

## **Belize 1996 Itinerary Summary**

1996 Capstone Experience - The Belize Marine TREC and Mountain Rain Forest

FIELD BIOLOGY L303, Ecology Laboratory L474

### **THE UNPARALLELED NATURE DESTINATION**

- Largest Barrier Reef in the West Hemisphere
- Fabulous Wildlife
- Tropical Forest and Mayan Ruins
- World renowned Hol Chan Marine Preserve
- Botanical and Bird Watching Trails through the Largest Island Forest in Belize

### **APRIL 27--DAY 1**

- MEET AT STANDIFORD FIELD, LOUISVILLE, KY
- DEPART FOR HOUSTON OR MIAMI
- CHECK IN WITH TACA OR SIMILAR CARRIER FOR BELIZE
- ARRIVE BELIZE, CLEAR CUSTOMS AND
- PROCEED VIA TROPICAL AIR TO SAN PEDRO ON AMBERGRIS CAYE, A 27 MILE LONG ISLAND WHERE WE WILL CHECK INTO THE HIDEAWAY.
- DON'T EXPECT LUXURY BUT IT DOES HAVE A SWIMMING POOL
- EVENING ACTIVITY--GENERAL ORIENTATION, BEGIN FIELD NOTEBOOKS
- GENERAL BEACHCOMBING AND BIRDING ARE ALWAYS AVAILABLE. MORE THAN 30 SPECIES OF BIRDS NEST HERE INCLUDING REDDISH EGRET, CORMORANTS AND EGRETS

### **April 28--DAY 2**

- MORNING--SNORKEL LAGOON AND TURTLE GRASS BEDS
- DEVELOP SPECIES LIST
- AFTERNOON--BEACH WALK
- INVESTIGATION OF SHORE LIFE: PLANTS, BIRDS AND OTHER ANIMALS
- EVENING--MARINE BIOLOGY PRESENTATION, UPDATE FIELD NOTEBOOKS

### **APRIL 29--DAY 3**

- MORNING--SNORKEL SAN PEDRO BACK REEF
- AFTERNOON--ECOLOGY GROUP TO VISIT CONCRETE SEA WALL TO DEVELOP TRANSECT LINES AND MARK MOLLUSKS
- EVENING--NIGHT BEACH SEINE; IDENTIFY INSHORE FISHES, UPDATE FIELD NOTEBOOKS

### **APRIL 30--DAY 4**

- MORNING--SNORKEL HOL CHAN MARINE SANCTUARY
- THIS AREA IS CONSIDERED TO BE ONE OF THE PREMIER SNORKELING SPOTS IN THE CARIBBEAN. LOCATED ABOUT 4 MILES SOUTHWEST OF SAN PEDRO, HOL CHAN (MAYA FOR LITTLE CHANNEL) IS A 30 FOOT CHANNEL THAT IS A BREAK IN THE BARRIER REEF.
- IDENTIFY OVER 220 KINDS OF FISHES INCLUDING SQUIRRELFISH, SPOTTED EAGLE RAYS AND MANY OTHERS, HUNDREDS OF INVERTEBRATES, HARD AND SOFT CORALS
- AFTERNOON--MANGROVE EXPERIENCE
- IDENTIFY RED, BLACK AND WHITE MANGROVE;
- DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPORTANCE OF MANGROVES IN TROPICAL MARINE ECOSYSTEMS
- MANGROVES ARE THE BREEDING AND NURSING GROUNDS FOR THE ENDANGERED AMERICAN CROCODILE AND MANATEE. THEY ALSO PROVIDE SHELTER AND ROOKERIES FOR MANY BIRDS INCLUDING THE FRIGATEBIRD AND REDFOOTED BOOBY.
- EVENING--MAYAN CULTURE AND HISTORY LECTURE

