

AgAbroad Newsletter

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS IN AGRICULTURE

JUNE 2012

The College of Agriculture study abroad program continues to thrive with the help and support of our administration, faculty, and staff. Our offerings continue to expand and change. In addition to the many and varied shorter-term opportunities, students can and do study abroad for a semester on almost any of the continents.

I hope you enjoy reading about some of the experiences of our students. In this edition, you will find articles about students' participation in their respective programs as well as one student's take on the benefits of getting to know

international students here on the Purdue campus.

We would like to feature articles from our alumni. If you would like to contribute, please get in touch with us. Let us know how your study abroad experience affected you either personally or professionally. We always enjoy finding out what our past participants are up to and what is going on in your lives. Also, if you are ever on campus, please stop in.

Linda Vallade, Program Leader for Ag Study Abroad

CULTIVATING A HEART FOR INTERNATIONALS

SHALYSE TINDELL

When I first got to Purdue, I found myself in a group of friends who always seemed to be talking about and trying to befriend international students. I thought to myself, "What's their deal?" "Why do these people seem to go out of their way to befriend this specific group of students?" "Surely it is easier to get along with other Americans," I reasoned to myself. "We have more in common, just as international students have more in common with one another than with me." This was my reasoning; however the more time I spent with these friends, the more I began to understand. And finally my eyes were opened! At Purdue, there are 126 nations represented. There are only 196 countries in the world. This means that as Purdue students, we have the rare opportunity to experience the cultures of the world without leaving Indiana! However, I still wondered, and you may be as well, why I was the one to have to make the extra effort to befriend an international. The answer eventually came to me, but I think I can more effectively communicate the reasons through personal testimony and experience.



asked her what her greatest fear was, she said that her English was poor. She says that although Americans are very friendly, and she has enjoyed her time here, she wishes she had made more American friends. She wishes more Americans had been patient with her in her English speaking.



Shalyse (on the right) smiles with her exchange student buddy, June, from National Taiwan University.

From personal experience, having been an international student at one point (I retired when I came back to America from my Australian exchange), I can testify that it can be difficult to be the outsider coming in. Even though English is the language spoken in Australia, they still have very different colloquial speech, and I can honestly say with my American accent, there were times I had no clue what those around me were saying. Fortunately, I was welcomed into a group of my peers, because even though we spoke the same language, we still had different backgrounds, and although many of the students were friendly, my exchange time would not have been nearly as fun had I not connected with people on a deeper level than a smile and "hello".

As I reflect on these two situations, I can see more clearly why my friends made an extra effort to befriend internationals, and why I now do the same. It may not be the most natural thing to do in the beginning because there are cultural differences that have to be overcome, and sometimes, conversation is not as easy if you don't both speak the same first language. However, I can definitely say that the initial challenge is worth getting over for the value of friendship with people from other cultures. It's so enriching and rewarding.

June and Shalyse were a part of an event called Ignite the Nations. Through song and dance, they were able to travel throughout the continent of Africa, visit Latin America, and Asia in the course of an hour. Of course this was just a brief taste of these many cultures, but it was still a lot of fun, and Purdue gives unique opportunity to experience the nations of the world.

was most excited about when coming to America, she said she was excited to experience and be a part of a new culture, and to learn more about herself. However, when I

EXPLORING THE CENTER OF NATURE TOURISM

COLLEEN HARTEL



next month and a half of my life. It was only after two overnight flights, over 20 hours in layovers, and a short hop in a rattling, propeller airplane with Thompson's Gazelle over the Kenyan border when I stepped onto the airstrip of the (mostly outdoors) Kilimanjaro International Airport that I realized I was starting my most amazing adventure yet.



I'm not sure when it hit me that I was studying abroad in East Africa. Although I had spent several weeks excitedly planning for my journey and trying desperately to make everything fit into one suitcase under the weight limit, it hadn't quite registered that I was going to be living in rural Tanzania for the

I decided to study in Tanzania because of academics. As a wildlife sciences student, I fell in love with the idea working in the field everyday with some of Africa's most amazing animals. I looked forward to camping trips in national parks. I knew every expedition would reveal amazing sights and wildlife. While all those things were absolutely everything I anticipated, the things that made my experience memorable were unexpected little moments. As my fellow students and I struggled together through adapting to a completely new culture, bonded as we got lost in the town market for the first time, and talked into the night under the bright stars of the East African night sky, I knew these moments and memories would stick with me the most.

I never imagined I could tell people that I lived in Tanzania, but now I can't imagine missing the opportunity to study abroad. My experience challenged me as a student and an individual, but I know that the memories and personal growth I have gained made the experience worth all of the energy I put into it.

