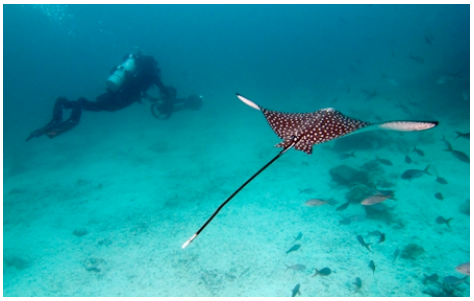
PRESS RELEASE

Underwater Survey Provides Virtual Access to the Unique Marine Life of Galapagos

Pioneering Scientific Study Captures Stunning Images for 'Virtual Dive' Experiences via Google's Street View

GALAPAGOS NATIONAL PARK, Equador – May 23, 2013 –The Catlin Seaview Survey, sponsored by the international insurer Catlin Group Limited, today announced that it has completed its first underwater survey of the Galapagos Islands as part of a joint pilot project between the Charles Darwin Foundation (CDF), the Galapagos National Park Service (GNPS) and Google. This new survey will allow scientists and nature lovers a rare opportunity to see the dramatic underwater world of these iconic islands online in 360-degree imagery.



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In a scientific first, the expedition aboard the GNPS vessel Guadalupe River recorded environments in high-definition 360-degree panoramic imagery, navigating sites around the islands. These included sites visited by dive tourists and others off-limits to tourists. This imagery will be accessible worldwide later this year on Google Maps.

As with its previous expeditions, the Catlin Seaview Survey employed its specially designed underwater camera equipment to begin a visual and scientific baseline record of the marine environments surrounding the islands, which will allow any future changes to be measured and evaluated.

Beautiful Imagery with a Scientific Purpose

The Galapagos Islands, a United Nations World Heritage Site, is inextricably linked with global scientific importance because of its unique biodiversity and legacy of discovery. While the islands are well protected against local pressures, such as industrial fishing and pollution, they are more vulnerable to global pressures, such as rising ocean temperatures and acidification, due to the unique convergence of currents surrounding the islands.

The Catlin Seaview Survey focuses on the study of coral reefs. The images and data collected by the expedition will aid CDF and GNPS monitor any recovery of coral reefs devastated by coral bleaching in 1982 and 1998 following El Nino events. The expedition uncovered signs of healthy corals in an area

that has not been visited by scientists since the bleaching event of 1998. As a result of this pilot project, a future research project is proposed to investigate further this promising recovery process.

With tourist visits to the Galapagos tightly controlled, the project also aims to bring the island's celebrated wildlife to millions of armchair travellers worldwide as "virtual divers."

The images captured during the initial survey show the islands' celebrated marine creatures, including seals, sea lions, turtles, sharks and other species, in their natural habitat.

"Part of our mission in the Galapagos was to deploy our 360-degree underwater cameras in trials for a broad range of uses in the Galapagos Marine Reserve," said Richard Vevers, Project Director of The Catlin Seaview Survey. "We carried out a range of pilot surveys to monitor sites that are heavily visited by tourists as well as other important habitats such as sandy seabeds. We also carried out surveys to monitor some key marine species, such as sea cucumbers and sharks."

Pelayo Salinas de León, Head of Fisheries and Sharks Research at the Charles Darwin Foundation, added: "During this pilot, we have compiled an amazing portfolio of 360-degree images that will allow the world to take 'virtual dives' in the Galapagos Marine Reserve's unique ecosystems. We believe these images will be an exceptional platform to raise environmental awareness about the importance of conserving this world heritage site among local residents, given that most have never had the chance to explore what lies beneath the waves."

Commenting on this unique collection of imagery, Google's project lead Raleigh Seamster said: "Our goal is to build the most comprehensive and accurate map, complete with imagery from the world's most remote places, including the Galapagos Islands. Using our Street View Trekker we captured images of blue-footed boobies, giant tortoises and more on land. But we knew this collection would not be complete without imagery of the fascinating underwater environment that surrounds the islands. Thanks to the Catlin Seaview Survey, we're thrilled to make 360-degree imagery of marine habitats available on Google Maps in the months to come."

Stephen Catlin, Chief Executive of sponsor Catlin Group Limited, said: "We are committed to understanding the future risks posed by climate change. It is not only important that scientists have access to this valuable data, but companies such as ours also must understand the impact that significant changes to our environment will have on their day to day activities".

Plans for Future Catlin Seaview Survey Expeditions

The main purpose of the Catlin Seaview Survey is to significantly expand the data available to scientists about corals. The information gathered will create a baseline to enable future studies and will become openly accessible in the Catlin Global Reef Record.

Using its specially developed camera technology and remotely operated vehicles, the Catlin Seaview Survey is capturing hundreds of thousands of images of coral reefs worldwide – all of which are under threat from climate change.

The Galapagos survey marks another important chapter in what is a pioneering scientific expedition to reveal the impact of environmental changes on the world's coral reefs.

The first survey completed by the Catlin Seaview Survey was along the Great Barrier Reef in late 2012, where the team completed transects at 32 locations along the 2,300 kilometres of the reef.

Future efforts in 2013 will focus on important reefs in the Americas, including the Caribbean.

More information about the Catlin Seaview Survey can be found here: www.catlinseaviewsurvey.com

Existing images of the Catlin Seaview Survey expedition can be found here: maps.google.com/ocean

You can also engage with the Catlin Seaview Survey and its 3 million followers on Google+ here: plus.google.com/+CatlinSeaviewSurvey/posts

More information about the Charles Darwin Foundation can be found here: www.darwinfoundation.org

More information about the Galapagos National Park can be found here: www.galapagospark.org

MEDIA PHOTOS

Media photos of the underwater survey in Galapagos can be downloaded from:
catlinseaviewsurvey.zenfolio.com/galapagosmedia
Please credit all images as © Catlin Seaview Survey. (Free use with credit, no on-pass)

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

U.S.
Gil Jenkins (gil.jenkins@ogilvy.com) +1 (415) 677 2716
Kristine Relja (Kristine.relja@ogilvy.com) +1 (415) 677 2730

UK/Europe
Rod Macrae (rod@macraecommunication.com) +44 (0)781 402 9819 or +44 (0)1491 613 715
Jackie Pedersen (jackie@macraecommunication.com) +44 (0)798 076 7710

Australia/Asia
Meabh Duffy (meabh@zing.net.au) +61 (02) 8303 6464
Ivana Bogut (ivana@zing.net.au) +61 (02) 8303 6464

About Catlin

Catlin Group Limited is a global specialty property/casualty insurer and reinsurer operating worldwide through six underwriting hubs: London/UK, Bermuda, the United States, Asia Pacific, Europe, and Canada. The Catlin Seaview Survey is the second major scientific project Catlin has sponsored. The Catlin Arctic Survey (2009-2011) investigated the impact of environmental changes in the Arctic. Catlin believes that insurers must take a leading role in improving the understanding of potential changes to our environment, changes that could affect how risks are managed in the future. Catlin's contribution is to sponsor independent, impartial research that is freely distributed to the world's scientific community.

About CDF

The Charles Darwin Foundation is an international scientific nonprofit organization with over 50 years of experience working for the conservation of the Galapagos Islands. Its mission is to provide knowledge and assistance, through scientific research and complementary action, to ensure the conservation of the environment and biodiversity in Galápagos.

About GNPS

The Galapagos National Park Directorate works to manage and operate the archipelago island ecosystems, within the limits of their resilience, to ensure the preservation of its ecological integrity, and the rational use of environmental goods and services they generate for the population.