

## Exploring a Unique Ecosystem

The Galapagos Islands are located in the Pacific Ocean west of Ecuador. A number of rare and unusual animals populate these isolated islands.

### Biodiversity on the Galapagos Islands

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The Galapagos Islands are part of the country of Ecuador.

1. The Galapagos lie about 600 miles (about 1000 kilometers) west of mainland Ecuador.
  - a. On the map, draw an arrow west from the mainland of Ecuador to the islands.
  - b. Use the bar scale in the legend to check the distance from one of the islands to the mainland. \_\_\_\_\_ miles
  - c. Two countries border Ecuador. List them below.  
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2. British naturalist Charles Darwin visited the islands in 1835. The giant tortoises he found there led him to further explore the stunning diversity of animals inhabiting the islands.
  - a. The Galapagos tortoise is the largest tortoise in the world. Some weigh more than 500 pounds (230 kilograms), and they can live up to 150 years. About 3,000 tortoises live on Isabela Island. Next to Isabela Island, write GIANT T (the T stands for tortoise).
  - b. These tortoises are endangered. Only one tortoise of the Pinta Island variety is living today. Near Pinta Island, write the name of this tortoise, LONESOME GEORGE.
3. Marine iguanas are native to the Galapagos Islands. They are the only lizards that eat marine algae.
  - a. The smallest marine iguanas are found on Genovesa Island. They weigh about two pounds (1 kilogram). Next to the label for Genovesa, write SMALL IGUANAS.
  - b. Many of the largest iguanas are found on Fernandina Island. Some of these iguanas can weigh more than 26 pounds (12 kilograms). Near Fernandina, write LARGE IGUANAS.

### Threats to Biodiversity

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4. Humans brought non-native animals to the islands. Many of these non-native animals compete with the native animals for food. Some even eat the native animals.
  - a. Only 11 types of tortoises are left from the original 15 Darwin studied. Goats and cattle threaten the food supply and eggs of the giant tortoises. On the map, find the label you wrote for LONESOME GEORGE. Near that label, write GOATS + CATTLE.
  - b. Non-native animals, including wild dogs and cats, threaten the marine iguanas by eating their eggs and young. Next to LARGE IGUANAS, write DOGS + CATS.