INCREASING ACCESS TO MARKETS IN COSTA RICA

JIM MURREN

Connecting small-medium producers to larger markets can be challenging, mostly due to lack of skills needed to access the markets with products that fit demand. Although food produced locally and accessible to consumers in local markets supports local economies, producers often seek markets beyond their immediate reach.

Production potential may be greater than local demand. As demand grows and producers' reputations expand, local demand may lead to growing demand across a region. As demand grows, local producers may need assistance in becoming more organized on their farms to meet that demand.

How does a small group of organized agricultural producers attain capacity to reach its fullest potential? What is its current capacity, and where can it go? What is feasible? How do you measure that feasibility?

The Association of Organic Producers of Turrialba (APOT) asks such questions. Over the past couple of years, they have struggled in understanding how to scale-up as well as dealing with the changing organic markets. They lack know-how. How to know how much food to grow? How to know which markets are accessible for their products of honey, banana vinegar, coffee, vegeta-

bles, and potential new products? How to investigate their entry point into various markets for their products?

The Association is comprised of 250 farmer families. This project seeks to establish a team that will strengthen their organization and position them in several markets whereby their products have a place to compete regionally and globally.

Purdue University's International Programs in Agriculture (IPIA) and Purdue Cooperative Extension Service (CES), in collaboration with the Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza (CATIE), will work with the Asociación de Productores Orgánicos de Turrialba, Costa Rica to improve APOT's organizational management, increase product development, and better market their products in Costa Rica and abroad.

The 250 APOT member families will become familiar with market and product development techniques using models developed by Purdue and CATIE, in association with APOT, leading to improved farmer livelihoods.

To read about Purdue Extension's progress in Costa Rica please check out their blog: <http://purdueffcostarica.wordpress.com/>.



LEARNING BY DOING AT ZAMORANO

KATHERINE CLEMONS

I am currently a student at Purdue University studying pre-veterinary medicine, and I couldn't love it more. Last summer I studied abroad at Zamorano University in Honduras for ten weeks with three other students such as myself. I made a small checklist of things I needed to be sure to bring on my trip, but the truth is there is no way to really prepare for the experiences you have abroad and what you bring back with you – all that comes from within!

During these 10 weeks we went through different modules related to animal production and production medicine. This included things like dairy, beef, poultry, swine, aquaculture, beekeeping, meat processing, animal reproduction, travelling to different farms around Honduras and shadowing the veterinarian on site. Our last week we spent lounging on the beach at the Bay Islands, making friends with parrots and dolphins!

The most exciting part about the program however, was their motto: "Learn by Doing". Never once did we see the inside of a classroom. Everything we learned we obtained through hands-on experience. I came armed with very little

knowledge of animal production and the extent of my Spanish being: "buenos días"!

My first diary entry read: "Day 1: We spent the morning ankle deep in manure, slapping/yelling at Brahman and very happy they gave us steel toed boots! They look super sweet until you stick a needle in their vertebrae to draw blood."



Every moment was an exciting new adventure for us, and soon enough we found ourselves eating lunch between wrestling bulls out in the pasture for injections and ear chipping and birthing newborn piglets at the nursery. Honduras was the most amazing experience I have ever had through Purdue, hands down. I am so excited about the person I am becoming and the things I will accomplish through my experiences at Purdue, and Zamorano was only the beginning!

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN HAITI

ANN BECHMAN

Over Christmas break 21 Purdue students and faculty traveled to Cap Haitien, Haiti on a study abroad course. Upon returning to the United States people often wondered why we chose to go to Haiti and what we did there. Our program was rather unique in that we focused our efforts on service learning. Service learning can have very different meanings for different people. For our group it essentially meant we wanted to help people in another country by working along beside them and exchanging information with them. What better place to plan a service learning trip than Haiti, a country that desperately needs help and information?

We were able to execute our plan by partnering with an agricultural university in Cap Haitien as well as Heifer International Haiti. We spent two days working with the agricultural students building a greenhouse, learning how to make fertilizer and pesticides, and weeding a research plot. We also worked with Heifer International at two different villages building a fence, planting trees, touring a dairy processing facility and witnessing a Passing on the Gift ceremony.



Ann Bechman gives some gifts to the children at the orphanage.



When interviewing, companies sometimes overlook the importance of international experiences. They often place a higher priority on communication skills, problem solving, and teamwork and leadership experiences. However, service learning in an international capacity encompasses all of these skills and more.

Not only did we have to communicate amongst our Purdue team but we also had to communicate with people who did not speak the same language to accomplish various goals. We were often faced with challenges both while working in Haiti and in our travels that forced us to make quick decisions, improvise, and most importantly, be flexible. We worked on many different teams with our agricultural university and Heifer International partners as well as working as a collective group just to get to where we needed to go each day. As a whole, an international service learning trip gives students the chance to apply what they are learning in the classroom, immerse themselves in another culture, help people in need, and develop personal skills on an entirely different level.

