Spend Your Winter Break in the Tropics!

Tropical Field Ecology in Costa Rica, Central America

December 27, 2013, to January 11, 2014

- explore lowland, montane, and mangrove forests
- hike, study, and relax on an unspoiled tropical coastline
- visit the rim 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. **Reserva Biológica Alberto M. Brenes at San Ramón** is located in north-central Costa Rica. This site is a spectacular premontane 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. **Volcán Poás** We will make a short visit to this national park, which features the active Poás Volcano. There is public access to the rim of its two large craters, one that has ongoing geyser-like eruptions of muddy water and steam, and the other an extinct crater filled with a freshwater lake.

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 grid 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 some time 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 resident false killer whales are also common.

programs.psu.edu/tropical
an outreach program of the Eberly College of Science
Academics
Penn State and Costa Rican 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 graduate student serve as the teaching assistant. 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 and Deposit
The class fee of $1,595 includes room, board, and transportation in Costa Rica. Expenses not included: airfare (approximately $900); spending money ($50–$100); and airport exit fee ($28). Review of applicants will begin immediately and proceed until the class is full. Please return your application by September 20 to ensure consideration for acceptance. At the time of acceptance, a $150 nonrefundable deposit is required within 7 days of the acceptance email. This is a 3-credit spring semester course. Upon acceptance to the course, the balance of the class fee will be charged to your bursar account. No refunds will be given if you need to withdraw or cancel from the program.

Full-time (12 credits or more) Penn State students:
Upon acceptance, BIOL 499A (3 credits–spring semester) will be added to your semester schedule. No additional tuition payment is needed.

Part-time Penn State or non–Penn State students:
In addition to the class fee, a tuition payment appropriate to your semester standing is applicable.

For More Information
Carolyn Andersen, Program Manager
The Pennsylvania State University
128 Outreach Building
Phone: 814-863-5143
Email: caa3@psu.edu

Additional information is available at our website:
programs.psu.edu/tropical

University Policies
Access—Penn State encourages persons 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 program manager at 814-863-5143. This course involves a large amount of physical activity.

Penn State Cancellations or Changes—You will be notified of any cancellations or changes. If some unforeseen event forces Penn State to cancel or postpone the program, you will receive a full refund of your registration fee; however, the University cannot be held responsible for any related costs, including cancellation fees assessed by airlines or travel agencies.

Tuition—The University reserves the right to revise the schedule of tuition and charges without further notice. For more information on tuition, visit http://tuition.psu.edu.

Information on scholarships can be found at:
science.psu.edu/travelgrants

Application Form
BIOL 499A Tropical Field Ecology
December 27, 2013, to January 11, 2014
Complete all areas and attach a current transcript.
This form may be duplicated for additional registrations. Please print in ink or type. Return to Penn State by September 20, 2013. Important—To ensure a timely registration, please include complete information.

Class fee—$1,595

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Last name          First name          Middle initial

Penn State ID no. Date of birth (m/d/y)

Male        Female
Email address

Local mailing address (no. and street, or box no.)

City          State          ZIP code

Local phone no.  Cell phone no.

Campus attending

Major          Current semester standing

Total academic credits  Grade-point average

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

Relevant courses and grades received:

Return this application form by September 20 to:
Carolyn Andersen
Continuing Education
The Pennsylvania State University
128 Outreach Building
University Park PA 16802

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