



# COSTA RICA FIELD PROGRAM

In 2023, **838 students and 197 teachers** contributed to wildlife conservation on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica. Through EPI's Costa Rica Sea Turtle Ecology and Feline and Primate programs, young people engaged in inquiry-based field-science curriculum and volunteer service on conservation research projects. Participants completed more than **20 hours of research and conservation service** and **over 30 hours of rigorous coursework**, leaving with tangible new skills and experience in field.



## CONSERVATION RESEARCH

### Sea Turtle Ecology

With EPI Costa Rica, students participate in nightly turtle censuses which help research assistants collect biometric data, examine leatherback sea turtles for visible damage, and relocate nests if there is a potential threat to its success. The research extends beyond the beach and into the forest with the butterfly monitoring portion of the experience. In collaboration with Veragua Rainforest, students collect and identify butterfly species at the Veragua site, introducing students to new species, habitats, and research methods.

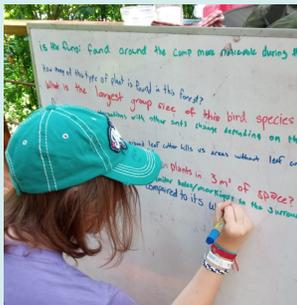


EAGER STUDENTS GATHER AS THEY RELEASE HATCHLINGS

### Felines and Primates

The Felines and Primates Program introduces students to a unique form of field science with camera trap research focused on large felines and their prey. Not only do students review photos from camera traps set by researchers, but also set up their own cameras to capture images for data collection. Students also engage in primate ethology, aiding in the collection of population and behavioral data for three out of the four monkey species present in Costa Rica.

## FIELD PARTICIPANTS AT-A-GLANCE



377	COSTA RICAN PARTICIPANTS
461	U.S. PARTICIPANTS
5,922	FIELD DAYS

## CONSERVATION SERVICE



Pacuare Reserve is home to one of the highest density leatherback nesting beaches in Costa Rica, and is one of the hotspots for the entire Caribbean region. With EPI Costa Rica, students remove garbage and debris to improve turtle nesting habitat and create an unobstructed path to the ocean for sea turtle hatchlings. By participating in the nightly sea turtle censuses, students contributed to Pacuare Reserve reaching a **0% illegal nest harvesting rate** this year. In 2023, **EPI students dedicated 8,469 hours to conservation service** in the Costa Rican ecosystem.

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

165	NESTS MONITORED
2,693	HATCHLINGS RELEASED
9%	IMPROVEMENT IN STUDENT ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SCORES

*"To put my knowledge into practice, I will change my daily habits and influence my family and people close to me to make changes as well," ~ Queini, Liceo San Antonio El Humo Student*

# EDUCATION & OUTREACH

EPI demonstrates commitment to environmental education through our collaborative work with local teachers and students. By empowering educators to teach about climate change and fostering student engagement in immersive field experiences and research projects, EPI Costa Rica participants leave our programs with the experience, knowledge, and confidence to identify local environmental problems and develop their own innovative solutions.

## ACTIVITIES AT-A-GLANCE

1,686 TOTAL ALUMNI AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS

24 WORKSHOPS AND FIELD TRIPS

9 AWARENESS AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

## YOUTH LEADING CLIMATE ACTION

### Workshops and Field Trips

In 2023, EPI Costa Rica engaged 377 local Costa Rican students from fifteen high schools in field trips to Pacuare Reserve and on-site conservation workshops at their schools to examine how climate change affects biodiversity, explore the forest ecosystem, and brainstorm powerful changes they can make in their lives to positively impact the environment. After the field trips and school workshops, nine high schools groups transitioned into the virtual portion of the educational experience. With virtual mentorship available to assist participants with their questions, students created group research projects based on an environmental problem in their communities related to climate change and its solution.

*“Through my project, I learned that people may not know how they impact flora and fauna, damaging habitats,”*  
~ Neilyn, Colegio Técnico Profesional de Guácimo student

### Biociencia Events

Two regional and one virtual Biociencia events marked the workshops' conclusions. With nearly 90 participants at the event for Caribbean schools as well as 60 Los Santos area students, the Biociencia events showcased students' cultural presentations, recognized awarded projects, and organized environmental rallies. The events offered a platform to celebrate student achievements and engage in cultural performances. These culminating events served as moments of recognition, creating a deep sense of accomplishment for all involved.

## FUNDERS

Embassy of Switzerland in Costa Rica  
Mediterranean Shipping Company  
MSC Foundation  
The Ida & William Rosenthal Foundation  
U.S Embassy in Costa Rica



LOS SANTOS STUDENTS PROUDLY PRESENT THEIR GROUP PROJECT RESULTS AT THE BIOCIENCIA EVENT

## IMMERSIVE TEACHER TRAINING

### When Teachers Become Students

The “Teacher Climate Change Training for Sustainable Education” experience inspired 54 local science teachers and non-formal educators to positively impact future generations. Focused on sustainable development education, the initiative targeted enhancing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEAM) skills within the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), providing tools for integrating field-based inquiry and conservation into curricula, and fostering outdoor education techniques for non-formal educators. The bimodal approach combined virtual modules, allowing flexible engagement with assignments and discussions, and face-to-face field trips to Pacuare Reserve, where participants immersed themselves in experiential learning activities and discussions on climate change's impact on habitats and ecosystems.



### From Field to Classroom

The Teacher Climate Change Training for Sustainable Education's three field trips provided real-world application into experiential learning. Activities during the visits to Pacuare Reserve included ecosystem exploration, presentations on climate change effects, exhumation and release of hatchlings, and workshops on environmental literacy. The collaboration with BioInteractive further enriched the project, offering access to scientific resources and a virtual workshop for educators in Mexico and the United States. For their culminating project, participants designed lessons or workshops integrating insights from the course and field trip, receiving valuable feedback and resources for improvement from EPI.

## PARTNERS

Lapa Verde Rainforest  
Pacuare Reserve  
Tirimina Rainforest  
Veragua Rainforest