Tropical Field Ecology in Costa Rica, Central America

December 27, 2008, to January 11, 2009

- explore lowland, montane, and mangrove forests
- hike, study, and relax on an unspoiled tropical coastline
- hike around the base of an active volcano
- snorkel on a Pacific coral reef
- learn to perform ecological research in the field
- learn about tropical plants, animals, and their habitats

Costa Rica is an excellent place to take a tropical ecology course.

This country has developed a strong national parks system, and currently more than 28 percent of the national territory is protected. Many of these protected areas have facilities for educational and research purposes. Our course visits five different areas in Costa Rica that offer students a broad overview of tropical ecosystems. The course includes visits to the following sites:

1. **Biological Reserve Alberto M. Brenes at San Ramón** is located in north-central Costa Rica. This site is a spectacular montane cloud forest at an elevation of 1,100 meters on the Caribbean slope. We will stay here for three days at a remote field station accessed by a memorable trail up the mountain. The vegetation here is otherworldly!

2. **Arenal Volcano National Park** features a classic cone-shaped volcano that has frequent, small eruptions. We will hike around the base of the volcano and relax in natural hot springs on New Year’s Eve.

3. **Cerro de la Muerte** is one of the highest mountains in Costa Rica (3,491 meters). This is an excellent location for observing ecological changes along an altitudinal gradient. We will make some short explorations at this site.

4. **Campanario Lodge** is located just north of the magnificent Corcovado National Park on the remote Osa Peninsula in southwestern Costa Rica. There are no roads or electricity in this area. We will reach the lodge by boat, which will take us through the largest remaining mangrove estuary on the Pacific coast of the Americas (Sierpe-Terraba Mangrove Reserve). Campanario, neighboring private reserves, and Corcovado National Park provide access to a wide variety of lowland rain forest, beach, and intertidal communities. We will spend seven glorious days in this paradise.

5. **Isla del Caño National Biological Reserve** is an island about ten kilometers offshore from Campanario. We will travel to Caño by boat and spend the day snorkeling on nearshore coral reefs and rocky intertidal. The boat trip to and from the island typically features encounters with porpoises, flying fish, frigate birds, and brown boobies. Sightings of migrating humpback and false killer whales are also common.

PennState

an outreach program of the Eberly College of Science
Academics
Faculty members will lead group research projects (four to six students per group) at sites 1 and 4. We also expect to have a marine biologist from the University of Costa Rica join us for our trip to Isla del Caño. Students will conceive and carry out their own research projects toward the end of our stay at Campanario. All projects are to be presented orally to the class and handed in as formal lab write-ups. Faculty will assist and interact closely with students in all aspects of the research projects.

Eligibility
Highly qualified students (biology-ecology option majors and ERM majors, with high GPAs, as well as students in other science majors, at the professor’s discretion) will receive first priority for acceptance. The remaining students will be chosen competitively. Enrollment is limited to twenty participants, so you must apply as soon as possible.

Fee
**Full-time (12 credits or more) Penn State students:**
Upon acceptance, BIOL 499A (3 credits) will be added to your fall 2008 or spring 2009 semester schedule. No additional tuition payment is needed. A $1,295 class fee must be paid by all participants.

**Part-time Penn State or non-Penn State students:**
In addition to the $1,295 class fee, a tuition payment appropriate to your semester standing is applicable. For example, during fall 2008 the tuition for 3 credits for Pennsylvania residents of lower-level standing is $1,626. The class fee includes room, board, and transportation in Costa Rica. Expenses not included: airfare (approximately $900); spending money ($50–$100); and airport exit fee ($26). Review of applicants will begin immediately and proceed until the class is full. Please return your application by September 17 to ensure consideration for acceptance. A $500 application fee is required; this sum will be applied toward the course fee and is nonrefundable unless the applicant is not accepted.

For More Information
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The Pennsylvania State University
Phone: 814-863-5100
Fax: 814-863-5190
E-mail: ConferenceInfo1@outreach.psu.edu

Additional information is available at our Web site:
www.bio.psu.edu/Courses/Abroad/Bio499A/

University Policies
**Access**—Penn State encourages individuals with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing special accommodations or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact the conference planner at 814-863-5100.

**Cancellation**—The University may cancel or postpone any course or activity because of insufficient enrollment or other unforeseen circumstances. If a program is canceled or postponed, the University will refund registration fees but cannot be held responsible for any other related costs, charges, or expenses, including cancellation/change charges assessed by airlines or travel agencies.

**Tuition**—The University reserves the right to revise the schedule of tuition and charges without further notice.

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Application Form
BIOL 499A Tropical Field Ecology
December 27, 2008, to January 11, 2009
Complete all areas; attach a current, unofficial transcript and application fee.

This form may be duplicated for additional registrations. Please print in ink or type. Return to Penn State by September 17, 2008. Important—To ensure a timely registration, please include complete information.

Last name      First name      Middle initial

Social Security no.  OR  Penn State ID no.  OR  Birth date  (month/day/year)

Male  Female  E-mail address

Local address (no. and street or box no.)
City     State       ZIP code

Permanent home address (no. and street or box no.)
City     State       ZIP code

Local phone    Home phone

Emergency contact    Phone

Address (no. and street or box no.)
City     State       ZIP code

For which semester do you want the course recorded?
Fall 2008  Spring 2009

Are you graduating in fall semester 2008?  Yes  No
Are you graduating in spring semester 2009?  Yes  No

Relevant courses and grades received:

Summary of previous travel and reasons for applying (using an additional sheet of paper is encouraged):

Return this application form with the $500 application fee by mail to:
Carolyn Andersen
Conferences and Institutes
The Pennsylvania State University
225 The Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel
University Park  PA  16802-7005

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