



ECOLOGY PROJECT  
INTERNATIONAL

# The Current

CONSERVATION FOR THE NEXT GENERATION • FALL 2019

## Learning from the Next GENERATION

SERGIO, A MOLA MOLA ECO CLUB MEMBER, LEADS A GROUP OF TEACHERS IN A BEACH PROFILING STUDY



BY HALEY HANSON  
EPI Brand Manager

boasts its own environmental superlatives: the world's 2nd largest barrier reef, the birthplace of the theory of evolution, and the largest intact ecosystem in the lower 48, respectively. All are bucket list-worthy places teeming with vibrant biodiversity and dynamic local communities. It's precisely this natural beauty and rich culture that draws EPI students and teachers to these areas each year.

**But all of EPI's field sites share a shadow, too: the current effects and future threats of climate change.**

Throughout 2019, as part of our [Connect4Climate campaign](#), EPI has focused efforts on better understanding how climate change threatens the vulnerable habitats where we operate. We've taken stock of what our students are already doing, and where we, as an organization, can best support the climate science literacy of our participants.

Over the past 19 years, we've seen our programs galvanize young people to become scientists and community leaders. We know that access to hands-on research connects students with the tools (knowledge, competencies, and dispositions) they need to move through the world as conservation leaders.

**We also wanted to know: Does the EPI Environmental Literacy Framework serve to inspire students to seek and apply climate solutions at home?**

After my 24 days in the field, learning with and listening to students from Montana to the Galapagos Islands, it is clear: The younger generations are clued into the reality that this *is* a global climate crisis. EPI alumni recognize that their actions at home have global ramifications, and they're quick to utilize the critical thinking skills that our programs provide. With youthful dexterity, they're primed to harness the power of social media to organize and find solutions. They're unencumbered by the communication barriers that have historically distanced young people from decision-makers.

EPI students can see that the work they do on course makes a difference in their communities, and this knowledge makes them powerful. I saw this recognition in the way that Galapagos alumni boldly presented their [beach profiling protocols to Knowles Fellowship teachers](#) on Tortuga Bay. They're clearly aware that they, not the adults, are the experts on the effects climate change has on their local habitats.

At EPI, we are committed to connecting young people to science mentors who provide them with the very skills necessary to recognize themselves for who they are—leaders on the stage of global change. We hope you'll join us in supporting and celebrating these transformational journeys.





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# CLIMATE CHANGE

## & HOW EPI ALUMNI TAKE ACTION



EPI IS MEASURING HOW CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECTS EACH OF OUR SITES' LOCAL ECOSYSTEMS AND USING THIS INFORMATION TO BUILD STRONGER CLIMATE LITERACY IN OUR FIELD COURSES.

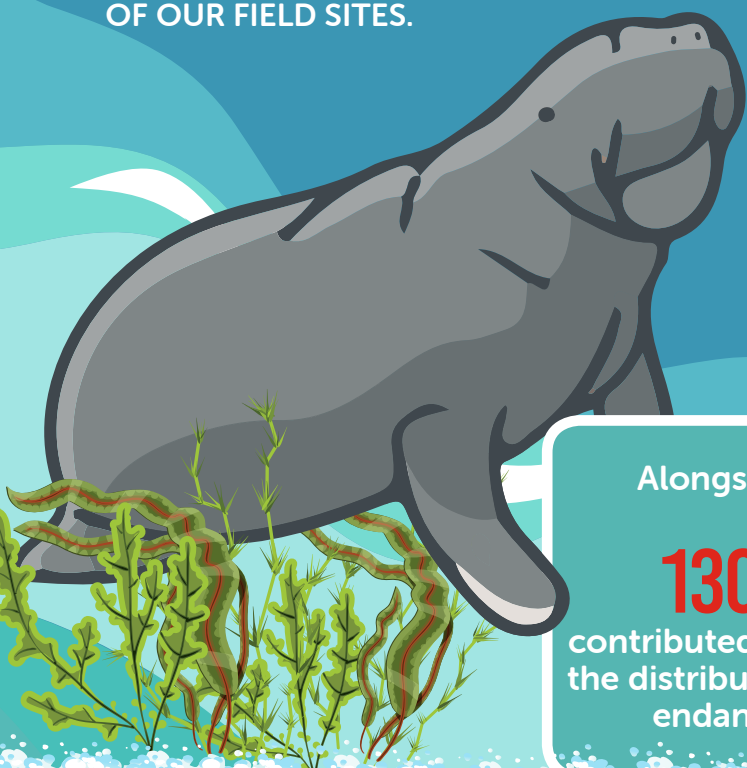
EPI'S ALUMNI NETWORKS AND ECO CLUBS GIVE YOUNG PEOPLE THE PEER GROUPS AND MENTORSHIP THEY NEED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. HERE ARE JUST A FEW EXAMPLES OF HOW OUR STUDENTS AND ALUMNI ARE DIGGING INTO RESEARCH AND SERVICE PROJECTS THAT DIRECTLY HELP CLIMATE-THREATENED ECOSYSTEMS AND INFORM CONSERVATION POLICY AT EACH OF OUR FIELD SITES.

