



BELIZE FIELD PROGRAM



The EPI Belize program spans an average of nine field days, and encompasses a blend of lectures, hands-on learning, service activities, ecosystem exploration, cultural immersions, and collaborative group research projects.

The primary focus of these activities is on marine and tropical forest ecology, with a highlight in coral reef ecology. Our goal is that students can fully immerse themselves in science, Belize's diverse ecosystems, and in the country's rich culture.

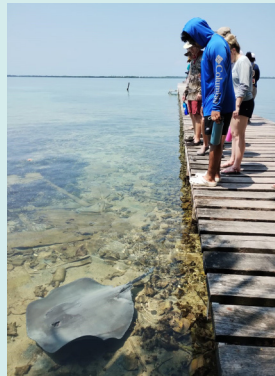
FIELD PROGRAM AT-A-GLANCE

107 VISITING PARTICIPANTS

32.5 SERVICE HOURS

184 BATS MONITORED

416.5 HOURS SPENT WITH
BAT RESEARCHERS



CONSERVATION SERVICE

Reef crest cleanups and Nurdle Patrol



Plastic pollution in the ocean has shown to be an issue that impacts every living organism, and has even been traced in humans' bloodstream. Students on course in Belize see firsthand how plastic pollution reaches the healthiest coral reef barrier in the world.

While engaged in beach cleanups, they document the specific items they find, establishing a tangible, eye-opening connection between everyday items and their ultimate destination.

As participants of the Nurdle Patrol, a citizen science project run by researchers at the University of Texas Marine Science Institute, EPI students get to better understand the plastic issue from its origins. The Tobacco Caye Marine Station (TCMS) in Tobacco Caye, Belize is our partner for these service-based activities.



FIELD RESEARCH



Wildlife Monitoring

The Toucan Ridge Ecology and Education Society (T.R.E.E.S) monitoring efforts EPI participants assist with help protect wildlife pressured by deforestation threats. Belize hosts a diverse array of bird and bat species, making them important bioindicators of ecosystem health. Students help researchers monitor these species by collecting data on their population sizes and condition. Monitoring efforts are also conducted on the white-lipped mud turtle, another species facing habitat loss.



To carry out these initiatives, students get hands-on experience using visual surveys and radio telemetry, which provide valuable insights into adaptation to habitat disturbances.

Coral Reef Surveys



Led by our partners at TCMS, EPI students engage in coral reef monitoring to assess the health and threats of the Mesoamerican coral reef barrier.

Students are able to contribute to global conservation efforts by collecting data on coral illnesses such as bleaching, black band disease, and white plague. This monitoring initiative provides valuable insights into the impacts of climate change on diverse ecosystems.

PARTICIPANT IMPACTS

- 11% IMPROVEMENT IN STUDENT ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SCORES
- 11% INCREASE IN SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING
- 18% INCREASE IN OVERALL COMPETENCIES

Though courses are relatively short in duration, they are incredibly impactful in many aspects of participants' lives. Students undergo internal transformations that better connect them to themselves, others, and the natural world.



STUDENTS LIVED, LEARNED, AND CONDUCTED RESEARCH AT T.R.E.E.S' LUSH CAMPUS IN THE MAYAN MOUNTAINS.



"This experience changed me for the better. It taught me that I can be independent and responsible for myself and still have fun, and that I have the knowledge and power to change the world and the environment with it."

"I learned that there is a whole world of new things apart from my home, my phone, and my experiences. The complexity of the world around me impacted me in a way that I'll never forget: everything is connected.."

- EPI Belize participating student from Long Island, NY

NOTABLE Cultural Immersions



Though it is one of the smallest and most sparsely populated countries in Central America, Belize is home to diverse ethnic groups and rich cultures. EPI students were given the chance to dive into local food, arts, music, and customs under the knowledgeable guidance of locals.

Activities included a background and history on the country's ethnic makeup, participating in a traditional Samba drum circle, and identifying local flora, fauna and their medicinal qualities on guided forest walks.

Belizean EPI instructors and partners were always on hand to answer students' questions and curiosities about the country, and time was taken to observe and discuss the region's current environmental and economical challenges.



PARTNERS

- Toucan Ridge Ecology and Education Society (T.R.E.E.S.).
- Tobacco Caye Marine Station (TCMS).