

Galápagos island gets its first iguanas since Darwin after mass-release

 [theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/08/galapagos-island-gets-its-first-iguanas-since-darwin-after-mass-release](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/08/galapagos-island-gets-its-first-iguanas-since-darwin-after-mass-release)

Agence France-Presse

January 8, 2019

A group of more than 1,400 iguanas have been reintroduced to an island in the Galápagos archipelago nearly two centuries after they disappeared from there, authorities said on Monday.



The Galápagos land iguanas from North Seymour Island were freed onto Santiago Island as part of an ecological restoration program, the National Galapagos park authority said in a statement.

The last recorded sighting of iguanas in Santiago Island was made by British naturalist Charles Darwin in 1835.

“Almost two centuries later, this ecosystem will once again count on this species through the restoration initiative,” said the park authority.



▲ Some of the 1,436 iguanas introduced to Santiago island in the Galápagos Islands on Monday. Photograph: Cristina Vega/AFP/Getty Images

Its director, Jorge Carrion, said the iguanas became extinct due to the introduction of predators such as the feral pig, which was eradicated in 2001.

The program is also aimed at protecting the population of iguanas on North Seymour, said to number about 5,000, where food is limited.

“The land iguana is a herbivore that helps ecosystems by dispersing seeds and maintaining open spaces devoid of vegetation,” said Danny Rueda, the park authority’s ecosystems director.

The Galápagos archipelago, which lies 600 miles (1,000km) from the Ecuador coast, contains unique wildlife and vegetation, and is a Unesco world heritage site but has one of the most fragile ecosystems in the world.