

SCIENCE WRITING: Students write nonfiction features based on first-hand experiences.

Birds of the Galápagos Islands

Jessica, Grade 8
Tualatin Valley Junior Academy
Hillsboro, OR
Mr. Kahler

Recently I visited the Galápagos Islands on a mission trip, which included a cruise around some of the islands. During the trip, I explored the islands to see many unusual things, like animals, plants, and landmarks. This part allowed me to learn many interesting facts about these things and other information concerning the islands. Some of the most fascinating things I learned were about the birds in the Galápagos Islands and what makes those birds so special.

In the Galápagos Islands, I saw so many different types of birds. Some birds were small and some were big. Some were marked with bright colors and some were just brown. Many were unusual, but the names of these birds were not shocking. I came across birds in trees, on the ground, flying, diving into the water or sitting on other animals.

In the Galápagos Islands I enjoyed watching some unusual birds called boobies, diving into the water. There are Red-, Blue- and Brown-footed Boobies. My favorite are the blue ones. The blue feet on these birds were so incredibly different from any other shade of blue I have seen. The boobies were either diving in the water or resting on the volcanic rocks with the Marine Iguanas.

Boobies like to dive into water that is both shallow and deep to catch fish, which causes a loud splash. When they come up, they have their fish in their beak, swallow it whole, fly off and then repeat the process again. One of my favorite experiences was seeing one small flock diving at the same time. They would fly together high over the water and then, all of a sudden, the whole group would be falling from the sky.

My other favorite bird was the Magnificent Frigatebird. The male is my favorite because it has a huge red pouch on its neck and uses it to attract the opposite sex during mating season. During mating season it somehow blows it up, becoming a huge bubble, and somehow the females find it attractive.

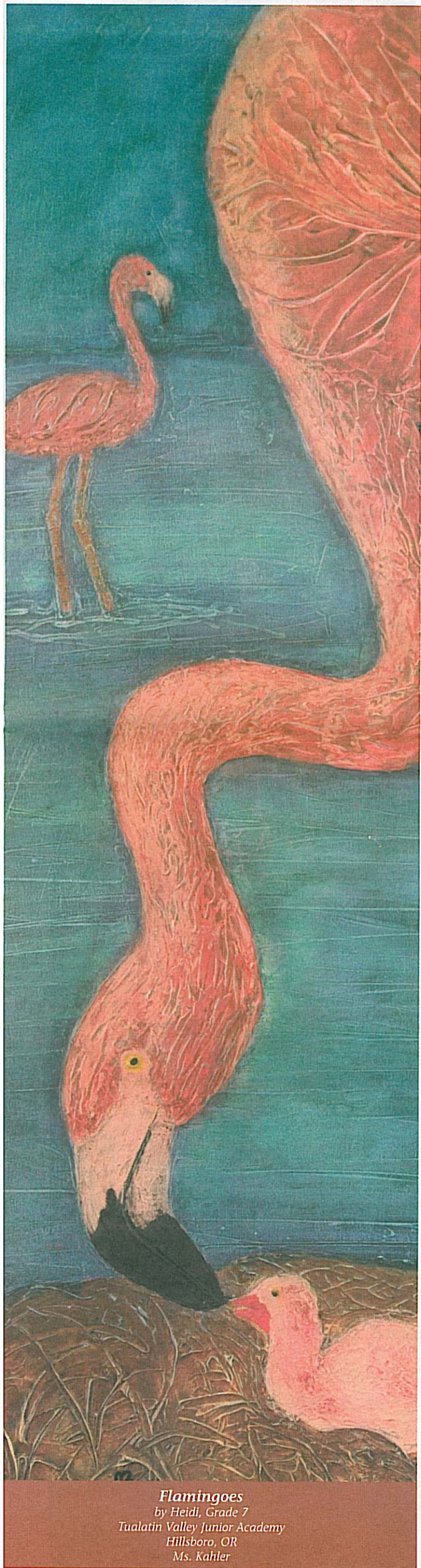
During my time on the cruise, I saw the largest variety of birds while off the boat exploring the islands. In fact, on our first excursion to an island called Santiago, there was a bird called

the Galápagos Flycatcher. It is rare to see one, however I was lucky enough to have one fly right in front of my camera. This allowed me to take a picture of it in mid-air. It was really cool! But then I lost my camera and I no longer have any of my wonderful pictures, including this one.

On another excursion, I was amazed to see a Galápagos Dove. This dove was not like any other dove I had seen. The only way you could tell it was a dove was by its body shape. Around its eyes was a ring that was the same shade of blue as the feet of the Blue-footed Booby. It has rusty red legs. In addition, the beak is longer than a typical dove's beak.

