CONSERVATION CORRIDOR

Description: Gain first-hand experience with conservation in action as Ceiba works to establish a biological corridor and restore coastal dry forests.

Project summary: The province of Manabí has some of the most intact fragments of Ecuador's coastal dry forest. With approximately 2% of this habitat remaining, it is important to maintain and expand these patches in order to preserve biodiversity and facilitate species movement between these patches. Ceiba is working on a large scale reforestation project to connect 27,000 hectares of forest fragments by creating a biological corridor. By working with private landowners, we intend to reforest over 200 hectares in prioritized areas by working with local landowners to plant native species alongside cultivates such as coffee and cacao, thus creating an "analog forest" which suites the economic needs of the landowner as well as maximizing biodiversity. The goal is to collaborate with landowners to promote sustainable use of natural resources to increase the productivity of their land while improving soil fertility, water quality, and carbon sequestration. Improving habitat in this manner will also provide better habitat for the native flora and fauna. This is a multi-faceted project that can suite interns from many different backgrounds including those interested in agroforestry, wildlife monitoring, reforestation and restoration, and community development. This project can be combined with the Agroforestry Internship, Wildlife Monitoring Internship, or the Reforestation and Forest Restoration Internship.

What you'll do:

- Assist landowners in site preparation, provisioning trees, technical assistance, planting and maintenance
- Collect baseline data including forest canopy cover, understory, soil infiltration rate, and other abiotic factors
- Collect baseline data on planted trees such as basal diameter and height
- Collect baseline data on presence/absence of terrestrial mammals
- Establish additional protocols for monitoring and evaluation of biodiversity
- Work with local landowners and local experts to research agroforestry methods
- Analyze data to recommend practices that maximize both economic and biodiversity benefits
- Conduct community meetings to discuss results and identify individuals interested in participating
- Conduct surveys of landowners and community members to evaluate the social and economic outcomes of the project

What you'll learn:

- Reforestation planning and implementation techniques
- Standard field methods for research in forestry and vegetation community structure
- Establishment and maintenance of long-term research plots
- Identification of common tropical tree species
- Management and analysis of multi-year datasets

- GPS navigation and mapping
- Challenges to education in a rural area of a developing country, compared to the U.S. system
- Cultural awareness and sensitivity in communicating and collaborating with diverse audiences

What we seek: Spanish language ability; willingness to learn various protocols and methods for multiple monitoring projects; cultural sensitivity and enthusiasm for community development; self-driven; willing to conduct field work in rugged conditions.