

Blue-footed booby

Blue-footed boobies are famous for their eye-catching, bright blue webbed feet. Their amazing feet help them find mates. When a male and a female booby meet, they often do a dance and wave their feet in the air. They can dive into the ocean from as high as 80 feet (24.4 meters) to catch small fish.

Galápagos penguin

This is the only type of penguin that lives and breeds on the equator. Penguins do not fly. Most live in the southern hemisphere and the cold waters close to Antarctica.

The Galápagos penguin has the shortest feathers of all penguins. This helps keep it from getting too hot. This penguin can swim in waters up to 82°F (27.8°C). To keep their eggs safe from the sun's heat, they lay and incubate them in shady nooks.

Penguins on the Galápagos Islands are in danger of being eaten by dogs, cats, and rats.

Galápagos sea lion

These animals can be found on every island in the Galapagos. They often lie in the sand or on rocks.

Adult males are called bulls. They are dark brown to black. They may grow as long as seven feet. Adult females are called cows. They are a lighter brown color. Females and pups are rather tame and harmless, but males may fight for their territory.

Galápagos sea lions sleep in groups, piled upon each other. Bulls without mates form their own groups.

Males become adults at 10 years. They are much larger than females, sometimes weighing twice as much.

Females begin mating at three years. Single pups are born in the *garua* (cloudy mist) season. They spend the first week of their life bonding with their mother. After the first week, mothers hunt for fish by day and suckle their pups by night. Older pups begin to feed on their own near the shore at five months. They may still need their mothers for many more months.

Giant tortoise

There were once 200,000 giant tortoises on the Galápagos Islands. Now, there are only about 15,000 to 17,000.

Giant tortoises can reach up to 5 feet (1.5 meters) long and weigh as much as 600 pounds (272.2 kilograms). There are two types of giant tortoises. One type has a "saddleback" upper shell. This shell has raised front shells, which allows the tortoise to reach high for food. The other type has a shell more like a dome, which helps the tortoise plow through dense forests.

Giant tortoises live mainly on the larger islands. Females with saddlebacks lay eggs four or five times a year. They lay about six eggs at a time. Females with domed backs lay eggs two or three times a year. They lay as many as 20 eggs at a time.

Giant tortoises can live more than 100 years!

Galápagos land iguana

Galápagos land iguanas are large (more than 3 feet [0.9 meters] long). Their skin is yellowish. Males can weigh as much as 30 pounds (13.6 kilograms). The first land iguanas probably arrived from South America by floating on a mass of plants, branches, and soils.

Land iguanas eat mostly low-growing plants and shrubs, such as the spiny opuntia cacti. They also eat fallen fruits and cactus pads. These plants give the iguanas the water they need during long, dry periods.

Land iguanas become adults between eight and 15 years of age.

Galápagos marine iguana

This is the only seagoing lizard in the world. It lives on land but grazes on seaweed. The seaweed can sometimes be found on rocks above the water. Sometimes, however, the iguana dives into the cold sea to get the seaweed. While underwater, the iguana might be eaten by sharks or other large fish.

When marine iguanas go hungry, they get shorter as well as thinner. They will shrink in length and then regrow as food becomes plentiful again. Scientists think they might digest part of their bones when they shrink.

There are about 200,000 – 300,000 marine iguanas in the Galápagos Islands.