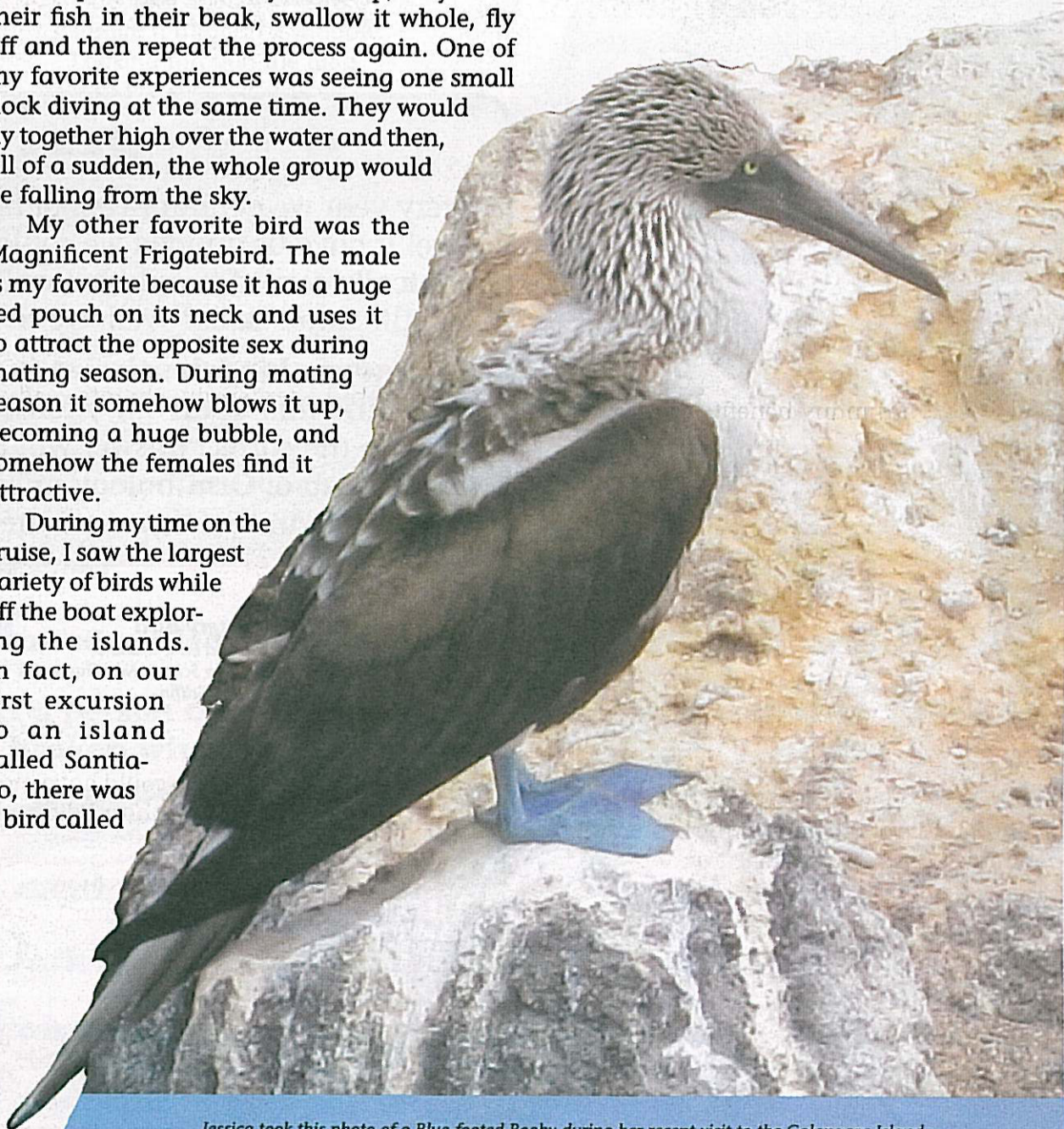
During the last day of our cruise, I spotted a rare pink flamingo. There are only about 600 pink flamingos living in the entire archipelago, so it was an amazing sight to witness at the end of my Galápagos trip.

While in the Galápagos Islands, I was able to see many different types of birds like the pink flamingo, boobies, Galápagos Dove, Galápagos Flycatcher, and the Magnificent Frigatebird. These are birds that can only be seen in the Galápagos Islands, which makes seeing them a once in a lifetime opportunity. I live in the country, which allows me to see all sorts of birds, however seeing the variety of Galápagos birds was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. I know that I am very lucky to have been able to see all these birds. I wish everyone could be just as lucky as I was to see and experience these amazing things.



Flamingoes

by Heidi, Grade 7
Tualatin Valley Junior Academy
Hillsboro, OR
Ms. Kahler



Jessica took this photo of a Blue-footed Booby during her recent visit to the Galapagos Islands.