



Dear Friends,

We hope that you and your loved ones are beginning a relaxing and fun holiday season. As we near the end of 2023, we are so grateful for the support and involvement of all of you in the Galapagos Initiative. Your contributions make our work possible!

As you read these stories, we hope it inspires you to consider giving a gift this holiday season to continue supporting our meaningful work. Please enjoy hearing about some of our current projects in the Galapagos – including an update about our recent social work certification program in Galapagos and the development of another exciting collaborative project with the UNC School of Nursing, USFQ, and the Oskar Jandl Hospital on San Cristobal Island. Let us whisk you away to the Galapagos one more time this year!

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for Galapagos Studies**

UNC School of Social Work and USFQ deliver social work certification program for Galapagos locals



This summer, the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work and the Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ) debuted a [12-week social work program](#) for Galapagos locals to earn a certificate in community development and social work. Participants reflected on how the training both equipped and empowered them to make concrete changes in their community. Each participant designed their own project to address a

specific local social issue, from the socio-economic consequences of population growth to conserving Galapagos’ cultural history. This work would not be possible without the longstanding collaboration between UNC, USFQ, and the Galapagos locals!

UNC School of Nursing collaborates with local Galapagos hospital to address professional development needs



The UNC School of Nursing began a collaboration with USFQ, Oskar Jandl Hospital on San Cristobal Island, and Ecuador’s Ministry of Public Health in 2016 to assess and address the professional development needs of nurses in the Galapagos. This summer, thanks to funding from a UNC Center for Galapagos Studies Seed Grant, a team from the School of Nursing [launched a study](#) to follow up from the initial needs assessment and develop a continuing education program. This program will address nurses’ professional development needs at the institutional level of the hospital, and the team is working closely with local nurses to ensure the success of the program.

CGS seed grant funds research on host-pathogen dynamics on San Cristobal Island



A seed grant from the Center for Galapagos Studies funded Senay Yitbarek, an assistant professor in UNC’s department of biology, to [travel to the Galapagos this summer to conduct research on San Cristobal](#). Yitbarek’s research explores how pathogens, particularly viruses, have arrived in the Galapagos and what part they’ve played in the

success of invasive plant species, which threaten the biodiversity in the Galapagos' unique ecosystems. Yitbarek also led a 5-week ecology course for UNC students through its summer study abroad program, providing the students hands-on experience in both field and lab work.

Does ocean warming make marine animals hungrier? UNC Ph.D. student shares insights during Teen Science Cafe



In November, the Center for Galapagos Studies' Esteban Agudo, a Ph.D. student studying marine ecology in UNC's department of biology, [gave a talk at the Teen Science Cafe](#) titled "Does Warmer Mean Hungrier?". Esteban's talk showcased his research about the effects of ocean warming, due to climate change, on marine animals' feeding habits and, consequently, their communities and ecosystems. Esteban also discussed the importance of taking action in the face of climate change and how teens can do their part in making a difference.

UNC Ph.D. student's cutting-edge science helps conserve critically endangered scalloped hammerheads in the Galapagos



Savannah Ryburn, a UNC Ph.D. student in the Environment, Ecology and Energy Program, has dedicated the last five years to [researching the diet of juvenile blacktip and scalloped hammerhead sharks](#) in the Galapagos Islands using a cutting-edge technique called metabarcoding. This technique allows her to determine an animal's diet through DNA sequencing, often identifying prey down to the species level. Savannah looks to

use the results of her research to help conserve both species of sharks through targeted fishing restrictions that protect these sharks’ prey.

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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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