

## NATURE CENTER & NATIVE PLANTS GARDEN

**Description:** Create educational exhibits and do environmental interpretation in the Lalo Loor reserve's EcoCenter.



**Project summary:** The Lalo Loor Dry Forest reserve offers a nature center (the "EcoCenter") for visiting tourists and school groups with a variety of displays and exhibits about the ecology of the dry forest, the human history of the region (going back over 3000 years), the importance and complexity of marine ecosystems, and more. The center is surrounded by a native plant garden that shows off the diversity of plants found in Ecuador's coastal ecosystems, as well as plants with medicinal, cultural or other uses (fibers, construction, etc.). The EcoCenter and the botanical garden are the starting point for any visit to the reserve, and it is of utmost importance that they be well-maintained,

informative, up-to-date, and above all, captivating. Interns with an interest in plants and a love of gardening are needed to make improvements and updates, and maintain the garden, and, secondarily, work on educational exhibits and visitor services in the EcoCenter. This internship may be combined with other internships at the Lalo Loor reserve -- just ask!

### What you'll do:

- Collect and plant native species in the garden, and label them with common and scientific name
- Maintain the native plants garden and EcoCenter
- Develop interpretative signage about coastal flora and ecosystems (e.g., the Chocó-Tumbes gradient)
- Update displays in the nature center
- Visit schools to talk about the reserve to generate interest in the environmental education program
- Lead groups of students or visitors (esp. English speaking!) at the reserve, especially on weekends when most visitors come

### What you'll learn:

- Techniques for communication of environmental concepts to lay audiences
- Identification of common native and medicinal plants of Ecuador
- Management of a nature center geared to education of the local public
- Principles of creating effective exhibits

**What we seek:** Enjoys plants and gardening; interest in medicinal plants; Spanish language ability; creative, artistic ability; patient, outgoing personality; enjoys working with others; knowledge or experience in tropical ecology/environmental education.