

Galapagos March Newsletter



Numenius arquata

The best time for bird to go feed themselves is when the tide is down.



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Note by Country Director

Hi, everyone,

We are in the middle of summer camp, when more than 100 children and teenagers on the island have fun learning about conservation and recycled art, taking part in sports' activities, as well as going on trips to local places of interest, such as the tortoise breeding centre and the National Park nursery in the Highlands. We have the most overseas volunteers we have ever had helping our kids have fun, and our local volunteers also ensure that everything runs smoothly.

It is one of the busiest times of the year for the centre, so our local staff members are working very hard to make sure that every visitor has a great time while living in paradise. The conservation volunteers are helping teach the community about the importance of looking after our local fauna, in particular sharks, and also educating our youngsters about invasive and endemic plant species. Projects Abroad has started a program in Fiji to help educate the world about the dangers facing sharks, and what we can all do to preserve them.

Our work with the National Park is of great importance, since it is the main organization that looks after this important area in the world. With our help, our kids are becoming more educated about their own islands, and in future, we hope that some of them will work as rangers within it. Our English teaching program is of great importance since most people need English to communicate with the many tourists who come here, and the sports programs ensure that our youngsters have activities on an island that lacks the entertainment facilities of the mainland, towns and cities.

As always we are working hard to beautify the island, in particular with a mural that focuses on our local fauna. We have also been socializing with the Kindergarten Staff the Care management plan. It has been hotter than usual this year, but the constant sunshine is a welcome bonus for people who come from winters in colder parts of the world.

We would like to thank the whole community for welcoming volunteers to the island and into their homes, our local volunteers and staff who help run all the activities, our children and teenagers for showing such enthusiasm for all their activities, and the staff in the overseas offices of Projects Abroad for marketing our island and activities so successfully.



William Puga
Country Director, Ecuador

THREE MONTHS IN A MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE IN THE GALAPAGOS

RONAN MARRON-Ireland-Conservation Project



The night before I left Ireland to come here to the Galapagos, I couldn't sleep.

I was nervous and anxious. What if the work was too much? What if my host family

and I didn't get along? What if I didn't make any friends? What if the food, the insects or the weather drove me crazy?

Well, I needn't have worried at all. I can't imagine having spent a nicer time. It is an island that resembles paradise with its sandy, unspoilt beaches, sunshine, and beautiful seafront dotted with dainty little cafes. I arrived and thought, 'I can't believe I get to live here for 3 months'.

What can I say about the people? My host family is great, and it is such a unique experience to live with them. The other volunteers are the greatest. It is impossible to be antisocial here, and the amount of time that we spend together is fantastic. I have a genuine problem now of trying to find the time and money to visit all of these amazing new people dotted around the world!

I suppose the work warrants a mention, although while being here, it is easy to forget that that's what I'm here for. The work doesn't feel like work because the atmosphere is so relaxed and friendly.



Often in conservation we will finish work at the beach on a Friday with time to tan and swim and still be home for lunch. When we work in the Highlands, the chance to work with the tortoises is phenomenal!

Then again, the animals here are so fantastic, now it has got to the stage where we say, 'oh, it's just another sea lion, giant tortoise or turtle'. The snorkeling is amazing. My personal favourite moment of my stay was snorkeling with two penguins on Isabela Island! The opportunity to visit other islands and do fantastic things like that is one of the reasons that I have

enjoyed volunteering with Projects Abroad so much.



A PART OF MY LIFE IN THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

ANN-CATHRIN COENEN-Germany-six months



Hola! ☺

My name is Ann-Cathrin, I am nineteen and I come from Germany. I have spent the last six months in Ecuador of which I have been volunteering with Projects Abroad on San Cristòbal for five months. There is nothing else to say than that it has truly been an amazing experience that I would never change in my life. Although I was a bit scared and unsure when I first decided to do the volunteering program, I have to say that it was possibly the best decision I have made in my life.

