

VIEW FROM THE CANOPY



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CALL FOR SCIENTISTS

In the last issue of *View from the Canopy*, we shared the results from a two-day workshop at La Selva in May 2007 "Long-Term Studies Reveal Alarming Findings." The objectives of this workshop were to 1) evaluate what data tropical scientists currently possess regarding changes in the La Selva forest, 2) compare trends at La Selva with information available at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institution's Barro Colorado Island (BCI) research station in Panama as well as other sites in Latin America, 3) determine what data are still needed in order to elucidate mechanisms of change, and 4) create a research strategy for the future through connections within an interdisciplinary research group. Based on the results from that workshop, the U.S. National Science Foundation has awarded OTS a grant through its Research Coordination Network program to expand and formalize the idea of an interdisciplinary research group into three overlapping and interacting networks.

We are now accepting applications of interest from individuals wishing to participate in the next phase of this project.

Four Neotropical Forests Working

Group—an interdisciplinary group of approximately 50-60 scientists with long-term data from the four neotropical research stations (La Selva in Costa Rica, BCI in Panama, the Biological Forest Fragments Project in the Brazilian Amazon near Manaus, and the Cocha Cashu Field Station in the Manu National Park, Peru). These four sites have been selected because they represent the tropical sites with multi-decadal data records for a wide array of plant and animal taxa. The group will

meet annually at one of the field stations, and will collaborate year-round through an interactive website and blog with tools for archiving and sharing datasets. One objective of this network will be to assemble, share, and analyze long-term datasets—with an emphasis on finding archived, unpublished data sets—among scientists within and across the four sites. We anticipate that at least 30% of this working group will be graduate students and recent degree recipients. Data-sharing activities will give rise to a series of research and synthesis papers, interdisciplinary grant proposals, and web-based communications.

Changing Ecosystem Network—

a larger (approximately 100-150+) assemblage of scientists working with long-term data on single taxa or ecosystems throughout the tropics. The group will have access to a new web site, a quarterly newsletter updating the group on new datasets, publications, and collaborative research initiatives. The primary objective of this network will be to share information and data across sites and among disciplines. Each year, the network would hold a symposium in conjunction with one of the main scientific societies. Additional funds are being sought to bring our international colleagues to the annual symposia.

Science Education in a Changing

World (SECW)—a parallel network for science educators will be formed to develop innovative teaching and assessment methods. Many tropical scientists are already creating

innovative and field-based programs for learners of ages from K-12 through adults, including video classrooms from the rainforest, tree-planting expeditions along damaged tropical waterways, and art and music competitions with a conservation theme for inner-city schools. In addition, many professional educators are exploring themes such as environmental conservation, sustainability, and ecotourism in novel and impactful ways. We have identified a core group of individuals to form the nucleus of this third network. Four important things to note regarding this network group are: the integration of scientists and educators, the creative approaches of the core participants, the built-in guarantee of diversity of participants, and the fundamental importance of this "broader impact" component to the overall project.

The Network Leader for the project is Dr. Elizabeth Losos, President and CEO of the Organization for Tropical Studies. Each of three field sites will have a Co-Network Leader—Dr. Deedra McClearn for La Selva Biological Station in Costa Rica, Dr. Douglas Robinson for Barro Colorado Island in Panama, and Dr. Miles Silman for Cocha Cashu in Peru. Dr. William Laurance will be listed as Senior Personnel for the Forest Fragments Project in Brazil, and he will act in the same capacity as the Co-Network Leader at the other sites.

Anyone interested in participating in this project should email a letter of interest outlining their experience and level of interest in the project to Deedra McClearn at deedra@slth.ots.ac.cr by May 1, 2008.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT RECRUITMENT

MAGGIE WALLENTA, OTS ADMISSIONS COUNSELOR

As we have just completed an active fall recruiting effort, it is time to take a quick breath and digest what we have been doing and where we have been for the last two and a half months. In doing so, we also reflect on a key question that informs all of what our team does. Who exactly is



The OTS Recruitment staff: (L-R): Maggie Wallenta, Patty Kustron, Steve Hutcheson and Ed Stashko

the ideal OTS undergraduate student? Study abroad officers, administrative leaders, faculty, and students themselves ask us: what type of student participates in our programs? While we have traveled to 55 college campuses spanning each region of the country, we have had our eyes, ears, and hearts tuned in to identify these students.

