



CEIBA INAUGURATES TROPICAL CONSERVATION SEMESTER

When it comes to teaching tropical ecology, one month just is not long enough! After many years of successful summer courses, Ceiba has added a semester-abroad program to our field education offerings. Beginning in January of 2007, the "Tropical Conservation Experience: Galapagos, Andes, Amazon" program will provide students intensive, hands-on academic coursework focusing on tropical ecology and conservation. The program is made possible by a collaboration between the Ceiba Foundation, the University of Wisconsin and the Universidad San Francisco de Quito.

Like our summer course, the semester program leads students on rigorous explorations of the major ecosystems in Ecuador: cloud forest, high-altitude tundra (known as páramo), Pacific coastal dry forest, and the lowland Amazon rainforest. We also visit the world-renowned Galápagos Islands where students tour the major island, then spend a second week conducting marine projects on San Cristóbal Island. There they are placed with local host families and gain first-hand insight into the difficulties of living on, and conserving, this famous archipelago.

The semester concludes with a unique internship that places students with a local research or conservation organization of their choice. Projects may take interns to the rainforest, high mountain peaks, or remote indigenous communities. Internships encourage students to put their accumulated knowledge -- Spanish, biology, local culture -- into action, and obtain invaluable experience in practical conservation.

Having supported our summer courses for several years, the University of Wisconsin - Madison now accredits the semester program for students in the entire Wisconsin state system. So if winter has you shivering in Superior, grousing in Green Bay, or cross in La Crosse, consider spending Spring in Ecuador! Participants receive 16 upper-level science and Spanish language credits, including General Ecology, Marine Biology and Conservation Biology.

The Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ), Ecuador's most prestigious academic institution, provides crucial administrative support. Participants receive Spanish instruction from USFQ professors, stay with host families recruited by the university, and can rely on USFQ's standing academic relationships with 50 US colleges to transfer credits for the program, if they are outside the Wisconsin system. As of this fall, Drs. Joe Meisel and Catherine Woodward serve as adjunct faculty at USFQ.

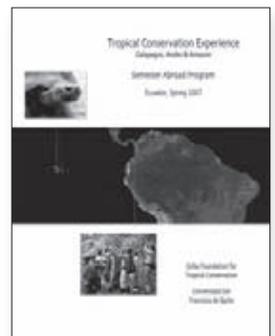
Our semester program seeks to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and applied conservation. Students will visit a variety of conservation sites within Ecuador, including national parks and marine reserves, and Ceiba's own private lands conservation sites: the El Pahuma Orchid Reserve and the Lalo Loor Dry

Forest. Throughout the semester we will focus on the complex and interrelated challenges to tropical conservation, such as the role of international bodies in alleviating poverty, one of the primary driving forces of deforestation and unsustainable resource use.

Do you know someone who might be ideal for the Tropical Conservation Experience? Please have them visit www.ceiba.org/TCEsemester.htm or email us at courses@ceiba.org.



The wild coast of Española Island in the Galapagos offers a scenic backdrop for the courtship of a pair of Blue-footed Boobies.



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DRY FOREST CALENDAR: INVENTORIES & EDUCATION

This year at the Lalo Loor Dry Forest reserve we learned a great deal about the forest, one of the most endangered tropical ecosystem types, and worked hard to pass this knowledge on to local communities. With assistance from the San Diego County Orchid Society, we are conducting annual biological surveys in the reserve and nearby forests. The long-term goal is to assess the ecological health of numerous forest sites in the region, and identify the highest priority sites for conservation.

Despite the dry climate, epiphytes (“air plants”) are numerous at Lalo Loor. Orchid surveys conducted in March identified over 25 orchid species, including the gorgeous “butterfly orchid” (*Psychopsis krameriana*) and the well-known *Vanilla planifolia*, source of the popular flavoring. Perhaps we’ll begin selling tropical ice cream before long!

Bird inventories identified a number of rare and striking species. Our findings have extended the range for several species previously not known in the region (such as the White-throated Spadebill). The Lalo Loor forest continues to provide excellent habitat for such threatened species as the Gray-backed Hawk, Rufous-headed Chachalaca and Red-masked Parakeet, all of which are observed regularly in the reserve.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Led by Monica Gonzalez, an educator with years of experience working in rural communities, our environmental education programs aim to raise awareness among local people of the value of intact forest. This year Monica is renewing and expanding a program in which she leads training workshops

for some 60 area school teachers that demonstrate the Audubon Society’s “In Your Back Yard” method for teaching ecological concepts and the need for environmental conservation.

