



East Finchley link to exotic islands

The exotic islands of Galapagos, with their strange, unique creatures, may be thousands of miles away but several times a year, Galapagos comes to East Finchley. For East Finchley is home to the Executive Director of the UK charity, the Galapagos Conservation Trust.

Leonor Stjepic explains: "The Galapagos Conservation Trust is the only UK charity raising funds to protect the Galapagos. We work with the key conservation groups there, as well as with the other independent friends of Galapagos charities throughout the world. We all save funds by staying in each other's houses when we have meetings."

Galapagos visitors to East Finchley have included scientists, award-winning wildlife photographers, school pupils visiting the UK for a conference, and colleagues from friends of Galapagos charities worldwide.

Dream destination threatened

Many people only know the Galapagos Islands, in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Ecuador, as one of the places that they have visited or would like to visit one day; what is little known is that it is under threat.

The Galapagos Islands are a microcosm of the social, political, ecological and economic changes occurring in the world. In Galapagos, biodiversity is susceptible to invasive species, over-harvesting, climate change and major pollution events. The major threat to native terrestrial biodiversity today is invasive species. 24% of plant species and 50% of vertebrate species on the islands are still considered



Sally Lightfoot Crab. Picture courtesy Galapagos Conservation Trust

as endangered. Some of the new potential threats, including malaria spread by birds, West Nile Fever and bird flu, may have highly damaging and unpredictable consequences. Furthermore, external markets for tourism, sea cucumbers and shark fins are driving business growth in the Galapagos.

Leonor told *THE ARCHER* "The next five years are vital for Galapagos conservation. If we don't act quickly we could see the end of Galapagos as one of the few, almost pristine, places left on Earth. If we cannot save Galapagos, what hope do we have for the other natural spaces on this planet?"

For further information about the Galapagos Conservation Trust, log on to www.gct.org or call Leonor on 020 7629 5049.



Galapagos Sea Lion. Picture courtesy Galapagos Conservation Trust

Searching for stained glass

Helene Davidian is looking out for stained glass in windows and doors. She will report on her survey to The Finchley Society on 27 April.

Finchley still has some interesting examples, including a window in Christ Church, North Finchley, by a brother of the painter, John Constable. If you know of any stained glass windows or doors, please contact Helene on 020 8444 3669.

A cyclist's tale

By Alisha Davies

Pedal, pedal, pedal. Watch out for the potholes, pedestrians, cars turning left, red lights, amber lights. OUCH! That's the second pothole of the day. I won't be able to sit down until lunch.

Come rain or shine, every day I'm overtaken by the Tour de France reject tearing down Highgate Hill, setting off the speed cameras and revelling in speeding past us novices who cycle along in old T-shirts, red-faced and sweaty. His attire is aerodynamic Lycra from head to toe. Not very flattering to view from the front or rear but, oh, what I would give for a pair of those padded shorts to combat the pain inflicted by potholes.

I become blinded by the fluorescent glare of the next regular cyclist I encounter on my journey to work: Mr Safety. I'm sure I can see him shake his head in despair as Monsieur Tour de France cycles past at speeds unsuitable for London roads. Mr Safety is a candidate for closet cycle rage. I have witnessed him point out to other cyclists the error of their ways. Did they forget their helmet and lights? One day he will be pushed too far and switch his cycle lights on to blinking mode to flash at bad drivers cutting him up. A small protest, but a valid one for the avid city cyclist.

Closer to Camden, Mr Safety and I part company and I'm halfway to my final destination. Now I must pedal faster to get ahead of the Casual Cyclist before we reach the narrow cycle lane. I'll have no chance of passing her there and I'll miss my timeslot to get into the shower at work.

Being stuck behind the

Casual Cyclist is sheer frustration, forced to cycle little faster than walking pace. The Casual Cyclist sits bolt upright on her ancient bicycle. It nearly passes as a Penny Farthing, but she cycles in a cloud of romanticism, fuelled by listening to softening tunes on her iPod. The Casual Cyclist never wears a helmet (it might ruin her hair) and wouldn't be seen dead in fluorescent outfits.

At Euston, I encounter my last fellow cyclist, the Commuter. Riding a bicycle that can be folded up for ease of transport, the Commuter, like myself, avoids all potholes. I think it is for fear that if he hit one at full pace his bicycle would suddenly fold up, trapping him within the wheels.

The Commuter spends all his hard-earned cash on an annual train pass to commute from the countryside. There is no way he is going to fork out another small fortune on a Tube pass, so he arrives in Euston, unfolds his bike and off he cycles to the office.

Crossing over Euston Road, we all head off our separate ways, only to come together again, same place, sometime tomorrow (unless it's raining, in which case Casual Cyclist won't be joining us). Reading this, you may be wondering what type of cyclist I am. I'm the one too busy looking around at everyone else to notice all the potholes. OUCH! Strike three!



Red Footed Booby. Picture courtesy Galapagos Conservation Trust

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