

Galapagos April Newsletter



Sula Sula

A loving parent taking care of their baby

Note by Country Director

Dear all

May has nearly arrived but perhaps we should rename this month and call it 'will', because with the help of Projects Abroad, our staff and our volunteers, everything that we might do has become what we will do. Summer camp continues and everyone is having fun, whether visiting the giant tortoises, the beaches or other touristic sites. We teach English, art, conservation and sports, and the activities and classes are divided by age. The days are not long enough for all the possible activities here. We continue cleaning the beaches and other public areas, thus helping to preserve our fauna and flora. We will develop a new English programme that will be easier for the volunteers to use and more interesting for the young people. We started with a new placement test and will improve the English courses and teaching system.

Having volunteers here has changed life on the island, because the children have more possibilities of interacting with foreigners and thus learning about new cultures, their parents are able to have more stable_sources of extra incomes and our volunteers become members of the extended family system. It used to be a struggle for a mother to pay for her children's education, but now it is easier. Other families are able to improve their houses and buy extras. When the volunteers leave, the community, families and children are genuinely sad to see them go, and we all hope that they will come back.

When I first started bringing volunteers in the 90s, I had no idea that we would have so many here in the 2010s. I used to struggle to pay the rent, electricity and water, but now everything is covered.

As always, I would like to thank everyone for their support: Our families, the local community, our local volunteers, our staff, and most importantly, Projects Abroad and our foreign volunteers.



William Puga
Country Director, Ecuador

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CONSERVATION PROJECT IN THE GALAPAGOS (2013-2014)



It has been one year since the new conservation project started on San Cristobal Island in the Galapagos. Projects Galapagos conservation activities focus on controlling introduced species from affecting the islands and protecting the endangered endemic species.

This year we have been working with the Galapagos National Park (GNP) with various key projects for the conservation of vulnerable species living in the different ecosystems and climatic zones on San Cristobal Island, from the arid zone to the Highlands, while monitoring and controlling the invasive plant species that affect the vegetation of the island.

With the significant help of volunteers from different countries, we have been able to implement the various projects that the GNP has introduced in order to control introduced species and help to restore different ecological niches on the island.

We have conducted various activities with volunteers and have been monitoring endangered endemic species, such as sea lions and marine iguanas. This entails collecting information about the population of these species, observing variations in numbers and deciding if the population of sea lions is stable, decreasing or increasing. Also we are performing and monitoring coastal clean-ups on various beaches in order to reduce beach pollution.

At the top of the island volunteers under the direction and management of GNP technicians and staff are monitoring a project dealing with the nesting habits of Galapagos petrels, a charismatic species that is threatened by the presence of rats that are destroying their nests and killing their young. We have been monitoring the number of rats nesting in the area and controlling the rat population, in order to increase the number of live chicks and allow them to become mature.



Volunteers are involved in activities where they interact with the community, while exchanging cultures, and learning about and adapting to different customs that make their stay more enjoyable. They learn different languages and share knowledge that will serve them in their future working and professional life. The boys have been working on restoration projects and the regeneration of green areas while carrying out reforestation projects in different parts of the community, and developing environmental education to teach children positive values in order that they love their island, since they are the future custodians and protectors of this paradise. They are also helping conserve the resources that they own in their own environments.

The coordinator of the various conservation activities we have completed this year, I am very happy with the volunteers. Their support is very important for the implementation and completion of individual projects. It has been a year with many successes in which the volunteers' efforts are beginning to pay off.

All the best,



Jonathan Guillen
Conservation Manager, Ecuador



MY EXPERIENCE IN THE CARE - SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM by Sofio Rossito, Italy



Combining volunteering with a holiday is an idea that has recently developed more strongly in my parish. I already volunteer with after-school activities for disadvantaged Italian and Moroccan children in the mother church in Avola. I searched the internet looking for something that would continue my volunteering efforts and above all I have tried to ensure that, as a Catholic Christian, I could help present to many children the living image of the love of God, the eternal young man, who does not abandon anyone, let alone those whom we consider " the past ", but in reality gives us so much and that enriches us a lot in terms of humanitarian values and greater spiritual growth. Thus I found the Projects Abroad website and information about an organization which

operates in various countries of the world and where you can choose humanitarian care projects with children.

I chose the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador to visit a new place since I had already been with The Catholic church in the Congo on a humanitarian mission, and at the same time make use of a holiday period. The choice was really happy. After a flight of about 16,000 km on a Ben 4 aircraft from Catania to Rome to Amsterdam to Guayaquil to San Cristobal, I landed in paradise on the Earth's equatorial zone in the Galápagos. As soon as I arrived at the airport, I was taken to the family who would host me for 18 days with 2 other volunteers. The family consists of dad, mom and a 15 year old daughter who enjoyed communicating with my Italian version of Spanish. We had lunch, visited the sea, and attended evening mass.

All the Galápagos inhabitants are simple people, with generous hearts, who greet you in the street. We note here that what Jesus has said is real and that is that many will come from east and west, from north and south, and from there pass into the kingdom of heaven, to show what Christians and non-Christians feel.

The next day, I went to school, immediately took part in activities and fell in love with the children who enjoyed my inventiveness with their games. We took part in all their projects, games and activities, which are divided up according to their ages and which are always different and very instructive. We took them to the beach, to the pool, and on educational tours, such as to see the giant tortoises and endemic plants of the Galapagos. In my free time I sometimes went to the beaches, taking pictures of the unique animals which are native to the islands and unique in the world.

It has been an extraordinary experience, and above all the joy that you have here is priceless, especially when you see the bright smiles of those children who have never demanded anything from me except affection. This is an experience that I invite others to experience, and I thank God for making me always feel protected and helping me do good for His greater glory.



I also thank the staff and all those people who helped me to feel comfortable here. I will never forget the faces of all the people and children of the Galapagos Islands in my whole life.

WORKING FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE GALAPAGOS

By **Elisabeth Levorsen**, Denmark



When I was a little kid, I dreamt about going to the Galápagos Islands, but nothing could have prepared me for how amazing this place truly is. The nature is so special and different and the best thing for me has been working on a conservation project. Whilst working, I learned so much about the wildlife here that it has made my thirst for further knowledge greater. I really enjoyed the work, even though it was hard in the burning sun, but when you are given the opportunity to work with giant tortoises, to study seabirds or to help the Galapagos National Park, the heat really does not matter all that much.

My time here would never have been the same without the people I have met here. Every day has been a happy day thanks to the amazing volunteers, staff and my host family. I'll miss every one of them when I go home to Denmark.



WATER GAMES DAY AT THE SUMMER CAMP



LAST DIRTY DAY AND SOCIAL





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Congratulations for your outstanding performances

If you have any suggestions about our work, please contact ecuador@projects-abroad.org.

Best wishes from Ecuador!