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Galapagos gains

- [09 December 2006](#)
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- [Victoria Todd, Dunbar, East Lothian, UK](#)

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Your report on the Galapagos was mostly negative about the impact of tourism on the wildlife of this exceptional archipelago (14 October, p 8). In 1995, I spent six months on the islands working as a volunteer research scientist.

At that time it was not tourism that was the problem for wildlife, but corruption within the navy, and among government officials and numerous politicians, in concert with increasing over-exploitation of marine resources - such as shark fins, sea cucumbers, sea horses, lobster and grouper - by local fishers. Ten years on, has much changed?

Surely, 698 tourists on a boat are better than 698 tourists on the land, where the impact of their energy and water demands are greater, as is the probability that they will introduce disease and alien species. Scientists could use these ships (as we once did) as "platforms of opportunity" that would allow them to reach more remote areas of the archipelago to do research.

Let us stop being knee-jerk conservationists and put on our business heads. We can make conservation pay for itself. If each person on a boat has paid, for example, \$6000 for their trip, would they not perhaps be able to pay another \$500 to be donated to fund vital work at the Charles Darwin Research Station?

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