To learn more about service learning in Haiti, please visit <http://www.ag.purdue.edu/ipia/studyabroad/Pages/>

FROM FAIRY TALES TO REALITY

MEGAN WINZELER

My introduction to the rainforest as a child was much like the fairy tales my mother would read to me at bedtime. The brilliantly pigmented frogs and vibrant birds were as much a part of my imagination as the dragons and the fairy godmothers. My childhood rainforest books were as worn out and well loved as any other storybook on my shelf. The rainforest has always been a daydream away until a few weeks ago, I found myself standing in my dreams, deep in the rainforest at La Tirimbina Biological Reserve.

Dr. Rueben Goforth, an Assistant Professor of Aquatic Ecosystems in the Forestry and Natural Resources Department, has been traveling to Costa Rica over spring break for several years collecting stream data for one of his research projects. The past three years, Dr. Goforth has brought a small group of students to assist in the sampling process. This year a group of twelve students, including myself and Matt Hamilton (fellow herpetology working group leader), accompanied Dr. Goforth and a teaching assistant to three field sites in Costa Rica.

Our first site, Tirimbina Biological Reserve, is a mid-elevation, primary growth forest. We were greeted by our guide, Raul, and a boa constrictor he had found at his house. Did you get that? He found a boa constrictor. At his house. The coolest thing that can stumble into our homes here is a garter snake.

The rest of our time at Tirimbina was filled with scarlet-webbed tree frogs, glass frogs, hog-nosed pit vipers, and red-eyed tree frogs. We found basilisks and salmon-bellied litter snakes, howler monkeys and sloths, toucans and oropendolas. A brown wood turtle even made an appearance for us. More than once I looked off the trail and realized how much I was looking at. The shear mass

of plant diversity was astounding. Any available surface was covered by something seeking to fill its own niche. The leaves had moss growing on them, branches were covered with bryophytes, and vines trailed down from the canopy.



The juvenile brown wood turtle found at Bijagual. The only Testudine found.

La Tirimbina was a reality to my childhood dreams. My first experience with the rainforest and its inhabitants could not have been better. Our next stop, Bijagual Ecological Reserve, was a smaller, even more remote field station. As Bijagual is a much younger preserve positioned on secondary growth rainforest that's higher in elevation, the forest changed considerably. The understory was thickly coated with ferns and shrubs, and there were many more



Juvenile green basilisk found during a night-herping walk. Adults have prominent crests.

open patches at La Tirimbina. The difference in the secondary forest growth after intensive agriculture was similar to the contrast of our early-successional forests and old-growth forests. However, here we were able to do fish sampling using electroshocking backpacks. I had never been electroshocking before, but if you ever get the chance, you should take the opportunity. It was so much fun! We shocked up knife fish, cichlids, tadpoles, guppies, and even a water snake. It was astonishing to see the organisms in the water that you hadn't realized were there.



A strawberry poison dart frog at La Selva.

The final stop of the trip, La Selva Biological Station, was the largest field station of the trip. It housed researchers, student groups, and tourists along with a large group of guides. At La Selva, we arrived just in time for the rains. We were able to see many very happy strawberry poison dart frogs.

Our first morning, we saw a fer-de-lance. Guides marked the location of the fer-de-lance in previous days because it was just off the trail. The general theory of the guides and managers at La Selva was the increase of toucans targeting small mammals and peccaries destroying the understory habitat of many tropical small mammals. Since the decline in the small mammal population, more fer-de-lance have been found starving to death due to low food availability. The female we saw was sprawled out, showing her stomach, and in no position to strike at food. Her spine was clearly visible and she looked sickly, but the power and grace associated with the fer-de-lance shadowed her frail frame. For me, it was like visiting a once strong and powerful relative in the hospital, only to witness that they don't belong in such a weak body and hope that any second they will spring off the bed, ready to go. The fer-de-lance is a beautiful snake, and when I go back, I hope to see a healthy individual. When asked, the guide said there would be no management to protect the fer-de-lance's food source nor would any individual be captured for rehabilitation. They chose to let the rainforest balance it all out again.

My time in the rainforest completely rose above any expectation or hope I had going into the trip. As we flew over the country, you could see where forest destruction for crop fields and pastureland was occurring. The overwhelming beauty and diversity of these forests cannot save it, and the organizations we stayed with are working diligently to protect the forest and educate visitors on the importance of the rainforests. However, the reality of the rainforest still far exceeds the colorful pages of children's books.

These photographs are courtesy of Megan Winzeler. Duplication, reuse, or sale of these photos are prohibited.

