

MIGUEL CIFUENTES — IN RECOGNITION

by

Thomas H. Fritts

Prior to accepting a new position, Miguel Cifuentes served as Superintendent of the Galapagos National Park over a ten-year span from 1976 to 1986 interrupted only by a two-year period during which he successfully completed a Master of Science Degree in natural resource management with a specialization in reserves and protected areas at the Centro Agronomico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza (CATIE) in Turrialba, Costa Rica.

Miguel's initial involvement with Galapagos began in 1972 when he served as a student researcher participating in a study of the green sea turtle populations in Galapagos. He subsequently worked in the Darwin Station's Education Program and as an assistant to the station director. Miguel's enthusiasm, maturity, and ability to work under difficult conditions, which were evidenced in his work on the remote turtle nesting beaches, were equally apparent when he began to serve as head of the Galapagos National Park.

During Miguel's tenure, the National Park and the entire socioeconomic status of Galapagos experienced a significant maturation. The challenges were numerous ranging from economic crises caused by delays in the transfer of money to Galapagos from national and international sources to ecological problems caused by diluvial rains, increasing feral animal problems, or wildfires. Miguel provided competent leadership on diverse issues: when the impacts of tourism needed to be assessed, when major commitments of park personnel were essential to the elimination of the last goats from Española and Marchena, and when new problems developed requiring reprioritization of the resources and personnel of the Galapagos National Park Service.

Miguel worked closely with the Charles Darwin Research Station and visiting scientists and effectively weighted their assessments, but he was not hesitant to adopt his own course of action when it was appropriate to the situation.

Miguel Cifuentes has given much to the park, the archipelago, and the international community interested in conservation, natural resources, and tourism. His expertise in problem solving, planning, administration, and management of natural areas, which has been so effective in Galapagos, has resulted in his being offered a role in training others to work with similar problems throughout Latin America and the rest of the world. His new position is the Central American Regional Representative for the WWF — International in the Wildlands Programme at CATIE. His absence from Galapagos will certainly be regretted, but the best wishes of the park, station and scientific communities who have known and worked with him go out to Miguel and his family with expectations for his success in the position in Costa Rica and the new challenges that this move will produce.

CONGRATULATIONS TO HUMBERTO OCHOA

Humberto Ochoa, a long-term employee in the Galapagos National Park, has been appointed to replace Miguel Cifuentes as Superintendent of the park. Humberto came to the park in 1978, and until his new appointment, headed up the Protection Program aimed at the control of introduced plants and animals throughout the park. He is trained as an agronomist (Ingeniero Agronomo) and has participated in numerous postgraduate training programs in conservation and land-management practices. Most recently Humberto completed a three-month graduate course in wildland management at CATIE in Costa Rica. The entire Galapagos community welcomes Humberto as the new head of the Galapagos National Park and wishes him success in this very important post.