

# Galapagos Newsletter



*Creagrurus furcatus*

**A swallow-tailed gull wakes up.**

## News....!!

June, another busy month on San Cristobal Island. Besides supporting the Galapagos National Park activities, we have recently started working with the Ecuadorian Department of Agriculture and are now providing volunteers to help our farmers tidy up their farms and grow coffee. We hope to be able to provide agro-tourism trips, so tourists will be able to see all the stages in the growth of coffee, from the growing of young seedlings to the final processing of the beans. They will also be able to visit the local farms, and see traditional agricultural practices.

We have also started developing new art projects, focusing on environmental and conservation awareness, with the help of a volunteer who is also an artist, and have re-started our programme of painting ecology-themed murals at the local schools. We are also working with the Art Cultural Centre in San Cristobal to provide volunteers who will help develop the teaching of music and drama to our teenagers and children, as well as helping to put on shows for the local community. We continue to tidy up the schools during Dirty Days, and are also involved in cleaning up the beaches and town. At the same time we are continuing to educate the local community about the importance of keeping the beaches and town tidy, in order to protect the local wild life and keep the environment attractive for foreigners and locals alike.

With all best wishes,



**William Puga**  
**Ecuador director for Projects Abroad**



# CARE PROJECT

by Ida Laursen, Denmark, 3 months



I started working as a volunteer on San Cristobal Island in March 2013. After three months of working with children, I now see what kind of a difference you can make. Earning the trust of a 5 year old autistic boy or giving all your attention to a child who can't focus is hard but rewarding work. I chose to spend a lot of time with these two boys, because I wanted to be able to give them the attention in the classroom that they needed.

Seeing changes, however, takes time, especially with the very limited amount of books and toys available to keep the children occupied. The teachers are creative and resourceful though! They give the children old magazines, so they can practise cutting pictures with scissors, and they use other common household materials in the classroom.

My work in the preschool was very rewarding for my Spanish. I believe being around children is the best way to learn a new language. They speak to you as they would speak to any of their friends and put up with your (sometimes) poor pronunciation. For that, I owe the children a big "thank you."

Working with the children and living with a very sweet and welcoming host family made the experience complete. Not only did I improve my Spanish at work, but also in the house. The cultural exchanges at home and in the community make this an experience for life!





# SPORTS PROJECT

By Rowdy van den Nieuwenhuizen, Netherlands, 1 month

After studying basic Spanish in the Netherlands and Argentina, I went to the Galapagos to help out with the sports project. I quickly figured out that it is necessary to understand and speak basic Spanish, not only to communicate with the children on the playing field, but also to have a good time with your host family.



The football project is held at the San Cristobal Island stadium and children train every single day from Monday to Friday. It is a great experience and the children are really motivated. Each day at least 60 go there to play football. You help the two trainers that are always there and what I

really liked about the project is that you are free to think about several exercises to do with the kids.

I love the first group that starts at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. They are aged from 5 to 8 and they just run after the ball, but after a while you are able to teach them some football tips. I was injured for the



whole month, but that did not hinder me because I could still do exercises

with them. The other groups are also really nice and the kids are just amazing. I had the direct feeling that I was doing a good thing and the trainers at the sports project really appreciated everything that I did.



It was a great experience, even for just one month. The island is a great place as well and it was exactly what I was looking for, with the combination of learning Spanish (because you are learning a lot from the children and your host family), teaching football and just living on a great spot for diving or snorkelling.



# CONSERVATION PROJECT

by Florence Panisset, Canada, 1 month

As a young student who loves traveling around the globe and has serious concerns about the environment, going to Ecuador to work on a conservation project in one of the most wonderful and unique natural parks in the world is a dream. Projects Abroad is the right organisation to make it happen, not only because its projects are directly managed in the Galápagos Islands by local people, but also because these projects are well-structured, realistic and mind-blowing.



My summer as a volunteer for Projects Abroad has been one of the most gratifying experiences of my life. This is mostly because, like all the volunteers, I had the chance to live on San Cristobal Island and see how fragile its unique environment is and how much it needs our help, not only as volunteers but also as humans. My stay here really gave me the opportunity to think about how humans have affected nature, and how nature has affected humans.



As an important organisation that takes its mission seriously, Projects Abroad has various environmental projects on the island to maintain the original sites. For example, during my trip, I had the opportunity to work with the National Park Services to gather information about many species, such as marine iguanas, sea lions and various kinds of birds.



We also worked in the Highlands, a place on the island where Projects Abroad has its own nursery for endemic plants. There, volunteers are required to work in the garden and then bring plants to La Galapaguera (Tortoise Breeding Centre) to feed the famous Galápagos tortoises. Working on this project was really exciting for me, because we volunteers had the privilege of directly assisting giant tortoises while they ate their food.

I also enjoyed working with local rangers on a project in the island's forest, which consisted of looking for birds' nests in the ground and putting rat poison near the holes, since rats have invaded the place because of human activity in the towns nearby. In fact rats are threatening the forest's wildlife by eating eggs and, as the rangers informed me, we have to make them disappear if we want the local bird species to survive. This project was pretty interesting for me, because we had the opportunity to visit the San Cristobal woods with a local





ranger who showed us many skills to find nests and, especially, the right attitude to have towards nature.



The adventures I had this summer are now memories I'll keep telling my friends and family for years, whether they are about meeting at 5am to go bird watching, climbing rocky hills or simply counting sea lions on the Malecon (boardwalk). Hopefully, a few years from now, other volunteers will still have the same memories to share with people.



However, with the shocking growth of urban development over the last few years, San Cristobal Island's wildlife has taken a step back. We obviously need Projects Abroad to maintain its activities and commitment toward the local population, so the unique San Cristobal environment might remain in its original state as long as people care. This is why being part of the conservation team is a way of showing our respect to the earth for what it has done and does for us.

## VOLUNTEERS TAKING PART IN DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES











Congratulations for your outstanding performances!

If you have anything you'd like to suggest, about our work please contact  
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