Galápagos

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than they are hurried from it; but I ought, perhaps, to be thankful that I obtained sufficient materials to establish this most remarkable fact in the distribution of organic beings.

The inhabitants, as I have said, state that they can distinguish the tortoises from the different islands; and that they differ not only in size, but in other characters. Captain Porter has described<sup>5</sup> those from Charles and from the nearest island to it, namely, Hood Island, as having their shells in front thick and turned up like a Spanish saddle, whilst the tortoises from James Island are rounder, blacker, and have a better taste when cooked. M. Bibron, moreover, informs me that he has seen what he considers two distinct species of tortoise

from the Galapagos, but he does not know from which islands. My attention was first thoroughly aroused, by comparing together the numerous specimens, shot by myself and several other parties on board, of the mocking-thrushes, when, to my astonishment, I discovered that all those from Charles Island belonged to one species (*Mimus trifasciatus*) all from Albemarle Island to *M. parvulus*; and all from James and Chatham Islands (between which two other islands are situated, as connecting links) belonged to *M. melanotis*. These two latter species are closely allied, and would by some ornithologists be considered as only well-marked races or varieties; but the *Mimus trifasciatus* is very distinct. Unfortunately most of

Bartolomé Island, Galápagos

the specimens of the finch tribe were mingled together; but I have strong reasons to suspect that some of the species of the sub-group *Geospiza* are confined to separate islands. If the different islands have their representatives of *Geospiza*, it may help to explain the singularly large number of the species of this sub-group in this one small archipelago, and as a probable consequence of their numbers, the perfectly graduated series in the size of their beaks. Two species of the sub-group *Cactornis*, and two of the *Camarhynchus*, were procured in the archipelago; and of the numerous specimens of these two sub-groups shot by four collectors at James Island, all were found to belong to one species of each; whereas the numerous specimens shot either on Chatham or Charles Island (for the two sets were mingled together) all belonged to the two other species: hence we may feel almost sure that these islands possess their respective species of these two sub-groups. In land-

shells this law of distribution does not appear to hold good. In my very small collection of insects, Mr. Waterhouse remarks, that of those which were ticketed with their locality, not one was common to any two of the islands.

If we now turn to the Flora, we shall find the aboriginal plants of the different islands wonderfully different. I give all the following results on the high authority of my friend Dr. J. Hooker. I may premise that I indiscriminately collected everything in flower on the different islands, and fortunately kept my collections separate. Too much confidence, however, must not be placed in the proportional results, as the small collections brought home by some other naturalists though in some respects confirming the results, plainly show that much remains to be done in the botany of this group: the *Leguminosæ*, moreover, has as yet been only approximately worked out:

Name of Island	Total Number of Species	Number of species found in other parts of the world	Number of species confined to the Galapagos Archipelago	Number confined to the one island	Number of species confined to the Galapagos Archipelago, but found on more than the one island
James Island	71	33	38	30	8
Albemarle Island	46	18	26	22	4
Chatham Island	32	16	16	12	4
Charles Island	68	39 (or 29, if the probably imported plants be subtracted)	29	21	8





An assembly of Darwin’s finch skulls and identification labels

Hence we have the truly wonderful fact, that in James Island, of the thirty-eight Galapageian plants, or those found in no other part of the world, thirty are exclusively confined to this one island; and in Albemarle Island, of the twenty-six aboriginal Galapageian plants, twenty-two are confined to this one island, that is, only four are at present known to grow in the other islands of the archipelago; and so on, as shown in the above table, with the plants from Chatham and Charles Islands. This fact will, perhaps, be rendered even more striking, by giving a few illustrations—thus, *Scalesia*, a remarkable arborescent genus of the *Compositae*, is confined to the archipelago: it has six species: one from Chatham, one from Albemarle, one from Charles Island, two from James Island, and the sixth from one of the three latter islands, but it is not known from which: not one of these six species grows on any two islands. The species of the *Compositae* are particularly local; and Dr. Hooker has furnished me with several other most striking illustrations of the difference of the species on the different islands. He remarks that this law of distribution holds good both with those genera confined to the archipelago, and those distributed in other quarters of the world: in like manner we have seen that the different islands have their proper species of the mundane genus of tortoise, and of the widely distributed American genus of the mocking-thrush, as well as of two of the Galapageian sub-groups of finches, and almost certainly of the Galapageian genus *Amblyrhynchus*.

