

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/Conference Title: Operation Wallacea, Peruvian Amazon 2010

Travel Dates: 19th June – 20th July

Location: Peruvian Amazon Basin, North East of Peru (Loreto)

Group Member(s): Sara Thornton.....

Aims: To participate in a conservation research programme in the Amazon for a month with Operation Wallacea.....

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

This past summer I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to travel to the Peruvian Amazon with Operation Wallacea, to work on a pre-existing conservation research programme started by fund Amazonia and other conservation groups. I stayed on a boat for a month, and had the fantastic opportunity to meet many people with the same interests and studies as me.

We were based deep in the heart of the Amazon basin of Loreto – one of the sources of the Amazon proper, and we were kept busy with the various different surveys and transects which were done on a daily basis by our group. These included caiman surveys, macaw surveys, dolphin surveys, and large mammal transects into the rainforest. Amphibian surveys were also done in both day and night, and we had the opportunity to help out thesis students with their projects as well, including one on the mist netting of under story birds and another on primates.

Though the living conditions were difficult, with temperatures and humidity along with the inescapable mosquitoes, the atmosphere on the boat was fantastic and inspiring. I thrived in this environment, and thoroughly enjoyed all of the activities. At first I was appalled at the state of the boat we were living on (there really was no air conditioning on our boat, and it was generally not very comfortable), and the food was not as varied as had been advertised on the Operation Wallacea website. Saying this, I took it as a bigger challenge to see what living conditions I could stand, and I was happily surprised at how well I did – I could have stayed another couple of months regardless of the state of the boat. It was all made up for with the beautiful wildlife we were able to see, and the people who made the experience so worth everything.

This trip was a great learning experience. We learnt the basics of transects and surveys, and we had a couple of lectures of the history of the Amazon and its ecology and conservation which gave us some valuable background to the projects we were going to work on (I would have liked more lectures – however they were rather unbearable to sit through in the heat and humidity).

I truly did not want to leave the boat when my month was up. It has inspired me in my pursuit of a career in conservation and ecology, and has provided me with invaluable work experience. It has fuelled me to look into the more specific field of tropical ecology, and perhaps even further focusing on amphibian and reptile ecology. I am now even more driven than I was before, and I will be ever grateful for the James Rennie Bequest in helping me to participate in this programme.