

Charles Darwin Foundation

# Flying the island skies





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Library, Archive and Museum  
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This document, dedicated to the birds of the Galapagos Islands, combines a series of photographs by the British researcher Godfrey Merlen, preserved as slides in the audiovisual collection of the Library, Archive & Museum of the Charles Darwin Foundation, with a selection of texts about the archipelago that are part of the "Historical Bibliography" of the *Galapagueana* digital project.

Using both resources, and connecting the visual works with fragments of narratives and chronicles, a comprehensive approach to some of the most iconic Galapagos species is sought. An approach that goes beyond mere scientific knowledge and that places these species in a broad and comprehensive framework. The minimalist design reinforces the importance of the images, which are already part of the audiovisual heritage of the Galapagos.

The texts included in these pages are quoted in their original version and language. At the end of the book, whenever necessary, a possible translation of them is offered.

Our thanks to Godfrey Merlen for the images, and to all the chroniclers, travelers and scholars who left, in their field notebooks, testimony of the natural wonders they found on their way through "The Encantadas".

Edgardo Civalero | Charles Darwin Foundation





"En esta segunda [isla] abia la mesma despusycion quen la primera; muchos lobos marinos, tortugas, higuanas, galápagos, muchas aves de las de España, pero tan bobas, que no sabian huir, e muchas tomaban a manos."

Tomás de Berlanga. *Carta a Su Magestad de Fray Tomás de Berlanga, describiendo su viaje desde Panamá á Puerto Viejo, e los trabajos que padeció en la navegación*. Portoviejo, Ecuador, 1535.



"There are great plenty of turtle-doves so tame, that a man may kill five or six dozen in sorenoon with a stick. They are somewhat less than pigeon, and are very good meat, and commonly fat."

William Dampier. *A New Voyage round the World: describing particularly...* London: printed for James Knapton, 1699.



"...these, together with a few birds, of which in point of number the dove bore the greatest proportion, were what appeared principally to compose the inhabitants of this island."

George Vancouver. *Voyage of discovery to the North Pacific Ocean, and round the world in the years 1791-9*. Volume 3, book 6. London: [n.d.], 1798.



"This island contains no great number, or variety, of land birds, and those I saw, were not remarkable for their novelty or beauty: they were the fly-catcher and creeper, like those of New Zealand..."

James Colnett. *A Voyage to the South Atlantic and around Cape Horn into the Pacific Ocean for the purpose of extending the Spermacetic Whaling Fisheries...* London: printed for the author by W. Bennett, 1798.





"The English mocking-bird was also found in great numbers..."

David Porter. *Journal of a Cruise Made to the Pacific Ocean by Captain David Porter in the United States Frigate Essex in the Years 1812, 1813, And 1814.* Philadelphia: published by Bradford and Inskeep, 1815.



"We found also a great many small birds ... They were so exceedingly tame, that many were taken without the least attempt to escape, and when a stone or stick was thrown, it was seldom they flew away, but remained until struck or killed."

J. Shillibeer. *A narrative of the Briton's voyage, to Pitcairn's Island*. Taunton: printed for the author by J. W. Marriott, 1817.



"The feathered race is the pelican, which lays its eggs in nest built on trees; flamingoes, and a small kind of albatross which does not lay its eggs in rookeries, but is found here sitting and hatching on the burnt stony ground; gulls, teals, rooks; a small kind of heron, which is in this country vulgarly called shite-poke; the ring dove, and two or three kinds of small sparrows."

*Amasa Delano. A Narrative of Voyages and Travels in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, Comprising Three Voyages Round the World...* Boston: printed by E. G. House, 1817.



"The birds were so tame, as to be easily knocked from the branches on which they were perched, and frequently alighted on the sticks we happened to have in our hands."

John Scouler. Account of a voyage to Madeira, Brazil, Juan Fernandez, and the Gallapagos Islands, performed in 1824 and 1825, with a view of examining their natural history, &c. *The Edinburgh Journal of Science*, 5 (11), October 1826, pp. 195-236.





"The place is like a new creation: the birds and beasts do not get out of our way; the pelicans and sea-lions look in our faces as if we had no right to intrude on their solitude; the small birds are so tame that they hop upon our feet."

Lord Byron. *Voyage of H. M. S. Blonde to the Sandwich Islands in the Years 1824-1825*. London: John Murray, 1826.



"In these lakes are found many varieties of ducks, gallenetas del monte, and also one species of the snipe. Other lakes are also met with ... of much greater extent; but the water is brackish to the taste, and these abound with ducks and flamingos."

J. N. Reynolds. *Voyage of the United States Frigate Potomac, under the Command of Commodore John Downes, during the Circumnavigation of the Globe, in the years 1831, 1832, 1833, and 1834*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1835.



"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."

Charles Darwin. *Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the countries visited during the voyage of H.M.S. Beagle round the world, under the Command of Capt. Fitz Roy*. London: John Murray, 1860.



"Les oiseaux de terre sont peu nombreux dans ces isles; on remarque parmi eux une très-jolie tourterelle bonne à manger; un oiseau très familier que l'on nomme *sueño* sur la côte du Perou; une petite espèce de canard, la poule d'eau; des flamands, des aigrettes des deux espèces, des crabiers; parmi les oiseaux de mer, on compte plusieurs espèces de goëlands, le pélican gris et la frégate."

Abel du Petit-Thouars. *Voyage autour du monde sur la frégate La Vénus pendant les années 1836-1839 publié par ordre du Roi, sous les auspices du Ministre de la Marine*. Tome II. Paris: Gide, éditeur, 1841.





"The species of birds I observed on Hood Island consisted of the two kinds of hawk, the spotted as well as the dusky one (which Mr. Darwin considered to be individuals of different ages of the same species)."

Simeon Habel. En Osbert Salvin. On the Avifauna of the Galapagos Islands. *The Transactions of the Zoological Society*, 1876, pp. 447-510.



## Translations

"In this second [island] there was the same disposition as in the first; many sea lions, turtles, iguanas, tortoises, many birds of those of Spain, but so dumb, that they did not know how to flee, and many were taken with the hands."

Berlanga, p. 3.

"The land birds are few in number in these islands; among them we noticed a very pretty turtle-dove good for eating; a very familiar bird which is called *sueño* on the coast of Peru; a small species of duck, the moorhen; flamingos, egrets of both species, crab-eaters; among the sea birds there are several species of gulls, the gray pelican and the frigatebird."

Petit-Thouars, p. 25.



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