#### May 1--DAY 5

- FLY FROM SAN PEDRO TO MUNICIPAL AIRPORT
- MORNING--BELIZE ZOO AND TROPICAL EDUCATION CENTER
- THIS WILL BE A CLOSE-UP LOOK AT NATIVE JUNGLE ANIMALS; WIDELY REGARDED AS ONE OF THE MORE BEAUTIFUL ZOOS
- LATER WE WILL DRIVE TO GUANACASTE PARK NAMED FOR THE GIANT GUANACASTE TREE THAT IS DRAPED WITH BROMELIADS ORCHIDS AND EPIPHYTES. THIS PARK FEATURES ONE HUNDRED SPECIES OF BIRDS (E.G. BLUE-CROWNED MOTMOTS, SQUIRREL CUCKOO AND OTHERS), ANIMALS (JAGUARUNDI, KINKAJOU, AGOUTI AND OTHERS) AND PLANTS. THIS IS A NATIONAL RESERVE. SPECIES GROWING IN THE PARK INCLUDE RAIN TREE, MAMMEE APPLE, BOOKUT, QUAMWOOD, COTTON TREE, COHUNE PALMS AND OF COURSE MAHOGANY--THE NATIONAL TREE OF BELIZE
- AFTERNOON--THE PANTI MEDICINE TRAIL
- HERE WE TAKE A SPECIAL WALK TO LEARN ABOUT THE ABUNDANT MEDICINAL PLANTS WHICH GROW HERE.
- MAYAN RUINS AT XUNANTUNICH (LOFTY MAIDEN OF THE ROCK)
- IMPRESSIVE EL CASTILLO TOWERS ABOVE THE CANOPY. THIS IS THE SECOND HIGHEST MAN-MADE STRUCTURE IN BELIZE
- THIS LATE CLASSIC SITE, THE LARGEST IN THE BELIZE RIVER VALLEY, AND THE LONGEST ESTABLISHED SITE IN BELIZE, PROVIDES A HILLTOP LOCATION WITH A PANORAMIC VIEW OF HOUSE MOUNDS, PYRAMIDS, PALACES AND THREE PLAZAS. THE LARGEST PYRAMID IS DECORATED WITH FRIEZES AND MASKS IN THE CLASSIC STYLE
- EVENING--MEETING, DISCUSSION AND FILLING OUT FIELD NOTEBOOKS

#### MAY 2--DAY 6

- MORNING AND AFTERNOON--EXCURSION INTO THE HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN PINE RIDGE.

- HERE WE OBSERVE FASCINATING BIRDS AND ANIMALS IN THEIR NATURAL SETTING. THERE ARE CAVES IN THE CHIQUIBUL RAINFOREST THAT WERE ONCE USED FOR MAYA RITUALS, NATURE TRAILS, A 1,000 FOOT FALLS, AND CLEAR POOLS FOR SWIMMING
- THE RIO FRIO CAVE HAS NATURAL BEAUTY, IS EASILY ACCESSIBLE AND IS A LUSH JUNGLE SETTING.
- EVENING--MEETING, DISCUSSION AND FILLING OUT FIELD NOTEBOOKS

#### MAY 3--DAY 7

- MORNING--VISIT HOWLER MONKEY SANCTUARY
- THESE MONKEYS OR BABOONS AS THEY ARE CALLED LOCALLY ARE QUITE ACCESSIBLE AND PROVIDE GOOD PHOTOGRAPHIC OPPORTUNITIES.
- THIS IS AN ENDANGERED SPECIES FOUND ONLY IN THE LOWLAND FORESTS FROM MEXICO TO HONDURAS.
- AFTERNOON--VISIT MAYAN RUINS AT ALTAN HA
- THIS MAJOR CLASSIC PERIOD CENTER WAS A SOUTHEASTERN TRADING POST LINKING THE CARIBBEAN WITH THE INTERIOR. IT IS DOMINATED BY A HUGE PYRAMID.
- EVENING--FLY BACK TO SAN PEDRO, UPDATE FIELD NOTEBOOKS

#### MAY 4--DAY 8

- DIVING ON THE WORLD'S LARGEST BARRIER REEF AT TRES COCOS
- THE BARRIER REEF EXTENDS FROM THE TIP OF MEXICO'S ISLA JUJERES TO SAPOLILLA CAYE IN THE BAY OF HONDURAS. IT IS THE LONGEST (180 MILES) UNBROKEN LIVING CORAL REEF IN THE WORLD. THIS IS UNSPOILED MARINE LIFE AT ITS BEST.
- Afternoon and Evening--Ecology Group Returns to the Wall
- Others--Town and Beach Time
- Evening--Update Field Note Books

#### MAY 5--DAY 9

- Morning--Diving and Snorkeling in Stingray Alley
- Afternoon--Ecology Group Tabulates Data from Transects and Writes Report
- Others have lab time to learn to use equipment or free time
- Evening--Night Snorkel or Dive

#### MAY 6--Day 10

- Morning and Afternoon--Snorkel and Picnic on Mexico Rocks
- Evening--Belize Night Party

#### MAY 7--Day 11

- FINAL EXAM AND TURN IN NOTEBOOKS

- Departure for Mainland to Return to Indiana