

# Pearl Islands underwater paradise survives El Niño

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**By Dr Bill McGraw**

WHEN you first arrive at Isla Contadora, the main island of the Las Perlas archipelago , and the former “counting house”for the early Spanish colonists, you will be struck to see so many interesting and diverse trees, many of which are over 200 years old.”



You will enjoy the visual experience, but, in addition to their beauty, the trees provide shade that allows buildings to stay cool during the day and cool off quickly at night unlike the city.

By renting a golf cart right after you exit the plane, you can explore the island anytime you like. With roads leading everywhere the opportunity for birders is intense.

Cryptic and secretive wildlife such as deer and the very shy, large rodents of the capybara family can be viewed at dusk and during the early night if you are quiet and patient enough.

The scenery is lush and abundant with chances of getting that amazing once in a lifetime wildlife photo.

Whale watching and chasing pods of dolphins are incredible experiences yet ephemeral.



Perhaps the greatest wildlife to see is under the sea with a mask and snorkel.

Colors and diversity of fish are spectacular to behold.

Each underwater site you visit will have its own residents of different size, speed and entertainment.

With very few sharks and the non aggressive but intimidating moray eels, to scare the more faint of heart , the environment is safe yet full of adventure. The ornamental varieties of fish are in great number and easy to find (visit coral dreams dive center and see [www.newaquatechpanama.com](http://www.newaquatechpanama.com)).

Coral colonies have suffered losses due to the most recent intense el Niño period that caused increased water temperatures which resulted in a die off of heat sensitive corals.

The good news is that the corals of the Pacific Ocean of Panama were less affected compared to areas such as the Great Barrier Reef of Australia with areas near the Seca Islands showing awesome resilience ([newaquatechpanama.com](http://newaquatechpanama.com)).

Most of the older corals viewed on 12 different sites around the Pearl Islands show damage yet younger corals in deeper water are still pristine.



The pictures and words here are but the beginning of what the Pearl Islands have to offer.

The soothing, quiet and balmy atmosphere will leave you pleasantly relaxed. The sunsets will take your breath away and leave you speechless and make you not want to leave. During the week the beaches are empty and waiting for you.

There are regular ferries to the island and accommodations a plenty.

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