I volunteered in two projects: In the mornings I was working in the conservation project while in the afternoons I was teaching local children between 5 and 13 English. Doing conservation was great for getting to know many new volunteers straight from the beginning who have all been very friendly, caring and open-minded and have become close friends to me. Furthermore it allowed me to have a valuable insight Galàpagos' wild life and nature. Working so close with the National park (e.g. with the giant turtles or the reforestation), but also with the local families (e.g. building a bathroom for a family) was an once-in-a-lifetime experience. One gets to know and to understand the beautiful parts, but also under which complicated conditions some people live and what dangers there are that might threaten the beautiful environment on the Galàpagos. It was partially hard manual work and yes, I look like I cut my arms instead of the blackberry bushes and trees, but I loved it and I woke up every day with a

smile looking forward to work -even if it was at 5 am to do bird watching.

Teaching on the other hand was a complete different experience. When I first came to Galàpagos I hardly spoke a word of Spanish and I was straight put into a class of twenty 6-year-olds introduced by the words "Here you go, you have got one hour. Teach them whatever you think is best for them". I have to admit that the first three days were extremely exhausting and totally overwhelmed me only being able to say "hola, cómo estás?" in Spanish while the smaller children hardly spoke a word of English. But after that, after getting to know the children and how adorable especially the little ones were, I just loved to work with them. Moreover I did not only teach the children a language, but they taught me at the same time. Today my Spanish (grammar) might not be one hundred percent perfect, but I understand the Ecuadorian people even if they speak extremely fast and they understand me and that's what counted for me, because I wanted to be able to communicate with them to get to know them and their culture even better.



Yes, it was hard at some days with teaching and conservation at the same time, but looking at all the little smiling faces and the kids that just jump on you and want to hug you and the kids that start crying when you have to leave..that was definitely worth all the effort and time I had to put into it. Furthermore it is great when you realize the children's improvement. What I also loved about teaching was that whenever you saw someone of your class in town, they would run up to you and give you a big hug and you could feel that their parents were thankful at you for



teaching their kids. It was a great way of not being looked at only as a volunteer, but as part of the Galapaguens. Where I experienced something similar, was in my family. I had three smaller hostsiblings that were really adorable. One day when my hostmum went to school with them, the teacher asked her how her new baby was going, because the kids had mentioned at school that they had a new sister. Therefore the teacher assumed that her mum had gotten a new baby. My hostmum started out laughing, because she realized that the new baby was me. And that is what I felt like at all times: like a normal member of the family. I really hope that I will see them again one day.



Another part of my experience besides work and my family were the absolutely amazing and crazy freetime activities I did with the other volunteers



or sometimes also with the locals. We went to various beaches, on the weekends we made trips to other islands, built our own soccer team, joined Zumba, went to play pool or cards pretty much every night and learned to dance a bit of salsa. I have met the most amazing people from all over the world. What surprised me was, that I directly felt like being a part of a big family.



I would definitely recommend this adventure to everyone, because it is not only about learning about other cultures etc, but it is also about getting to know yourself better. There is one last thing that impressed me very much over here: No matter how poor the people on Galápagos might be, I have never seen people that are more happy and welcoming than the people from Galápagos. And that is something I want to take back with me to Germany: The happiness.



Even now, two months later I am still in contact with them and we are all planning on meeting up together in summer.

In summing up I want to say: Thank you Projects Abroad and Galápagos for making this amazing opportunity possible.

Muchas gracias y hasta pronto, Galápagos,

Ann ☺

CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES IN SUMMER CAMP -

By **Jonathan Guillen**-Conservation Manager- Ecuador

During the last 3 weeks of summer camp, the conservation guys have organised special days when we worked with the children in the following activities:

SHARK CAMPAIGN

Projects Abroad started the shark campaign last year. But in the Galapagos we started this year during summer camp, we taught the children about how important it is to have sharks in the ocean, the causes of their deaths, and what is going on in the Galapagos, using presentations and games to increase their understanding of the issues involved.



MURAL PAINTING

We are also painting a mural with conservation as the topic, where the children paint their hands on the wall and draw fauna from the Galapagos Islands.

RECYCLING

To finish the month, we had a workshop for the volunteers, and then they helped the children to create objects with recycled materials, and taught the importance of recycling and protecting the environment because the place where they live is really fragile with unique species.

TORTOISE BREEDING CENTRE

For our second trip, we visited the tortoise breeding centre where the children learnt about the importance of keeping giant tortoises, what they eat and basic biology the different species of plants that we are planting there, and received information about native and endemic plants. about tortoises. Then, they visited the National Park greenhouse, where they saw.



CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES DURING THE MONTH





CREDITS

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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!