

## PREFACE

During the 25 years in which I have been actively involved in the promotion of Galapagos conservation and science there have been such radical developments that I could not hope to give a catalogue of all the Charles Darwin Foundation's manifold activities within the pages of a slim volume. It was therefore necessary for me to be selective in various ways. I suspect that I have given undue emphasis to those projects in which I have been personally concerned and for this I apologise. On the other hand it was quite deliberately that I concentrated on certain aspects of our work. Conservation has been given priority over science, so that the hundreds of visiting scientists who have used the Charles Darwin Research Station's facilities have been allotted relatively small space: after all, their results, usually addressed to a restricted audience, have been published in their specialist journals.

This was not intended as a natural history of the Galapagos: there are an increasing number of excellent works of that kind on the bookshelves in several languages. I have taken the liberty of devoting a disproportionate amount of attention to a few species while ignoring others because this reflects the Foundation's principal concerns over the years. For instance, the Lava Gull of the Galapagos may be the rarest gull in the world but, not being in any danger, it has not required the CDF's intervention and I have not even mentioned it: whereas the still numerous Dark-rumped Petrel is under threat of extinction and receives considerable attention. The giant tortoises and iguanas were not only endangered but were also the very symbols of the Galapagos and consequently play an exaggerated role in this story.

Most of these pages are devoted to the activities of the Charles Darwin Research Station and deal chronologically with developments under successive Directors. This was a convenient narrative method as the station has been the cutting edge of the operation and its day by day problems, setbacks and successes tell the story more graphically than would accounts of the transactions of the Foundation's

officers and executive council, although they bore the ultimate responsibility. I have consulted surviving Presidents and Founder Members and all former Directors in order to get the facts as nearly correct as possible but any opinions expressed are entirely my own.

Within the available space it has not been possible to acknowledge the generous contributions of all the many individuals and institutions who have made possible the success of this adventure. A few of the major benefactors, including UNESCO, our mainstay in the early years, fall naturally into the story, but little mention has been made of WWF, simply in order to avoid endless repetition. Since its establishment, WWF has been a constant source of funds, encouragement and advice and no year has passed without its substantial support.

Looking back over 30 years of endeavour, the surviving founders of the organization must be surprised at the way their enterprise has grown and the degree of success that it has achieved. This has been largely due to the peculiar alliance between national government and international science, which has been at the heart of the whole project. The warmth of the welcome and the tolerance shown by the Ecuadorean authorities and people to the activities of a band of foreign scientists was extraordinary and has been followed by an ever-increasing national participation in the Foundation's affairs at every level. The development of a prosperous tourist industry since the inauguration of the research station has become a factor of very considerable importance in the national economy, but this material benefit was anything but obvious in the early years of co-operation. Moreover, successive governments have resisted all temptations to exploit this advantage by turning their unique National Park into a conventional beach resort. It was no accident that the Galapagos Archipelago was one of the first four natural areas to be awarded World Heritage status.

Despite the many triumphs, much still remains to be done to protect the exceptional environment of the islands and more funds are urgently needed.

But it is good to be able to record that the Government has recently extended the area under protection to include the entire internal waters of the archipelago, and that it has renewed its original twenty-five year agreement with the Charles Darwin Foundation for a further period of five years.

In an age when so many of our planet's natural resources are being destroyed, it is comforting to know that great strides have been taken towards saving and restoring one of the world's key environments. It is alarming to think what would have happened to the extraordinary ecological wealth of the islands if the Galapagos National Park and the international Charles Darwin Foundation had not come into being in 1959. Together, Government and Foundation have not merely halted but have actually turned back the tide of degradation, thus offering bright prospects for future generations. It has been a fortunate partnership. The Galapagos, Ecuador and the world have been the beneficiaries.

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GTCS



Flightless Cormorant  
Drawing by Peter Scott