The distribution of the tenants of this archipelago would not be nearly so wonderful, if, for instance, one island had a mocking-thrush, and a second island some other quite distinct genus—if one island had its genus of lizard, and

a second island another distinct genus, or none whatever—or if the different islands were inhabited, not by representative species of the same genera of plants, but by totally different genera, as does to a certain extent hold good: for, to give one instance, a large berry-bearing tree at James Island has no representative species in Charles Island. But it is the circumstance, that several of the islands possess their own species of the tortoise, mocking-thrush, finches, and numerous plants, these species having the same general habits, occupying analogous situations, and obviously filling the same place in the natural economy of this archipelago, that strikes me with wonder. It may be suspected that some of these representative species, at least in the case of the tortoise and of some of the birds, may hereafter prove to be only well-marked races; but this would be of equally great interest to the philosophical naturalist. I must repeat, that neither the nature of the soil, nor height of the land, nor the climate, nor the general character of the associated beings, and therefore their action one on another, can differ much in the different islands. If there be any sensible difference in their climates, it must be between the Windward group (namely, Charles and Chatham Islands), and that to leeward; but there seems to be no corresponding difference in the productions of these two halves of the archipelago.

The only light which I can throw on this remarkable difference in the inhabitants of the different islands, is, that very strong currents of the sea running in a westerly and W.N.W. direction must separate, as far as transportal by the sea is concerned, the southern islands from the northern ones; and between these northern islands a strong N.W. current was observed, which must effectually





TOP: The highland landscape of El Junco Lagoon, Chatham Island, otherwise known as San Cristóbal Island  
INSET: Albemarle Island, today Isabela Island

separate James and Albemarle Islands. As the archipelago is free to a most remarkable degree from gales of wind, neither the birds, insects, nor lighter seeds, would be blown from island to island. And lastly, the profound depth of the ocean between the islands, and their apparently recent (in a geological sense) volcanic origin, render it highly unlikely that they were ever



~ FROM ~  
*ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES*

BY CHARLES DARWIN

Oceanic islands are sometimes deficient in certain classes, and their places are apparently occupied by the other inhabitants; in the Galapagos Islands reptiles, and in New Zealand gigantic wingless birds, take the place of mammals. In the plants of the Galapagos Islands, Dr. Hooker has shown that the proportional numbers of the different orders are very different from what they are elsewhere. Such cases are generally accounted for by the physical conditions of the islands; but this explanation seems to me not a little doubtful. Facility of immigration, I believe, has been at least as important as the nature of the conditions.

united; and this, probably, is a far more important consideration than any other, with respect to the geographical distribution of their inhabitants. Reviewing the facts here given, one is astonished at the amount of creative force, if such an expression may be used, displayed on these small, barren, and rocky islands; and still more so, at its diverse yet analogous action on points so near each other. I have said that the Galapagos Archipelago might be called a satellite attached to America, but it should rather be called a group of satellites, physically similar, organically distinct, yet intimately related to each other, and all related in a marked, though much lesser degree, to the great American continent.

I will conclude my description of the natural history of these islands, by giving an account of the extreme tameness of the birds. This disposition is common to all the terrestrial species; namely, to

the mocking-thrushes, the finches, wrens, tyrant-flycatchers, the dove, and carrion-buzzard.

All of them are often approached sufficiently near to be killed with a switch, and sometimes, as I myself tried, with a cap or hat. A gun is here almost superfluous; for with the muzzle I pushed a hawk off the branch of a tree. One day, whilst lying down, a mocking-thrush alighted on the edge of a pitcher, made of the shell of a tortoise, which I held in my hand, and began very quietly to sip the water; it allowed me to lift it from the ground whilst seated on the vessel: I often tried, and very nearly succeeded, in catching these birds by their legs.

These birds, although now still more persecuted, do not readily become wild. In Charles Island, which had then been colonized about six years, I saw a boy sitting by a well with a switch in his hand, with which he killed the doves and finches as they came to drink. He had already procured a



little heap of them for his dinner, and he said that he had constantly been in the habit of waiting by this well for the same purpose. It would appear that the birds of this archipelago, not having as yet

learnt that man is a more dangerous animal than the tortoise or the *Amblyrhynchus*, disregard him, in the same manner as in England shy birds, such as magpies, disregard the cows and horses grazing in our fields.

