



Galapagos Newsletter



Charadrius Semipalmatus

Great work!

We have had another busy month here in Ecuador.

One of the highlights was a visit from Conservation Director Stuart Timson, who came to inspect our conservation program, meet the staff and help us set up a conservation management plan on San Cristobal Island.

The work of the Care Project has picked up very quickly and the special needs children now have a lot of attention due to the presence of our dedicated volunteers. Having extra pairs of hands in the classrooms helps our local teachers and carers enormously. We have also almost finished a new audio-visual classroom in one of the kindergartens. We have painted the room and decorated it with murals so far. We will be putting up curtains soon. The little children will now be able to watch videos and have get-togethers there.

Our volunteers also helped run a special fundraising day for the special needs children, who will be going to Santa Cruz Island next month to take part in the special needs Olympics. We needed to raise money to pay for their accommodation, uniforms and boat trips. Two of our volunteers donated \$800, so we would like to publicly thank Tonje Sundvoll and Ole Kristian Storli for their great generosity.

Finally, we continue our work trying to rid the island of invasive species, and have planted endemic plants around some of the schools in order to beautify the public areas.

There is never a dull moment or a boring day on the island because of the wonderful work of our local and overseas volunteers. The whole community thanks all of you.



William Puga
Country Director



VOLUNTEERING AS A TEACHER WITH PROJECTS ABROAD

By **Simon Schleinitz** (Germany)



Being a volunteer for Projects Abroad is an exciting, funny and new experience for anyone interested in travelling and working.

My name is Simon Schleinitz and I spent four weeks working as an English teacher in Galapagos Islands, Ecuador.

Preparing for my flight I thought, “What are you doing?” I have to admit that I didn’t know what to expect at my stay-over. But once I had arrived at the rather tiny airport, I knew exactly what was going to happen: three months of beautiful landscape, uncommon wildlife and living in a foreign culture, shared with both locals



and volunteers from all over the world.

After being welcomed by the very friendly and adorable Projects Abroad staff, I slowly started to experience life on the island, which is so different from what I was used to. There is no hectic rush, no need for fear of crime and no xenophobia.

I was shown all that was involved in the task of teaching by a fellow volunteer and the Projects Abroad crew. At first the noisy and playful crowd of students overwhelmed me, but one week later I knew that I never wanted to miss a class because of my lovely and adorable students.



Projects Abroad also offered me other opportunities to enjoy during my time in Ecuador: organizing trips, establishing a football club and preparing dinner for all the volunteers were just a few things they did in order to increase our happiness during our time in the country.

On top of that I got to know people from all over the world. Soon I felt like I was living in a huge family of travellers who felt the same need for new experiences that I did. Enjoying our time in a local bar, playing



sports, discovering the other islands and watching magnificent sunsets created new friendships that I never want to lose.

There was also opportunity to do my own thing during my free time, and Projects Abroad assisted me in creating my own plans. It is up to you, whether you prefer discovering wildlife and beaches or if you want to establish a sports team for local kids – anything is possible.

CARE PROJECT IN SAN CRISTOBAL

By **Tonje Sundvoll** (Norway)



My name is Tonje and I arrived on San Cristobal Island with my boyfriend Ole Kristian a bit over a month ago. I come from Norway and I am 26 years old. I volunteer at the care project, working at a preschool called Alejandro Alvear. My job is to assist the teacher in the classroom. The class consists of twenty-five children of the age of five and there is only one teacher. The days are hectic, but it is also a lot of fun. My biggest challenge in the classroom so far is the language barrier. Although I feel my Spanish is getting better



In a nutshell, the experience arranged by Projects Abroad provides everything you need to escape Western lifestyle and discover other cultures, meeting new people who accompany you on your trip or through your whole life. To cut a long story short – you will enjoy living in one of the most beautiful places on earth.

every day, it is still very challenging to get the children to listen with my very limited vocabulary. My temporary solution is to use a lot of body language and games to make the children understand. It works from time to time ☺



Ole Kristian and I live with a very nice family. The food is excellent and our host mum makes the most delicious cakes. We are lucky to have our own floor with our own bathroom and Wi-Fi. The Wi-Fi has been a lifesaver on rainy days and when I get a bit homesick.

