

# VIEW FROM THE CANOPY

IN THIS ISSUE ■ Global Health Program Launched ■ Las Cruces Acquires New Land  
 ■ Tropical Biology Student Blogs about OTS ■ Upcoming Graduate Courses

## INAUGURAL GLOBAL HEALTH SEMESTER ATTRACTS 8 STUDENTS 19 SET TO PARTICIPATE FOR FALL '09

This past spring, eight students arrived in Costa Rica to participate in the newly created Global Health semester program, a joint venture of OTS and Duke University designed primarily for pre-med, biology, public health, and natural science majors. These students, from seven different institutions, were trained in research in the areas of tropical medicine and public health in Costa Rica.

The group visited each OTS biological station and examined the relationship between ecology and tropical disease, epidemiology, and public health. Topics included vector ecology, infectious diseases, water quality and health, socialized medicine, and traditional and alternative medicine. They were given exposure to current techniques and concerns in tropical medicine and public health through visits to numerous field sites including clinics and hospitals. They also analyzed the impact of climate change

**Global Health** *continued on page 3*



## PURA VIDA BLOG FOLLOWS TROPICAL BIOLOGY STUDENT

On June 15, 2009, a group of undergraduate students arrived in San Jose to begin their journey what is arguably the cornerstone of the OTS undergraduate experience: Tropical Biology. One of those students was Tiff Shao, a rising sophomore at Duke University.

Most field researchers and naturalists find keeping a field notebook to be a useful tool for recording interesting observations which they can refer back to for later comparisons or research ideas. In Tropical Biology, students are required to keep a field notebook throughout the semester and include an entry of a half hour observation on some organism at each site we visit.

Tiff Shao took this exercise to the next logical level: an online blog. Tiff invited followers to join her through her Tropical Biology experience online and experience Costa Rica through the eyes of a new OTS student, seeing the beauty of Costa Rica for the first time.

■ ■ The online blog was supported by the North American office and the Office of Communication at Duke University. For information on how to help promote the experiences of students from your institution, please contact Cathleen Lemoine at 919-684-6969 or via e-mail at [cathleen.lemoine@duke.edu](mailto:cathleen.lemoine@duke.edu).

## Pura Vida OTS



**A diary of study abroad at the Organization for Tropical Studies in Costa Rica, where "pura vida" is the way. Your host: Tiff Shao, Duke '12**

Today was our first opportunity to do actual fieldwork, and we pseudo-bushwhacked through primary forest to count the number of ferns, woody plants, herbs and palms along our 25 m transect. I learned something very important and shockingly obvious as a result of this experiment...

People too often think of a 'forest' as nothing but trees, and we overlook the smaller aspects of it, such as undergrowth and abiotic factors. This, along with our lecture on Restoration Ecology today taught me, above all else, that there are so many factors to consider when trying to 'save' an area. There's more to it than just planting trees. And yes, this should be common knowledge, but think of a forest right now... What do you imagine? I'll bet the first thing that comes to mind are sweeping green canopies and sturdy trunks. If not, I'd like to know, because I'm still trying to add that layer of undergrowth to the forests in my mind. This course has made us question and find the answers for ourselves.

