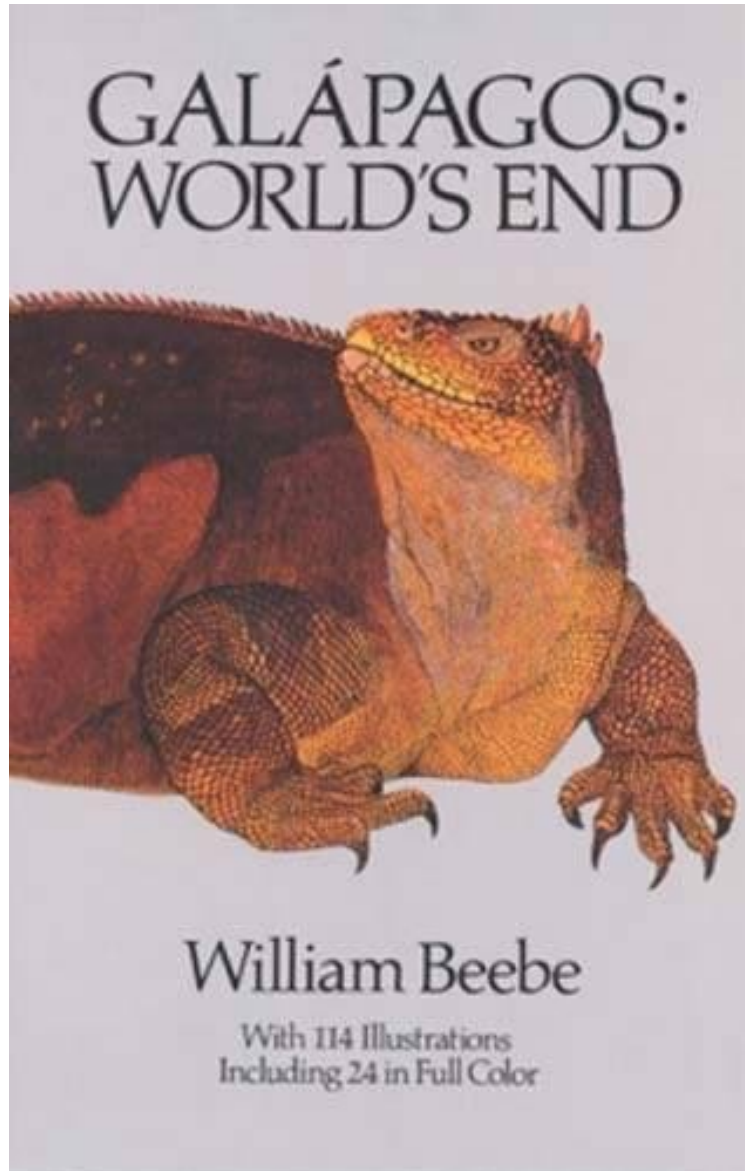


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## Galapagos: World's End

*William Beebe*

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#870716 in Books William Beebe 1988-05-01 1988-05-01Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.40 x 1.30 x 5.501, 1.17 #File Name: 0486256421442 pagesGalapagos World s End | File size: 23.Mb

**William Beebe : Galapagos: World's End** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Galapagos: World's End:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Beebe's book is written to satisfy his audience (mainly his funding audience)By Susan Frink NelsonI am a Professor of biochemistry with a lifelong interest in evolution. In four weeks my wife and I head for a Galapagos trip so some reading was in order. I had already read the Origin of Species years

