



ECOLOGY PROJECT

INTERNATIONAL

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. We aim to protect threatened species and habitat, including the leatherback sea turtle, Montana grizzlies, and the giant Galapagos land tortoise.

Education	Conservation	Cultural Exchange
EPI participants gain a better understanding of ecological systems and processes through participatory field science	Students and scientists work together to protect species, collect high quality data, and restore habitats.	We create global citizens by fostering cooperation between international and local students, teachers, and scientists.

Participants

Since EPI's establishment in 2001, **7,500** students have participated in our field programs. Local residents (Costa Ricans, Galapagueños, Mexicans, and Montanans) compose 2/3 of total participation. EPI strives to make local participation a priority. In 2010, EPI donors contributed \$160,000 to support the participation of underserved teens in our programs.

Global Presence

EPI world headquarters is located in Missoula, Montana. We also have program offices in Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Mexico that facilitate our work with local organizations and host education and outreach events associated with EPI's mission.

Programs

Costa Rica- Sea Turtle Ecology Program

- EPI students protect the 4th 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.

Ecuador- Galapagos Island Ecology Program

- 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.

Mexico- Whale Ecology & Island Ecology Programs, Sea of Cortez

- 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.

Montana, U.S. – Yellowstone Wildlife Ecology Program

- EPI's students collect data in collaboration with conservation agencies, which is used to inform land management plans for threatened species and habitat.
- In Montana, student involvement means increased monitoring of threatened wildlife (grizzlies, snowshoe hares, lynx, and bluebirds) in the last intact predator-prey ecosystems in the continental U.S.