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Biological Expedition to Galapagos and Ecuador **July 2017**

- **Students involved in a real biodiversity monitoring programme**
- **Opportunity to work in remote locations with expert scientists**
- **Travel in the Developing World**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

After very successful expeditions to Indonesia, Madagascar and Guyana, the Biology Department will take a group of A-level students to the Galapagos Islands and Ecuador in 2017. The Galapagos Islands need no introduction and are famed for the huge numbers of species that live nowhere else, not to mention their role in the formation of the theory of evolution proposed by our most famous Old Salopian. Ecuador is listed as one of the top countries in the world for biodiversity and we will spend the week with the Huaorani Amerindians in the Yasuni Biosphere Reserve at the remote Nenkepare forest camp which is accessed by long boat along the Shiripuno river.

Dates

The proposed dates are from 10th July – 26th July 2017. These dates may require slight adjustment depending on the availability of flights.

Organisation

The expedition will be run by an organisation called **Operation Wallacea** (www.opwall.com). Operation Wallacea have been successfully running schools' conservation expeditions since 1995, aiming to identify areas worthy of protection and to provide hard data on the efficacy of conservation management programmes. The projects are run in conjunction with more than 150 academics from international universities. Surveys undertaken by student groups have contributed to international research, resulting in the publication of hundreds of research papers and the discovery of 30 new vertebrate species. Furthermore, in some remote areas, species thought to be extinct have been re-discovered.

Itinerary

The expedition runs for 2 weeks. We will fly into Quito and make our way to the Yasuni Biosphere Reserve. After an introduction to the Ecuadorian Amazon Rainforest we will spend four full days carrying out field surveys and completing a course of lectures on Amazonian wildlife and conservation.

Field surveys will include the following activities:

- Soundscape analysis of bird and frog calls and mist netting for birds
- Forest structure and carbon surveys
- Camera trapping, small mammal trapping and herpetofauna surveys
- Fish and river wildlife surveys using gill nets, fyke traps and angling

The fifth day will be spent in a local Huarani Indian village. We will then transfer back to Quito and on the following day, we will fly to Baltra Island in the Galapagos from where we will transfer to Floreana Island by boat. Over the following five days, we will complete an ecology course on the Galapagos Islands which will include terrestrial and snorkel practical work to go alongside the lectures on the topics listed below. We will also complete two open water dives.

- An introduction to the Galapagos
- Vegetation zonation and how species colonised
- An Introduction to the marine environment of the Galapagos
- Common fish and invertebrates of the Galapagos
- Endemic animals of the Galapagos (including penguins, gulls, iguanas, sea lions and fur seals)
- Marine megafauna (sharks and iguanas)
- Adaptive radiation (Darwin's finches, tortoises and natural selection)
- Introduced species and extinctions
- Control of invasive plants and animals
- Conservation initiatives on Floreana

We then fly back to Guayaquil on the mainland to fly back to the UK.

Costs

The total cost of the trip will be in the region of £3700. At this stage it is difficult to estimate costs and the total may increase. A lot depends on international flights. Costs include:

- Expedition fees from Operation Wallacea
- International flights
- Internal flights and transfers
- Park Entry fees and visas

Students will need to be BSAC or PADI trained to Open Water level before they go which will entail further cost. It will be possible to complete BSAC training in school in the year prior to the expedition.

We will obviously do everything we can to keep the cost of the trip to a minimum without compromising the safety of the students going on the expedition. By launching the trip early, expedition members will have a considerable period of time in which to raise funds. Individual enterprise and commitment in raising sponsorship is the way forwards as those who work hardest benefit the most. In previous years, some members have managed to raise the full amount. There are significant cancellation charges so those who sign up must be committed to raising money or have parental sponsorship.

Benefits

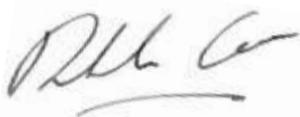
Participants will be challenged and inspired and will build a strong knowledge of ecological techniques and biology that will set them apart in Pre-U biology and at university. Mention of the expedition and commitment to fundraising on a UCAS personal statement will provide a powerful demonstration of subject interest and initiative sought by university admissions officers. The expedition will contribute directly to conservation in an area that has been identified as a global priority for conservation and visiting the Galapagos should be inspirational. Furthermore, it will provide an opportunity to gain an insight into life in the Developing World which will be of huge value to any young person.

Commitment

If you would like your son or daughter to participate in this expedition, please complete the enclosed form and return it by post or by hand by **Wednesday 9th December 2015**. The team will be finalised as soon as possible after this so that fund-raising can begin. It will not be possible to purchase flights until September 2016 and only then will it be possible to provide you with more exact information about the final cost of the expedition.

For all those interested, a representative from Operation Wallacea will visit on Monday 16th November to give a presentation on exactly what the expedition will entail. This will take place in the SLT at 7:30pm. Parents are welcome to attend.

Yours sincerely



Dr. Richard Case.

Confirmation of Interest Form: Biology Expedition to Galapagos and Ecuador 2017

Name of student: _____ Form/Year: _____

House: _____

I wish for my son/daughter to be included in the Biology Expedition to Galapagos and Ecuador and I will underwrite any failure of my son/daughter to raise the funds required. I understand that the expedition will require a high level of physical fitness and good health. (Given the nature of the expedition, they must also be able to demonstrate that they can behave maturely and demonstrate a high-level of self-discipline).

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Future expedition correspondence will be by email. Please print your email address/addresses carefully below.

Email: _____

Finally, please understand that there are 20 places available and I cannot at this stage guarantee places. Priority will be given in the following order and a selection process may have to be used:

- Current L6th form aiming to study biology at university
- Current L6th form aiming to study Pre-U biology
- Current 5th form aiming to study A Level biology
- Other L6th formers
- Other 5th form
- 4th Form (Those in the 4th form will have another opportunity in 2019).

L6th Entrants in September 2016 are eligible too.