ago so I began with Darwin's autobiography then the Voyage of the Beagle, Floreana by Margaret Wittmer and this Beebe book. Currently I am reading Peter Grant and Rosemary Grant's 40 Years of Evolution about the finches on Daphne Major (named Major by Beebe). This covers a spectrum of times and writing styles each with unique perspectives. Darwin is essential as the original scientific observer though he only visited four of the islands (Chatham or San Cristobal, Charles or Floreana, Albemarle or Isabela and James or Santiago) and mixed his specimens from the first two until he spoke with the Vice-Governor of the Islands Mr. Lawson about the tortoises. Mr Lawson said he could tell from which island any tortoise had been brought. This turned out to be an important remark not immediately recognized as such. Darwin allotted one chapter of twenty one to the Galapagos in The Voyage of the Beagle. Much of his writing concerned the geology of the places he visited. My chief reward from reading his Voyage account was his voice as an individual that came across in his writing. Floreana is the first person history of Margaret Wittmer, who came with her husband Heinz and her 13 year old stepson to settle on Floreana (Charles) in 1932. They were just dropped off on the beach at Post Office bay with their crates of supplies. There were only two other people living on the island Dr. Karl Friedrich Ritter and his lover Dore Strauch. Dr. Ritter was a vegetarian dentist who moved to the Island motivated by his personal philosophy to live a life unaffected by civilization. Both he and Dore had all their teeth removed before coming and they had one pair of dentures between them for emergencies as needed. Margaret and her husband lived a farming lifestyle and built a compound not unlike a Robinson Crusoe story, while interacting in some difficult ways with Ritter and Dore. The arrival of a third gun-toting woman (The Baroness) and her multiple lovers created chaos for a time, but she disappeared after a while. Her goal was to make a hotel for millionaires (Hacienda Paradiso) that did not ever get far. A movie has been made about this little group "The Galapagos Affair: Satan Came to Eden," based on Dore Strauch's book. Lots of drama, maybe murder. Margaret Wittmer lived the whole of the rest of her life on the island from age 28 to 94 having two children with not much help. The Floreana story brings human reality to the islands. Hopes, ambitions, dangers, birth, death and perseverance all in the place that Darwin walked in 1835. The Galapagos are fairly small. Each island has very few beaches suitable for landing so the people who come and go over centuries make their footsteps in the same places and drink from the same wells. In fact the search for water is a universal problem that all who visited there had. Beebe's steam yacht Noma needed to refill with 40,000 gallons of fresh water in the dry season. They steamed around to three or four places to find water with no luck. Eventually they did find a small source that was not accessible for their boat so they used 150 feet of hose and a funnel to pour water down the hose to a waiting lifeboat. They almost swamped the lifeboat with 4000 gallons of water and ferried it out to the boat. At this point the Captain said enough and they headed back to Panama to resupply since they were in danger of running out of coal also. Beebe's book is written to satisfy his audience (mainly his funding audience). He worked in the 20s at the New York Zoo. There were no NSF grants to fund expeditions, so patrons must be found. Patrons with steam yachts and deep pockets and they must be satisfied with results. His writing style is along the lines of Marlin Perkins' Wild Kingdom. He depicts his exploits as exciting, involving personal risk and courage. The opening chapter in the Panama Canal is prime Indiana Jones screenwriting to impress the reader. Beebe goes out at night with guide wearing headlamps and wading through swampy riverbanks in hunt of the rare and elusive water opossum. In the process he and his assistant nearly step on and end up shooting a five foot long bushmaster snake that Beebe ties around his waist to take back. This is a poisonous pit viper. Michael Douglas killed one in the movie "Romancing the Stone" (Wikipedia). Once the Noma reaches the Galapagos there is less drama, but still first person accounts of struggling with nature, getting the clothes torn off by thorns, numerous descriptions of large sharks in the waters where they had to go to the collect desired specimens. There is certainly color in describing the yacht. All sorts of equipment are piled in the saloon that used to be used for rich socialites to cruise the seas in luxury. In fact, Beebe says one of these elegant rooms converted to science labs etc. was his bedroom on the trip. It is easy for me to criticize from the distance of 94 years, but I have to say I read Beebe's bio in Wikipedia and it is most impressive. Hew traveled around the world on another expedition to study pheasants. This resulted in a four volume book on the pheasants of the world that was considered one of the best scientific monographs of the century. He won many awards for this. He wrote a total of 24 books, including a second expedition to the Galapagos (The Arcturus Adventure, currently sitting on my coffee table). Maybe he is most remembered for his bathysphere dives, setting depth records and naming four species (without collecting the type specimen of course). These species have not been seen since and they are in question as real species. But what do we really know about 3000 ft down off the coast of Bermuda? The World's End book is dated and the style is designed to sell. Not unlike similar books like "Under a Lucky Star" by Roy Chapman Andrews that tell the tale of expeditions to the Gobi Desert by another superstar museum curator. I cannot fault him for finding a successful formula to inspire new generous patrons. Along the way may interesting observations are given and the natural history of the islands is charmingly depicted. Ruth Rose, the historian on the trip gives a wonderful chapter called Man and the Galapagos covering the first possible human visit by the king of the Incas to pirates, whalers, penal colonies and scientific expeditions. Appendix B is a truly deep bibliography on the Galapagos from 1592 to 1922. Ruth Rose contributed to other Beebe books like the Arcturus Expedition. I give the book a modest rating, but it is not a waste of your time. There are some nuggets to uncover. I am planning to read the Arcturus Adventure and maybe Beneath Tropic Seas (about helmet diving in Port-au-Prince,

