

Summer Internship in Costa Rica – Bosque Eterno de los Niños



Abstract

For our summer internship in Costa Rica, we worked at a forest reserve and non profit organization called Bosque Eterno de Los Niños (BEN). BEN is the largest private forest reserve in Costa Rica, covering 56,000 hectares of forest, and it is managed by a group of community members, scientists and activists called the Monteverde Conservation League (MCL). The reserve was established in the 1980s through the work of the MCL in conjunction with fundraising efforts spearheaded by a group of Swedish schoolchildren for land purchase. Today, the main goals of BEN still include land purchase and protection, with more of an emphasis placed on protecting the land they already have, as well as environmental education, community outreach, and research. The reserve is mostly off limits to visitors, but they have two field stations, and environmental education center and native plant nursery, as well as a visitor center with trails in Monteverde called Bajo del Tigre. We had the opportunity to visit all of these locations, but worked primarily at Bajo del Tigre. For our internship, we produced blog content for BEN aimed at increasing interest for visitation at the reserve. We covered a wide variety of topics with our blog posts, including species profiles, information about field stations, topic issues like water conservation and ecotourism, as well as personal stories about different experiences within and related to the BEN. In addition to the blogs, we installed a system on the windows at two different buildings within the BEN to prevent bird strikes, as well as produced an educational poster explaining the technique used, why bird strikes are a problem, and what can be done to reduce them. When we weren't working on these projects, we spent time working on trails and maintenance of the reserve, helping with environmental education within the community, and learning more about BEN

Liz Gagliardi & Angie Rizzo

Our Work at BEN

During our time at BEN, we worked on a myriad of projects. From routine work on the trails (and taking guided hikes with local skilled naturalists) to painting the casita (an interactive, educational children's house), we truly did it all. Typically we had a split schedule of sorts. In the mornings, we worked on promoting visitation to the BEN by increasing their online presence. We wrote blog posts, took photos and wrote captions for their social media work. In the afternoons we did work at their reserve in Monteverde, Bajo del Tigre (Jaguar's Canyon). Always learning some Spanish and up for anything, we made great connections to both our co-workers and nature.



Trail work at Pocosol field station and helping with environmental education at Finca Stellar.

We were lucky enough to be Lehigh's first interns to visit all of BEN's field stations and reserves. Allocating specific time in our schedules, we were able to work all across BEN's 23,000 acres, and with the majority of BEN's staff. Each place brought different challenges, connections, and opportunities. We got to meet Maria Fernanda, BEN's environmental educator, and facilitate educational programs. We also got to meet Mark Wainwright, a leading naturalist, and sit in on two of his lectures.

Advisor: Don Morris

Outcomes and Takeaways

Our time working with BEN was phenomenal, and one of our main takeaways (or I guess you could say leave-behinds) was our special project on bird strikes. Bird strikes, as you can read on our other poster, are a huge concern in this area. Birds see the reflection of the forests in the windows and, not realizing they can't pass through the glass, many strike the windows and die or get seriously injured. Tragically, we witnessed this event more than once ourselves.



BEN lies within the Bellbird Biological Corridor. The Three-Wattled Bellbird serves as a flagship species for conservation in this area.

To help address this issue, we installed cords on the windows, a method studied to be 97% effective in preventing bird strikes. We also made this bilingual informational poster (with some translation editing), a blog post, and a bilingual informational flyer as well, so visitors of the BEN can learn how to install their very own anti-bird strike system at home.



Angie installing the bird strike prevention system with Luis, a BEN staff member