MORE THAN **1,430** INTRODUCED SPECIES HAVE ENCROACHED ON THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS. NEARLY **800** OF THESE SPECIES ARE PLANTS AND SOME, LIKE THE BLACKBERRY, ARE INVASIVE AND CONSIDERED MAJOR THREATS TO GALAPAGOS WILDLIFE.

LAST YEAR,  
**EPI STUDENTS**  
REMOVED  
**6,000m<sup>2</sup>**  
OF INVASIVE PLANTS

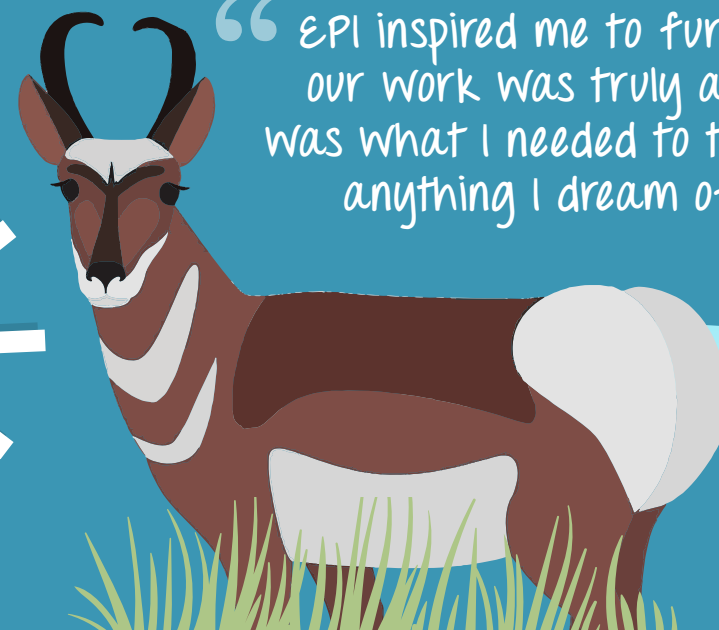


Alongside TIDE, EPI's newest field experience partner,  
**130 EPI STUDENTS**  
contributed to studies that helped identify the distribution, movement, and threats to endangered manatees in Belize.



“EPI inspired me to further my studies in conservation. I felt like our work was truly appreciated, and the growth I experienced was what I needed to take the next academic step. I feel I can do anything I dream of - especially in the conservation world.”

