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Dear Friends,

We are excited to share how our Galapagos Initiative has continued to thrive over the past few months. Due to high vaccination rates in the Galapagos Islands, our Galapagos Science Center has been able to reopen with pandemic related protocols in place. Enjoy reading about new research being conducted by UNC PhD students, the impact being felt from one of our REACTT projects, ongoing success stories about research grants in Galapagos, and much more!

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UNC PhD Students Turn Challenges of Pandemic into Opportunities



UNC PhD students Esteban Agudo and Savannah Ryburn navigated uncertainty during the pandemic to finally conduct their valuable research at our Galapagos Science Center and – of course – countless hours in the ocean! Esteban’s research focuses on understanding the indirect effects of ocean warming on marine communities while Savannah studies diets of juvenile sharks to understand why they choose specific nursery grounds. Read the full article [here!](#)

How Coffee Brought Together Agriculture, Conservation and Economic Recovery



Nicolas Balon’s project titled “Reforestation my Island” was awarded a REACTT grant partially funded due to generous support during the GiveUNC campaign. [Learn](#) how this grant not only helped Nicolas recover economically during the pandemic but enabled him to create a sustainable coffee farm on San Cristobal, Galapagos - showing that conservation and agriculture can thrive together! You can also hear from Nicolas (and see the farm!) in this [short video](#).

Animal Health Researchers Continue Vital Work at Galapagos Science Center



This summer researchers were able to return to the Galapagos to conduct valuable research on animals such as the San Cristobal tortoise, Galapagos sea lion, green sea turtles and the Española Nazca booby – all with different research objectives. For example, [learn more](#) about how health assessments from the Nazca booby will help measure stress levels to better understand how tourism may or may not be impacting its health.

CGS Researchers receive \$1.2m Grant from National Science Foundation



What began as a seed grant from UNC Center for Galapagos Studies has now led UNC researchers Alan Jones and Corbin Jones to recently receive a [\\$1.2m grant from the National Science Foundation!](#) This research will be conducted over 4 years to better understand the genetic characteristics of grasses across Ecuador – including the Galapagos – and how the genes within these grasses allow them to respond to changing light environments.

Why Have So Few Reptiles Invaded Marine Environments?



How did the marine iguana evolve to be the world’s only marine lizard? The Galapagos Science Center was part of a multi-institutional collaboration with scientists and students from across the globe to better understand the extent to which modification on the reptilian system is required for successful invasion of the marine environment. Read about the research and collaboration [here!](#)

Science & Conservation in Galapagos



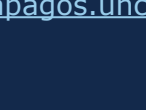
[Learn](#) why our approach, using interdisciplinary science and sustainable conservation, is the key to protecting the Galapagos Islands! Explore the topics of One Health, marine microbial ecology in a changing climate, invasive species, and citizen science to better understand how our Galapagos Initiative approaches protecting island ecosystems and threats to their sustainability.

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I hope you enjoyed reading these impactful stories from Galapagos and look forward to sharing more with you in the future! If you would like to support our Center to allow us to continue making an impact in this way please click [here](#) or feel free to reach out to me at weaverk@email.unc.edu to arrange a phonecall or Zoom to learn more!

Kind regards,

Kelly Weaver
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