In the second stage of the program, Monica works directly with rural schools to help teachers implement the new approach. This year, thanks to a grant from the British Embassy, she will expand the community component to eight schools located near Lalo Loor. The culminating field trip to the reserve is the



Male (left) and female White-whiskered Puffbirds, whose serrated bills help them hunt beetles, were captured during surveys at the Lalo Loor reserve.

highlight of the program for Monica’s students, who bubble with curiosity as they apply their lessons in the dry forest.

REFORESTATION & RECONNECTION

Led by our partners, the Jatun Sacha Foundation, reforestation plots from 2004 are becoming self-sustaining (after months of patient watering by volunteers!). This year we have begun to reforest the banks of the Camarones River, which will connect the reserve to an expansive (1000 ha) forest to the south.

Ceiba continues to pursue options for establishing a continuous forest corridor along the central Pacific coast. While exploring the mountain chain behind the Lalo Loor reserve, Joe Meisel discovered several large tracts of land for sale. These properties, once managed for small-scale mixed agriculture now are returning to their original dense forest cover. Depressed land prices make purchase of these properties a viable option.

The coastal mountains catch moisture from the ocean which condenses along the ridgeline as thick mist in the forest canopy. These conditions large, ancient trees that are thickly covered by epiphytes, reminiscent of the Andean cloud forests. A startling profusion of orchids and bromeliads, not to mention hummingbirds, toucans and tanagers, all call this moist forest home. Please consider supporting our conservation corridor by visiting www.ceiba.org/donate.htm.

Ceiba is pleased to thank our generous contributors:

- San Diego County Orchid Society
- American Orchid Society
- Fauna and Flora International
- The Greenstone Foundation
- Liz Claiborne & Art Ortenberg Foundation
- Meyer Family Fund of Central Indiana Foundation
- Massachusetts Orchid Society
- Missouri Botanical Garden
- The National Herbarium of Ecuador
- New Hampshire Orchid Society
- Quito Orchid Society
- Twin States Orchid Society
- Universidad San Francisco de Quito
- Fundación Jatun Sacha
- World Parks

We also extend our gratitude to our many generous individual donors!

“ANDES TO AMAZON” COURSE UNITES WISCONSIN, TROPICS

2006 marked the eighth year of Ceiba’s popular month-long field course, offered each summer in Ecuador, and accredited by the University of Wisconsin statewide system. This past summer a group of 14 students - two Ecuadorians, 11 Wisconsinites, and one Oregonian - enjoyed the wonders of the Andean highlands, cloud forest, dry forest and the impressive rainforest of the Amazonian lowlands.

A whirlwind trip that’s “over before you know it,” our Andes To Amazon course exposes students to Ecuador’s pristine habitats, and trains them in tropical ecology and natural history at remote field stations.

This year was marked by superb wildlife sightings. At the El Pahuma Orchid Reserve we observed rare Plate-billed Mountain-toucans and Sicklewinged Guans, both characteristic of the misty cloud forest. At the Lalo Loor Dry Forest reserve, we were greeted by a troop of howler monkeys, howling loudly, the moment we arrived! This extended family group kept us company throughout our stay, and even interrupted a natural history lecture when a juvenile fell dramatically from his high perch; fortunately, it scrambled back into the trees uninjured.



Summer course students use a log bridge to cross a creek swollen by Amazon rains. This same trunk has served well for over 10 years!

Our luck continued upon reaching the famed Tiputini Biodiversity Station in the Amazon rainforest. We saw 10 species of primates, including the elusive Owl Monkey (*Aotus* sp.) and the chipmunk-sized Pygmy Marmoset (*Callithrix pygmaea*), South America’s tiniest monkey.

Many frogs, turtles and

snakes were helpfully identified for us by herpetologist Shawn McCracken, who was conducting doctoral research on the fauna of high-canopy bromeliads. Among the highlights were a South American Banded Water Snake, a first for the station, and an endangered side-necked turtle (named for the way they pull their heads into their shells) known as *Platemys platycephala*, and so rare as to earn the nickname of “the jaguar of turtles.”

