



Ecology Project International (EPI) Fact Sheet

- EPI's mission is to improve and inspire science education and conservation efforts world-wide through field-based student-scientist partnerships. Our vision is to create an ecologically literate society in which the world's youth are empowered to take an active role in conservation.
- EPI partners high school students from the US and developing countries with professional scientists, to perform research in biodiversity hot spots, aimed at protecting threatened and endangered species and places, including the Leatherback sea turtle, Yellowstone grizzlies, and giant Galapagos land tortoise.
- Local residents compose 2/3 of total participation in our programs (Costa Ricans, Galapagueños, Mexicans, and Montanans). In international projects, one-third of our participants arrive from the U.S. to collaborate with their in-country peers.
- We're celebrating our 10th anniversary this year, having worked with over 6,000 students and educators since 2000.
 - EPI participants include students from over 125 schools from 21 states and 5 countries.
 - Worked with 340 Montana kids since 2003 (245 from Missoula)
 - 9 of the 12 Montana schools are new to EPI this year – from Frenchtown, Big Sky, Billings (West, Central, & Senior), Bozeman, Willard, Havre, Wolf Point, Hellgate, Sentinel, Sussex, and Missoula International School
 - Record number of Montana kids in Yellowstone program – approximately 40, including chaperones
- EPI offices are located in Missoula's historic Swift building, which houses 4 other conservation education organizations

Educational goals: EPI participants gain a better understanding of ecological systems and processes through participatory field science

Conservation goals: Students and scientists work together to protect species, collect high quality data, and restore habitats.

Cultural exchange goals: We create global citizens by fostering cooperation between international and local students, teachers, and scientists.

SEA TURTLE ECOLOGY PROGRAM, CARIBBEAN COAST OF COSTA RICA

- EPI students protect the fourth most important nesting site in the world for the critically endangered Leatherback sea turtle.
- An estimated 90% of leatherback eggs were illegally harvested at this beach before the student/researcher turtle patrols. Today, only 10% of the eggs are harvested.
- The data our students help collect inform management and conservation decisions for sea turtles worldwide via the Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research.

GALAPAGOS ISLAND ECOLOGY PROGRAM, THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR

- The Galapagos Islands were the first U.N. World Heritage Site designated for the protection of endangered species, however encroaching development and the introduction of non-native species are driving numerous species extinct.
- EPI students eradicate invasive plant species and restore habitat to ensure that the giant Galapagos tortoise populations will continue to recover.

WHALE ECOLOGY & ISLAND ECOLOGY PROGRAMS, SEA OF CORTEZ, MEXICO

- The Sea of Cortez hosts 39% of the world's marine mammal species and supports critical habitat for a wealth of spectacular marine life.
- A hundred years ago the great whales—Finback, Blue and Humpback—were nearly hunted to extinction.
- The research data collected by scientists and EPI students will be used to create a protected area for whales in the Sea of Cortez and to create a marine census in a newly-protected marine park.

YELLOWSTONE WILDLIFE ECOLOGY PROGRAM – GREATER YELLOWSTONE ECOSYSTEM

- EPI partners with the U.S. Forest Service collecting data to inform land management plans for threatened and endangered species.
- In Montana, student involvement means increased monitoring for iconic predators (grizzlies, lynx, wolverine) in the last intact predator-prey ecosystems in the continental U.S.

CONTACT: Kelsey Stamm, kelsey@ecologyproject.org, (406) 721-8784