

## News from the Field

Charles Darwin Foundation  
Galapagos May, 2012



Dear <<First Name>>

Outside the realm of research, attention tends to focus on the iconic and emblematic animals with the less conspicuous not surprisingly overlooked as they are likely hidden under a rock, in the crook of a branch or floating on the ocean currents.

Galapagos is home to a myriad of seemingly invisible creatures such as the ants and spiders that carry out their daily tasks in my office and home. When I am scuba diving with giants such as the whale shark or among fields of hammerhead sharks it's easy to forget that their survival depends on plankton, the often microscopic animals and plants that float in the ocean and that are the very cornerstone of marine life. While Galapagos might be among the best studied tropical island ecosystems, what we know is far from complete. Ecologists and conservation managers rely on objective information from the CDF to better understand how all the facets of Galapagos ecosystems function and intersect.



For Galapagos to remain one of the most pristine ecosystems left on our planet, CDF must continue to provide the information that ensures the future of this special place.

Thank you for choosing to join with our efforts.

With best wishes,  
Swen Lorenz  
Executive Director

## Conservation Highlights



As Galapagos is subjected to ever increasing pressures, our work to identify and understand the Galapagos marine and terrestrial biodiversity becomes all the more urgent. Biodiversity baselines are essential to assess the status of the Galapagos ecosystem, manage native species, detect risks early, and develop efficient control and eradication strategies for invasive species that pose the greatest risks to fundamentally transforming this insular ecosystem. CDF's inventory of Galapagos biological diversity also helps identify critical gaps in our current knowledge and guides the direction our future research. CDF's [Species Checklist](#) is the culmination of many years of intense efforts to create a complete inventory of all the known species. We are now able to share the results of over 50 years of investigation with stakeholders, partners, teachers, students, researchers, visitors and all CDF website visitors. You can find more information about our [Biodiversity Assessment](#) projects on our website. [www.darwinfoundation.org](http://www.darwinfoundation.org)

### The nature of ants



[www.antweb.org](http://www.antweb.org)

As well as a food source for many animals their soil-moving skills make ants important in nutrient cycling. Of the 44 types of ants registered in Galapagos just 4 are found nowhere else on earth. Another three ant species also top the list of the most aggressive introduced species. Henri Herrera, CDF's ant specialist, is working on filling the gaps on what we know about these tiny creatures with many localities left to inventory, and much still to learn. [« more »](#)

[Renowned scientist E.O Wilson visits CDF.](#)

### Clues to the past and future



Lichens – small inconspicuous plant like organisms that live on the bark of trees or even on bare rock - are sensitive environmental indicators and are often the earliest warning signs that something has gone wrong. CDF is building a complete [lichen checklist](#) [« more »](#)

Pollen can reveal environmental conditions from thousands of years ago and today can show which threatened species may rely on a specific pollination system. [« more »](#)

### Closing in on a solution for an invasive fly



“Darwin’s” finches were the catalyst for revolutionary thinking yet today they are an emblematic indicator of how things can go wrong when man intrudes upon Nature. A deadly intruder, the larva of a non-native parasitic fly, *Philornis downsi*, feeds on the blood of the nestlings and causes up to 100% mortality. [CDF scientists](#), students and volunteers have helped build the knowledge about this fly in Galapagos and a recent [workshop](#) brought experts together to join efforts to combat this devastating pest. [« more »](#)

### Zooplankton : driving ecosystem productivity



The CDF zooplankton inventory investigates seasonal and annual population variability and dynamics of zooplankton in the Galapagos Marine Reserve. Zooplankton plays a fundamental role in the marine food web. Improved knowledge about zooplankton will help plan for the preservation of the entire ecosystem that depends on it. [«more »](#)  
[Zooplankton checklist](#)



We are very excited to announce our upgraded [Datazone](#) - sharing scientific information relevant to Galapagos conservation in a modern and dynamic way. Just click to explore all that CDF has connected to the world.

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