- Angie, 2019 Galapagos Participant



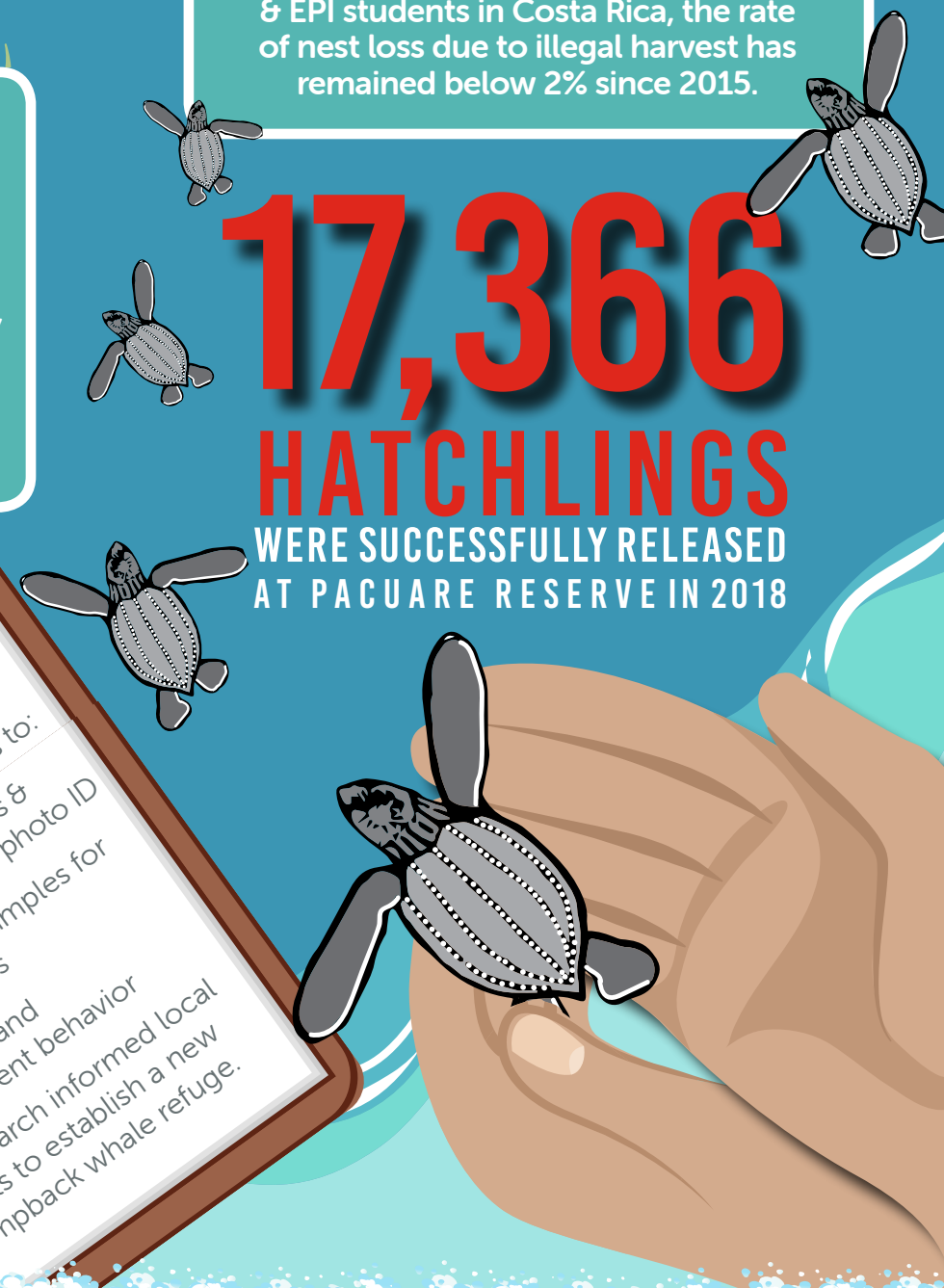
EPI students contributed

**635 HOURS**

to studies on bison grazing and ungulate migration in Yellowstone, increasing their understanding of wildlife management as well as climate change threats to this intact ecosystem.

Last year, EPI students removed  
**227 LBS OF TRASH**  
and other beach debris from Pacuare Reserve. Thanks to researchers, volunteers, & EPI students in Costa Rica, the rate of nest loss due to illegal harvest has remained below 2% since 2015.

**17,366**  
**HATCHLINGS**  
WERE SUCCESSFULLY RELEASED  
AT PACUARE RESERVE IN 2018



**CETACEAN SURVEYS IN BAJA**  
EPI students spent 140 hours conducting cetacean surveys to:

- ☒ Identify 2197 whales & dolphins through photo ID
  - ☒ Collect skin samples for DNA analysis
  - ☒ Observe and document behavior
- This research informed local efforts to establish a new humpback whale refuge.



During her 19 years as EPI's Advancement Director, Co-founder Julie Osborn propelled Ecology Project International from an [idea sparked between two friends](#) in Costa Rica to an organization whose conservation influence has spanned six countries and two continents.

Her passion for science, research, and community empowerment has reached nearly 40,000 participants throughout the U.S. and Latin America. We're excited to see where this next stage in life takes her.

As EPI staff, alumni, supporters, and board members, past and present, we'd like to extend our gratitude for your profound investment in the future of our planet.

**Muchas Gracias, Julie!**

# THE FOUNDERS FUND

## SUPPORTING A LEGACY OF CHANGE

For the past 19 years, I've helped EPI pursue a strategy to change the world by empowering young people, and through these youth, to change the actions of parents and other community members. One thing is clear: Empowered students can make a difference. I'm inspired by the impact I've seen young people make as a result of their EPI experience, and am especially enthusiastic about bringing diverse voices to the fight against climate change.

As I enter into a new chapter, I am excited to remain a part of the organization as a donor and board member. I am deeply grateful to our amazing students, teachers, staff, and supporters for helping realize the vision that my husband Scott and I imagined nearly two decades ago.

Thank you for being with me on this journey, and I look forward to connecting with you as EPI works to catalyze climate action!

Yours in sustainability,

JULIE OSBORN  
EPI Co-founder

You can support future EPI climate change initiatives by making a gift to the Founders Fund:  
[ecologyproject.org/foundersfund](https://ecologyproject.org/foundersfund)

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Ecology Project International improves and inspires science education and conservation efforts worldwide through field-based student-scientist partnerships.

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