

# TROPICAL FIELD ECOLOGY IN COSTA RICA

TRAVEL SEMINAR

## WHY COSTA RICA?

OFF-CAMPUS STUDY & EXCHANGES

Costa Rica occupies just 0.03% of the Earth's land surface but contains more than 4% of the planet's biodiversity. The country's climate, varied topography, location between two continents, and often enlightened ecological policies have all contributed to the generation and persistence of its incredible species richness.

Monteverde, our base in Costa Rica, is bordered by three cloud-forest preserves that include a mountaintop and its windward Atlantic and leeward Pacific slopes. The pronounced temperature and moisture gradients on these slopes produce varied habitats that are home to over 450 species of orchid and more than half of Costa Rica's 850 bird species.

Monteverde is faced with rapid development, in large part because of these preserves. During our visit, working with local residents, researchers, and staff from the Monteverde Institute, we will study tropical communities and the organisms that inhabit them, and investigate possibilities for a sustainable future.

Our in-country logistics and program have been arranged in collaboration with the Monteverde Institute, a nonprofit organization dedicated to peace, justice, knowledge, and the vision of a sustainable future. Proceeds from the course support the Institute's conservation and community programs.

## TROPICAL FIELD ECOLOGY IN COSTA RICA

Tropical Field Ecology, offered in Costa Rica, is the sister course for Tropical Ecology (BI 325), a 3-credit lecture and discussion-based course taught on the Skidmore College campus; both courses will be offered in the spring 2013 semester. Students in Tropical Field Ecology (TX 301) will have weekly seminar meetings throughout the spring term and will travel to Costa Rica for field studies March 9–17, 2013

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Tropical Field Ecology will meet weekly on campus throughout the spring 2013 semester as well as in Costa Rica March 9–17. The instructors will schedule a meeting in fall 2012 in order to discuss logistics, equipment, immunizations, and code of conduct for the travel seminar.

## PRELIMINARY TRAVEL SCHEDULE

The following is the expected travel schedule for March 9–17 2013. This schedule is subject to change.

**March 9:** Flight: Albany, New York, to San José, Costa Rica. Transport to Monteverde. Orientation. Settle in at Los Llanos field station.

**March 10:** Quaker Meeting in Monteverde or field exploration and bird walk. Sack lunch at Quaker meeting house. Field observations at hummingbird gallery. Orientation walk through forest and pastures with Martha Campbell; slide presentation and seminar at Martha's home on the history of Monteverde's landscape and people. Fieldwork preparation.

**March 11:** Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve ALL-DAY HIKE. Field observations for altitudinal transect. Dinner at Monteverde Institute with Dr. Alan Pounds. Evening lecture: Global Warming and Amphibian Extinctions by Dr. Alan Pounds.

**March 12:** Children's Rainforest/Bajo del Tigre. Hike and field observations for altitudinal transect in Bajo del Tigre. Terra Viva organic dairy farm and cheese tour. Visit CASEM crafts cooperative and Coop Santa Helena coffee. Lecture: Environmental History of Monteverde, by Monteverde Institute staff. Evening lecture: Introduction to Bats by Dr. Richard La Val with guided walk through "the bat jungle."

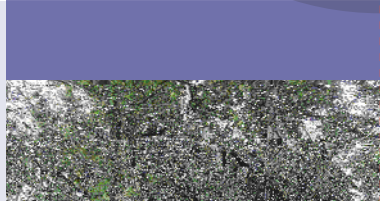
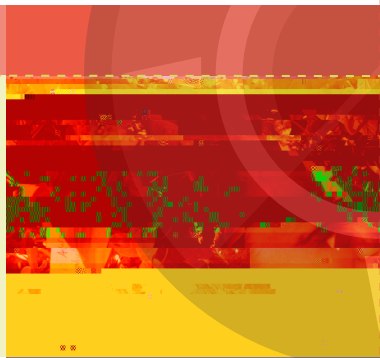
**March 13:** Butterfly Garden interactive presentation and tour. Hike from Santa Helena reserve down Atlantic slope to San Gerardo Field Station accompanied by local naturalist. Evening orientation lecture. Accommodations in San Gerardo Field Station.

**March 14:** Field orientation walk. Field research. Night hike.

**March 15:** Finish field research. Work on field notebooks and explore. Hike up to Santa Helena Reserve. Lecture: Tropical birds and the Bellbird conservation project by Dr. Deb Hamilton. Transport to Ranario to observe frogs by daylight and at dusk. Dinner at Tramonti's.

**March 16:** Finca la Bella Cooperative Farm tour and fieldwork with lunch at the farm; orchid seminar. Transport to San José. Farewell dinner.

**March 17:** Lecture: Fundación Neotrópica by Dr. Bernardo Aguilar, executive director, and Dr. Carla Córdoba, coordinator of communication. Return flight to Albany.



## FACULTY DIRECTORS

The Tropical Field Ecology travel seminar in Costa Rica will be led by the following faculty from Skidmore College:

Monica Raveret Richter is an associate professor of biology. She studies foraging behavior and social insects, and has extensive field experience in the tropical forests of Central America and Brazil. Raveret Richter lived in Costa Rica for over two years conducting research and teaching. She has served as visiting research faculty and field instructor for the Organization for Tropical Studies' Tropical Ecology graduate course in Palo Verde and Monteverde and for the International Rain Forest Educators Workshop in Tortuguero, and lectured at the Universidad de Costa Rica and for the University of California's Education Abroad Program in Monteverde. She teaches courses in ecology, behavior, and conservation ecology, and has co-taught the Tropical Field Ecology Travel Seminar since its inception.

Kim Marsella is the associate director of academic advising, having previously spent 12 years on the faculty in both the Department of Geosciences and the Environmental Studies Program. She is a geoscientist whose focus has been on glacial geomorphology and climate-change research. Her teaching interests are focused on the intersection of the natural sciences and social sciences as they apply to issues of sustainability and conservation. She has conducted extensive fieldwork in challenging locations including the Canadian High Arctic and the Desert Southwest. In addition to teaching field courses at Skidmore, she has previously co-taught intensive field courses for the University of Vermont in the Pacific Northwest and Colorado.

## ANTICIPATED COSTS

The anticipated fee for the travel seminar to Costa Rica is \$3,000 (may fluctuate). This includes round-trip airfare from New York to San Jose, all ground transportation in Costa Rica, on-site accommodations in field station, all meals, medical insurance, entrance fees, local resource faculty, excursions, Skidmore faculty on-site, and the support of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges. The fee does not include personal expenses.

