



"The Charles Darwin Research Station and Foundation in Galapagos: New Directions and Challenges for the Future"

by

Dr Graham Watkins
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Ecuador

Friday, 30 September 2005, Bonvin Building, Room XIV, at 15h00.

Graham Watkins, Ph.D., *Executive Director of Charles Darwin Foundation*

A Guyanese-born British citizen, Dr Watkins has spent most of his life in tropical South America, mainly in Ecuador and Guyana. Prior to joining the Foundation in 2005, Dr Watkins was Director-General of the Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development in Guyana from 2003 to 2005, and senior wildlife biologist with the centre from 1998 to 2003. His professional portfolio includes more than 15 years of experience in ecological research, collaborative wildlife and fisheries management, and enterprise development in aquaculture, fisheries and tourism. Dr Watkins holds an undergraduate degree in Zoology from St. Catherine's College, Oxford in the UK and a Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolution from the University of Pennsylvania, USA. His Ph.D. studies were carried out on the Ecuadorian coast and he worked as a guide in the Galapagos Archipelago in the late 1980s.

The Galapagos Archipelago: Situated in the Pacific Ocean some 1,000 km from the South American continent of Ecuador, these nineteen islands and the surrounding marine reserve have been called a unique 'living museum and showcase of evolution'. Located at the confluence of three ocean currents, the Galapagos are a 'melting pot' of marine species. Ongoing seismic and volcanic activity reflects the processes that have formed the islands. These processes, together with the extreme isolation of the islands, have led to the development of a diversity of fauna, such as the giant tortoise, land and marine iguanas and abundant bird species, including the finches that inspired Charles Darwin's theory of evolution following his visit to the islands in 1835.

The Galapagos Islands were inscribed in 1978 in the World Heritage List of UNESCO and in 1984 designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