OTS requires students to be in good academic standing, have two college level semesters of biology or ecology and, we strongly recommend, one semester of college level Spanish. Yet, these criteria hardly describe all of the attributes it takes to identify an ideal OTS student. As we remind ourselves of what makes an OTS program unique, part of the answer emerges. Our students spend an enormous amount of time in the field. We offer them a unique experiential learning experience unmatched by others. We provide them with the outdoor classroom in which they will encounter countless wonders on a given day in the natural world. OTS students need to be comfortable and content with getting uncomfortable and dirty! Students also need

to exercise flexibility. This quality cannot be stressed enough. Students need to be comfortable with the fact that nature and its inhabitants are often not on our time clock. Dorm-style group dynamics and navigating cultural differences are two other areas where flexibility will prove to be an important quality.

In developing research skills, students utilize a multidisciplinary approach to a multitude of complexities in the tropical environment and the intertwining relationships of the host culture and the global community. Our students need physical stamina, more than a healthy dose of inquisitiveness, analytical skills, and a passion for the outdoors that is unrivaled by their peers. An ideal OTS student is motivated and enjoys challenges: personal, physical, academic, intercultural, and professional. We offer students rigorous skill building experiences. They will learn scientific methods and, through our direct hands-on approach, acquire skills to form thoughtful questions, learn a variety of field sampling techniques, conduct analysis, and produce defensible conclusions. Our students want to contribute to a growing base of research, and in doing so, have the opportunity to form personally and professionally rewarding relationships.

Through our programs in Costa Rica and South Africa, students gain the opportunity for rich cultural engagement. In both programs, they have host country nationals on site and partake in several cultural excursions. In South Africa, our students spend the semester with South African students, and in our semester programs in Costa Rica, they live with a host family during a portion of the program. The ideal OTS student is open-minded, interested in other cultures, and does not approach cultural differences with ethnocentrism.

We have long recognized that diversity is an integral part of our culture allowing us and our students to benefit from multiple perspectives and approaches. This diversity serves to strengthen educational and training opportunities, research endeavors, and, ultimately, the solutions we implement.

Incoming Students, Spring 2008

Costa Rica Program

Daniel Peterson, *Amherst College*
 Michelle Fournier, *Grinnell College*
 Britta Beckstead, *Scripps University*
 Rachel Northeim, *Duke University*
 Lee Paulsen, *Grinnell College*
 Susan Diane Finkbeiner, *Cornell University*
 Cheryl Silveri, *University of Arkansas*
 Jacob Blessing, *Williams College*
 Anne Moran, *University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill*
 Louise Stevenson, *Amherst College*
 Martin Sluk, *Earlham College*
 Jackson Milsaps, *Emory University*
 Henry Pollack, *Washington University in St. Louis*
 Brian Eisenstatt, *Tulane University*
 Audrey Wright Sager, *Wheaton College*
 Mallory Lynn St. Pierre, *Bucknell University*
 Gabriela Anhalzer, *Bates College*
 Alanna Darling, *Amherst College*
 Joanna Rifkin, *Amherst College*
 Julia Carleton, *Reed College*
 Phillip Sanchez, *University of Florida*
 Mariel Yglesias, *Universidad Latina*
 Fernanda Hong, *Universidad de Costa Rica*
 Andres Santana, *Universidad de Costa Rica*
 Andrea Corrales Vargas, *Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica*
 Timothy O'Connor, *University of Illinois*

South Africa Program

Emily Behrman, *Williams College*
 Jenneca McCarter, *University of Arkansas*
 Christina Orangio, *Elon University*
 Hannah Yourd, *Grinnell College*
 Emily Schultz, *Scripps University*
 Keala Cumming, *Scripps University*
 Jennifer Leonard, *Reed College*
 Sarah Bolthrunis, *College of the Holy Cross*
 Sophie Feather-Garner, *Wellesley College*
 Carly Sieff, *Brown University*
 Annalee Herrera, *University of Washington*
 Sofia Solano, *Costa Rican Citizen*
 Keren Araya, *Costa Rican Citizen*
 Kelsey Smithwood, *Syracuse University*

Upcoming Deadlines

Introduction to Field Ethnobiology Costa Rica

July 14 – August 12, 2008
Deadline: March 1, 2008*

Field Tropical Biology in Costa Rica

June 9 – July 8, 2008
Deadline: March 1, 2008*

*Applications will be accepted until courses are filled

Undergraduate Study Abroad Program in Costa Rica, Fall 2008

August 25 – December 9
Students will be informed of their acceptance to the program on a rolling basis. All applications will be considered without regard to race, color, national and ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation or preference to gender or age.