Haiti). Then of course there is Half Mile Down (if I can only find a copy)David Nelson6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. An oldy but still very much a goodyBy David J. WilsonWilliam Beebe's Galapagos: World's End was published in 1924, so it is certainly not a substitute for more recent books such as Michael H. Jackson's Galapagos: A Natural History, Jonathan Weiner's The Beak of the Finch, Oxford and Watkins's Galapagos: Both Sides of the Coin, Jonathan Green's Galapagos: Ocean, Earth, Wind Fire, or Tui de Roy's Spectacular Galapagos. However, Beebe's book contains a wealth of information about the history of the Galapagos, particularly that of the various pirates and privateers who used it as a base of operations, and of Porter's operations against the British whaling fleet during the War of 1812. Beebe's descriptions of what land exploration was like on the Galapagos back in those days(very, very rough) made me very appreciative of the excellent work Ecuador has done in making these fascinating islands readily accessible to elderly and creaky folks like me. I was quite interested to note the changes in our understanding of the biology and geology of these islands that have taken place between the time the book was written (1924) and the present; science, like life, evolves. The technologies of photography and photographic reproduction have also evolved, fortunately; some of the old black and white photographs reproduced in Beebe's book are almost unrecognizable.Beebe visited the Galapagos long before they became a 'must see' holy site for those of us interested in geology and evolutionary biology; at that time a visit to the Galapagos was a major expedition requiring lots of money, a steam yacht, and lots of planning--definitely not a jaunt for a casual tourist. So, while he describes in some detail the devastating environmental impacts of pirates and privateers, whalers, rats, goats, and other exotic invaders, he makes no mention of the environmental impacts one might expect from large-scale tourism on these fragile islands. As a recent visitor, I must compliment Ecuador on its efforts to protect and preserve these islands while simultaneously allowing those of us who find them fascinating to make our visits.If you are interested in the Galapagos or are actually planning a visit, Beebe's book definitely should be on your reading list, along with more current material.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating perspectiveBy VICKI PEARSEI read this book while engaged in my second trip to the Galapagos Islands, skipping among the chapters to match our own itinerary. I particularly enjoyed Beebe's keen observations of the behavior of individual animals, especially that of the various birds. I also liked his writing style and enthusiasm, which some readers disparage as too "popular" for an account of a scientific expedition. I detected no evidence for the view that he exaggerates; on the contrary, he often includes counts and other detailed specifics of what he is describing and never claims that these are universally applicable. Selected quotes from earlier writings add much interest. His idea of the islands' geological origins, probably the prevailing hypothesis at the time, is now considered obsolete. Not surprising, considering that the book was published in 1924, almost a century ago. Our scientific understanding has changed, and some conditions on the islands have changed as well. Read in that context, this book provides a fascinating perspective.

"Galpagos is a glorious book. It is high romance, exact science, fascinating history, wild adventure."NationThe Galpagos Islands are famed for their remarkable wildlife, including land and marine iguanas, land tortoises, four-eyed fish, and flightless cormorants and albatross. In 1835, Charles Darwin observed variations among the islands' species that inspired him to formulate the theory of natural selection. Eighty-eight years later, in 1923, a scientific expedition sponsored by the New York Zoological Society followed in Darwin's wake. Led by renowned biologist and explorer William Beebe, the scientists visited the the islands to study and obtain specimens of indigenous plants and animals. This is Beebe's personal account of that fascinating expedition.Combining rare literary skill with careful research, Beebe produced an exceptionally readable volume, replete with youthful enthusiasm, a romantic's awe before the mysteries of nature, and a scientist's passion for accurate description. He recounts the expedition's enormously productive results, including specimens of 60 species previously unknown to science, and an unparalleled accumulation of data that stimulated many scientific papers and new avenues of naturalistic inquiry. Beebe's account is enhanced with more than 100 splendid illustrations, selected from hundreds of paintings, drawings, and photographs by expedition members. A classic of popular science, it is scientifically rigorous as well as exciting and accessible.