

Galapagos volcano calms, pink iguanas out of danger

May 26 2015



The eruption of the volcano Wolf on Isabela Island, Galapagos on May 25, 2015

A volcano in the Galapagos Islands whose fiery eruption raised fears for the world's only population of pink iguanas has calmed, sparing the unique critters from danger, officials said Tuesday.

Wolf volcano is still showing signs of activity but has died down since a tour boat to the area found it breathing tongues of fire, puffing smoke

and spilling bright orange streams of lava Monday, said officials at the Galapagos National Park and Ecuador's Geophysics Institute.

"We haven't had any more explosions like yesterday's, which suggests a decrease in activity. However, there are still lava flows, which is normal in these cases," said Alexandra Alvarado of the Geophysics Institute.

The island, Isabela, is home to the only known pink land iguanas in the world. The species, *Conolophus marthae*, lives at the foot of the volcano and is listed as critically endangered, with a population of only about 500.

The area, which is uninhabited by humans, is also home to members of a rare species of giant tortoise, *Chelonoidis becki*.

But the animals live on the northwest side of the volcano, opposite the [lava flows](#), and appear to have been spared from harm, a park official said.

"We will likely carry out more flights over the area, but the [pink iguanas](#) are safe, and the tortoises, because the lava is flowing down the opposite side," the official said.

Wolf volcano had last erupted in 1982.

It is one of five volcanoes on Isabela island, the largest in the Galapagos.

The Pacific archipelago, which sits about 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) off the coast of Ecuador, was made famous by Charles Darwin's studies of its breathtaking biodiversity, which was crucial in his development of the theory of evolution by natural selection.

UNESCO, which has declared the Galapagos a World Heritage Site, has

warned the islands' environment is in danger from increased tourism and the introduction of invasive species.

The pink iguanas, which were discovered in 1986, were established as a separate species in 2009 after an analysis of their genetic makeup determined they were distinct from their cousins, the Galapagos land iguanas.

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Citation: Galapagos volcano calms, pink iguanas out of danger (2015, May 26) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-05-galapagos-volcano-calms-pink-iguanas.html>

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