Undergraduate Fellowships and Scholarships

■ **Scholarships:** OTS has funding available for students from ethnic or minority groups underrepresented in the sciences, as well as for Costa Rican students.

■ **For Non-Duke Students:** Please consult with the Financial Aid Office at your institution or contact OTS.

■ **For Duke Students:** Duke undergraduates who receive need based financial aid during the academic year may apply their financial aid package to a Duke semester abroad program. For information, please contact the Duke Office of Study Abroad.

The Human Footprint: Challenges for Wilderness and Biodiversity

Through a series of photographs, maps and essays, *The Human Footprint* shows the collective impact that humanity's demands have had on the Earth's ecological resources. Its goal is to provoke constructive thinking about our responsibility to build a more sustainable future.



The book was produced by CEMEX, SA de CV, Wildlife Conservation Society, Agrupación Sierra Madre, The WILD Foundation and The International League of Conservation Photographers.

Cemex will donate 50% of the retail price of each book to OTS. Cemex chose to support OTS in recognition of our 45th anniversary.

The purchase price for *The Human Footprint: Challenges for Wilderness and Biodiversity* is \$50, plus \$10 for shipping and handling.

Chillout DVD Now Available

On November 26th, the Organization for Tropical Studies, Universal Music Central America, and the Costa Rican producer José Cortés officially launched the Costa Rica Chillout 2 DVD.

The Costa Rican Chillout DVD was dedicated to OTS, in recognition of our 45th Anniversary, which coincides with the OTS Initiative on Climate Change and Tropical Ecosystems. By purchasing a copy of this DVD, you will be contributing to OTS mission and, therefore, to its initiative on climate change, which comprises action areas such as: global climate change monitoring, education and awareness, ecosystem conservation and improvements in sustainability. The DVD is filled with beautiful Costa Rican scenery set to a pleasing compilation of relaxing music.



The purchase price for a DVD is \$20, plus \$5 for shipping and handling.

- To place an order in The United States, please contact Cathleen Lemoine at 919-684-6969 or via e-mail at cathleen.lemoine@duke.edu.
- To place an order in Costa Rica, please contact Katherine Solano at (506) 524-0607 x1111 or via e-mail at ksolano@ots.ac.cr.



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- Natural Wonders Calendar (\$50) Or
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Please send information on:

- Planned Giving
- OTS Travel Programs

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TROPICAL EXPERIENCES FOR TEACHERS

Rainforests and Reefs in Costa Rica, a course for teachers

Field research methods and tropical natural history for secondary teachers.

July 15-29, 2008

Come visit the world famous **La Selva Biological Station** and **Cabo Blanco Absolute Reserve** for 14 days of education, excitement, and collegial interactions.



Faculty: Dr. Barbara Bentley and Dr. Joe Levine

- Explore tropical ecosystems
- Examine and quantify ecological concepts
- Discuss and evaluate conservation in tropical countries
- Learn field research techniques
- Carry out a research project
- Learn how to teach research
- Develop a teaching plan based on inquiry and the processes of science
- Develop evaluation tools and plans
- Become a member of a team of qualified educators
- Develop programs to train colleagues

Cost: \$2295 (includes all in-country room & board, transportation, and field station use fees). International air fare is not included. Scholarships are available to qualified participants.

For more information, contact Dr. Barbara Bentley at variicolor@earthlink.net.

GRADUATE EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Neotropical Herpetology:

May 16-27, 2008, priority application deadline February 15, 2008, followed by rolling admissions; (spaces still available at time of printing)

Conservation and Biodiversity Genetics:

May 18-31, 2008; priority application deadline February 15, 2008, followed by rolling admissions; (spaces still available at time of printing)

Tropical Plants Systematics 08-9:

June 11 – July 14, 2008, application deadline March 22, 2008; (spaces still available at time of printing)

Ecología Tropical y Conservación 09-2:

Jan. 14 – Feb. 23, 2009, application deadline June 16, 2008.

For more information, please visit us online at www.ots.duke.edu.



About OTS

OTS is a non-profit consortium of over 60 research institutions, colleges and universities from the United States, Latin America, Africa and Australia. OTS' mission is to promote education, research, and the responsible use of natural resources in the tropics.

The View from the Canopy is produced by the OTS Development Office. To receive it electronically, or to submit comments or news items, please contact Cathleen Lemoine at 919-684-6969 or via e-mail at cathleen.lemoine@duke.edu.



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