The Falkland Islands offer a second instance of birds with a similar disposition. The extraordinary tameness of the little *Opetiorhynchus* has been remarked by Pernety, Lesson, and other voyagers. It is not, however, peculiar to that bird: the *Polyborus*,



LEFT: A medium ground-finch (*Geospiza fortis*) fledgling begging for food from a male, Galápagos  
BELOW: A black Darwin finch on a cactus  
OPPOSITE: A gray warbler-finch (*Certhidea fusca cinerascens*) on Espanola Island



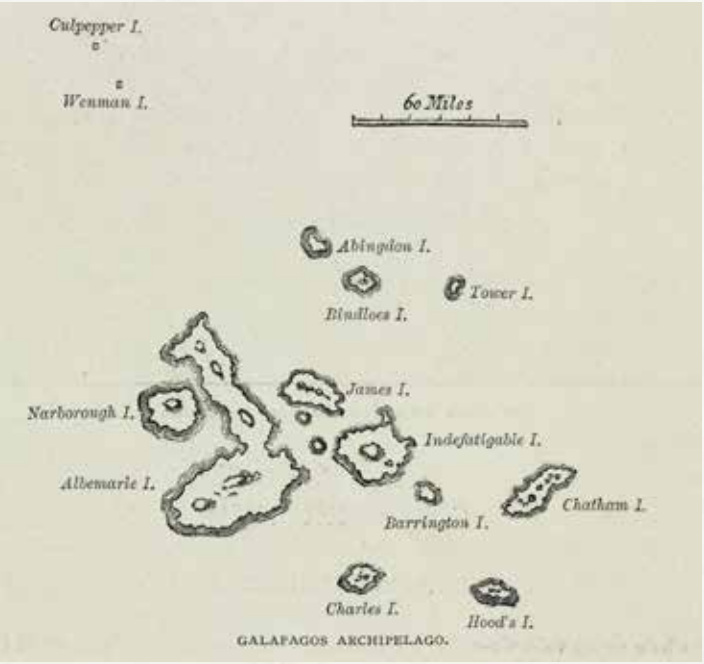




snipe, upland and lowland goose, thrush, bunting, and even some true hawks, are all more or less tame. The upland geese at the Falklands show, by the precaution they take in building on the islets, that they are aware of their danger from the foxes; but they are not by this rendered wild towards man. This tameness of the birds, especially of the water-fowl, is strongly contrasted with the habits of the same species in Tierra del Fuego, where for ages past they have been persecuted by the wild inhabitants. In the Falklands, the sportsman may sometimes kill more of the upland geese in one day than he can carry home; whereas in Tierra del Fuego it is nearly as difficult to kill one, as it is in England to shoot the common wild goose.

I may add that, according to Du Bois, all the birds at Bourbon in 1571–72, with the exception of

the flamingoes and geese, were so extremely tame, that they could be caught by the hand, or killed in any number with a stick. Again, at Tristan d’Acunha in the Atlantic, Carmichael<sup>6</sup> states that the only two land-birds, a thrush and a bunting, were “so tame as to suffer themselves to be caught with a hand-net.” From these several facts we may, I think, conclude, first, that the wildness of birds with regard to man, is a particular instinct directed against *him*, and not dependent upon any general degree of caution arising from other sources of danger; secondly, that it is not acquired by individual birds in a short time, even when much persecuted; but that in the course of successive generations it becomes hereditary. With domesticated animals we are accustomed to see new mental habits or instincts acquired or rendered hereditary; but with animals in a state of nature, it must always be most difficult to discover instances of acquired hereditary knowledge. In regard to the wildness of birds towards man, there is no way of accounting for it, except as an inherited habit: comparatively few young birds, in any one year, have been injured by man in England, yet almost all, even nestlings, are afraid of him; many individuals, on the other hand, both at the Galapagos and at the Falklands, have been pursued and injured by man, yet have not learned a salutary dread of him. We may infer from these facts, what havoc the introduction of any new beast of prey must cause in a country, before the instincts of the indigenous inhabitants have become adapted to the stranger’s craft or power.



ABOVE: The Galápagos archipelago  
OPPOSITE: View of the Galápagos Islands taken from aboard the International Space Station