



Galápagos Land Iguana

I could learn a lot from this iguana,
but, of course, I won't.
I can't sit still that long.
I want what I want when I wanna.
On a whim.

And there's nothing there
to tempt me, surrounded by the sea
like a castaway among some bugs
and lava rocks and prayer.
It's rather grim.

Weeks into a drought
he's still waiting under a cactus
for one of its pads to drop,
trusting everything will work out.
Good for him.

About 80% of the Galápagos land iguana's diet comes from the prickly pear cactus. Everything is consumed: flowers, fruit, pads, even spines. And it's his major source of moisture.



Flightless Cormorant

Most days they stand beside each other
looking out at the sea, their stubby wings
constant reminders that their usefulness
was forfeited forever in eons past,
but they don't remember what that was;
just some kind of emptiness, you'd think,
hangs on their backs, itching to be filled.

They're looking to the future, that's what it is.
He trudges up the rocks with some seaweed
which his mate gratefully acknowledges,
adding it to their nest. Their necks snake
back and forth cementing their commitment.

Now they fly when they fold those remnants in
and dart like homing arrows underwater.

One of the world's rarest birds, flightless cormorants are found only on the islands of Isabela and Fernandina in the Galápagos. Currently, there are about 1,000 breeding pairs.



Marine Iguana

Give me a rock to hug
and I'll be happy
to wear my sleepy mug
and take a nappy.

Give me a band of blokes
like bros of a feather,
snorting salt, telling jokes,
chilling out together.

Give me beds of algae
between high and low tides
where I can shilly-shally
and eat my fill besides.

All I ask for is sunshine
and a lengthy shoreline
and a close-knit colony.
It's a hard life to be carefree—

but I'm warming up to it.

The marine iguana is found only in the Galápagos. Cold-blooded, it soaks up heat from the lava rocks and beach sand before foraging in the ocean, where algae make up almost all of its diet.



Waved Albatross

One of the last that will leave this season,
the big bird still sports tiny tufts of down,
plopped among the lava rocks like a stooge,
sleepy, pot-bellied, drawing the breeze in,
his wondrous wingspan yet to be unfurled.

He waits to be invited to the world,
unperturbed, harboring a lazy eye.
Who can judge now what will happen
when he wakes from this immature stupor
to find the vastnesses of sea, the soaring sky?

The waved albatross breeds primarily on Española Island in the Galápagos archipelago.



Blue-Footed Booby

His goofy version of a two-step—
left foot up, pause, down, then the right,
head pointing to the sky as he whistles—
for the doting Mrs. by his side,
who, nodding her head, full-heartedly
approves the display, the magnificence
of the blue color redolent to her
of health and wealth and ooh-la-la.

Nature has a keen imagination.
From its color wheel, it chose between
the tender turquoise of the sky
and the aquamarine of the sea, just
where the birds will entertain their zeal
and prove imagination's real.
Still, some things are hard to imagine.
You have to see them for yourself.

About half of all blue-footed booby breeding pairs nest in the Galápagos. The name booby comes from the Spanish word bobo ("stupid", "foolish", or "clown") because the birds, like other seabirds, are clumsy on land.