Our departure from Tiputini was like an all-star wildlife farewell party: we saw a dozen Blue-and-Yellow Macaws, a family of Capybara (world’s largest rodent), Howler and Spider monkeys, an Anaconda sunning itself (seen by only one lucky student), and a Crested Eagle, one of the largest (5 feet tall!) and most rarely observed birds of prey in the Amazon. After a long trip home via motorized canoes, open-sided buses, a speedboat, another bus and finally a plane, we were safely back to the high (and dry!) air of Quito.

LOCAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Ceiba continues its tradition of offering full-tuition scholarships that allow Ecuadorian students to join our summer course. Xavier Haro and Carolina Toapanta, this year’s recipients, provided a valuable link between our students and the rich culture of Ecuador. From plant identification to Spanish vocabulary to salsa lessons, their participation made a lasting impression on our US students, who now have friends for life in South America.

For more information about our summer course, or if you would like to contribute to our scholarship fund, please visit us online at www.ceiba.org/andes2amazon.htm or send us an email to courses@ceiba.org.



Scholarship students Xavier and Carolina hold a Golden-headed Manakin caught in our

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EL PAHUMA CLIMBS HIGHER



El Pahuma's forested hills and cloud forest trees dripping with moss continue to thrill visitors.

Although Ceiba's first major project, establishment of the El Pahuma Orchid Reserve, formally concluded in 2005, we remain committed to helping the Lima family continually enhance their capacity to manage the reserve. This year we arranged for the Quito

Botanical Garden to train to family members who now apply those skills in the orchid garden at El Pahuma. Visitorship continues to increase, particularly among local school groups and foreign tourists, who arrive by busloads.

The success of El Pahuma has catalyzed new local conservation and ecotourism projects, and inspired nearby landowners to open cafes and hiking trails that serve -- and promote -- the flow of visitors to the area. Indeed this region increasingly is touted as a nature tourism destination with lush forests and ancient archaeological sites. Meanwhile Rene Lima, the reserve's first manager, has formed a local association of naturalist guides that promotes tourism to cultural and ecological destinations in the region. We are proud of all the Lima's hard work and conservation spirit, and we wish them continued success!

To visit El Pahuma, or find out more about the reserve, please go to www.ceiba.org/elpahuma.htm or write mail@ceiba.org.

ANZU CANYON ORCHID CONSERVATION

Ceiba's ongoing search for orchid-rich habitat suitable for conservation has intersected fortuitously with the efforts of Lou Jost, orchid expert and director of the Ecuadorian organization EcoMinga. We soon may collaborate to protect a portion of the Río Anzu canyon, a steep forested gorge with astounding orchid diversity. Located between 1100 and 1500 m of elevation on the eastern slopes of the Ecuadorian Andes near Mera, this land contains some of the highest densities of orchids in the world! On a recent scouting trip, Lou discovered what may be a new genus of orchid growing on the limestone canyon walls,



*Rich in orchids like these *Phragmipedium pearcei*, the picturesque canyon is kept cool and humid by the rushing waters of the Anzu river.*

which also were festooned with thousands of *Phragmipedium pearcei* (see above). Two stretches of land along the river totaling 150 hectares (375 acres) are being considered. The lower elevation site harbors a very different orchid flora than the higher site, and both have many endemic species. The land adjacent to this stretch of river is owned by the mayor of Mera who is enthusiastic about collaborating with our organizations to promote conservation, education and ecotourism in this scenically stunning area. Please consider supporting our orchid projects by visiting www.ceiba.org/donate.htm.



DRY FOREST VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers play an important role in all our projects. Special thanks go to these Lalo Loor Dry Forest reserve volunteers:

- Paul Cadman, from Australia, worked tirelessly to establish the reserve's initial reforestation site with native species.*
- Michelle Parish, a Peace Corps volunteer, helped with data collection in plant study plots tracking seasonal rhythms.*
- Caitlin Langlois assisted environmental education programs at community schools, and created a fun self-guided trail.*

Explore the tropics of Ecuador, learn Spanish and contribute to conservation! Go to www.ceiba.org/volunteer.htm for details!



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