

Biological Problems in Costa Rica – Kelsey King

Dear Class of 1955,

My name is Kelsey King. This past November I spent two and a half weeks in Costa Rica. Your funds helped cover the cost of trip, and for which I am extremely thankful. To understand the location of my trip you would have to look on a Google map for a small collection of houses surrounded for a few miles by jungle called the Piro Biological Station. The closest thing to a city was Piro, which was a hilly muddy 45-minute stretch from the station. Let me just say that the 20-minute walk to the beach through the jungle took less effort than the drive.

On our stop in San Jose, Costa Rica, before the prop plane into Puerto Jimenez, included a night at the Toucan Rescue Ranch, which was one of my favorite days in



Costa Rica. The toucan Rescue Ranch includes a Spider Monkey, a flock of geese, ducks, a grison, and many other creatures besides toucans and toucanettes. This ranch has definitely helped me evaluate the merits of working at a rescue of some kind, and the research ahead has helped me evaluate fieldwork more seriously.

The mission that my course took up was to help OSA conservation evaluate what kind of species, and in what distribution, their newest piece of land possessed. This soon-to-be third OSA station is to be dedicated to ecologically and environmentally conscientious farming. So using camera traps, track surveys, and monkey surveys, we evaluated the area. This sentence implies that the task we set out upon was much easier than it was in reality. With the start of the rain season, many of our treks along these hilly, muddy, animal trails became soaking wet mud sliding events. Those were the easy days because the rain cleared the trail of data, and therefore took much less of our time. The sunny days that came



Some trails used during my research project

after the wet days primed the ground for animals to leave footprints, and tempted the monkeys out to play.

Despite the physical strain that I underwent for research, I loved the experience. To see monkeys in the wild and to learn tracking skills are invaluable life experiences that I would not give up. Additionally the memories that I have of the trip will be with me



Puma track found during research

always. For example, my favorite tracking day was when my partner and I came upon puma prints, the first we had found. The pure excitement I felt while tracing the path of the puma along a trail that had become so familiar to me was amazing.

Similarly, the entire group was excited when we finally were able to look through the photos we caught from our camera traps. Not only was it entertaining to watch ourselves pass the cameras each day, but also to see all the creatures that passed

that we never saw was great. To know that these creatures are present, though we never saw them with our own eyes helped reveal to me how alive the forest was, though seeing the monkeys and leaf cutter ants everyday was a great reminder as well.



Puma caught on a camera trap



Ocelot caught on a camera trap

Though the research provided by our trip was useful, only to OSA conservation, and myself the experience I have gained from the trip benefits me both personally and professionally in ways I never imagined. Where once I had a very broad view of my career choices this trip exposed me to things I discovered that I very much did and did not want to do as a career. Your generosity is one thing I owe very much for this, and

with that, I say thank you. I know that this letter is not a repayment for your kindness, but someday I hope to be able to do the same thing for a student in my position.

Thank you so much for helping me with this opportunity,

Kelsey King, Class of 2015



Coatis caught on a camera trap