In my spare time I try to work out a lot. The free Zumba lessons every weeknight are a fun activity to join, and there are also a lot of great places to run on the island. My next goal is to do yoga on the beach!



I also spend a lot of time hanging out with the other volunteers. Many great people come and go and the group is very people from all around the world.

Being able to live on San Cristobal Island has been a dream come true. The beautiful nature, the rich animal life and the friendly people are all part of an experience that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. But for now I will enjoy my last three weeks on the island!

welcoming of newcomers. It is a lot of fun and I love meeting so many different



ANOTHER CARE VOLUNTEER'S STORY

By **Ole Kristian Storli** (Norway)



I have been living and working on San Cristobal for five weeks now. I decided to work as a volunteer because I wanted a new experience and to learn new things about language, myself and the world. Combining that with helping people seemed like the perfect thing to do.

I live with my girlfriend in an apartment in our host family's house. It is very interesting to be part of a family on the Galapagos Island and I really feel that I am getting to know the culture of the island from the inside.

I work with three- and four-year-olds at Alejandro Alvear preschool. In my class there are 23 children, some of whom have special needs. The teacher really needs some help in order to give the kids enough attention. My work mainly consists of helping the teacher and the children with their assignments, teaching the children English and playing with the children. I have also been working on different ways to encourage good behavior.

The children are good Spanish teachers. They talk to me as if I know how to speak Spanish, and I really get a feel for the words I need to go home and practice when I try to explain something to them. However with the use of a smile and some body language we usually figure out what we are trying to say to each other.





Every day after work I go down to the pier and look at the sea, where there is a lot of stuff going on. I see sea lions playing in the water, boats coming and going and an occasional sea turtle popping its head up for air. San Cristobal is a very cool place.

In my spare time I try to make the most of the many possibilities the island have to offer. I love to go snorkeling on the different beaches and I am always curious of what animals I will see when I go into the water. I also like walking around on the island looking at the wildlife. I also really enjoy hanging out with my fellow volunteers doing various

activities. At the moment we are preparing for a football match against a local team so we are practicing and teambuilding for the big day. It is a lot of fun.

I feel that I am doing something good in helping the teacher and the children and I can really see that they need my help. In return they have taught me a lot of things and given me a lot of good moments. I am very grateful for this experience.



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

By **Christian Speyerer** (Germany)



In January 2013 I went to the Galapagos Islands for five weeks to volunteer as a teacher with Projects Abroad. I enjoyed my time with the children a lot, but I was especially amazed by the beautiful untouched landscape as well as the coexistence of the inhabitants with the local animals. For this reason I decided to come back to San Cristóbal as soon as possible to learn more about the

environmental protection of this natural reserve.

In October 2013 I finally got the chance to spend three weeks in the Projects Abroad conservation project. I happily chose the same host family again and they welcomed me like a family member when I arrived.

My work usually starts at 07:30, when all



the conservation volunteers meet to take care of some endemic flowers, which we have planted in front of a local school. It is a great way to get in contact with the local people to talk about our work and about the importance of environmental protection in general. Our supervisor picks us up at 09:30 to go to the different working sites, where we stay until 12.30. My favorite one is La Galapaguera, where we work with the giant tortoises in close collaboration with the national park. We have also created our own nursery station, where we are able to grow some endemic plants.



After having done one week of work, I am glad that I decided to come back to this



place, because I have already learned a lot about the challenges of protecting the natural environment of Galapagos.

In my opinion, five hours of work per day is perfect, because it leaves plenty of spare time to enjoy the beautiful island with the other volunteers and the local people.

I especially look forward to growing some coffee beans on a local farm in my remaining time, because they will be a great souvenir of this gorgeous place when I eventually have to go back home.

VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION



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OCTOBER DIRTY DAY-MACHETE WORK





- **Front Page:** Jonathan Guillén
- **Design:** Daniela Silva
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- **Articles:** Simon Schleinitz
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If you have any suggestions about our work, please contact ecuador@projects-abroad.org.

Best wishes from Ecuador!

