ECUADOR
BRIAN BRITO

Brian’s Major: Environmental Sciences

Program: Ceiba Tropical Ecosystems: Andes, Amazon, Pacific Coast, Summer

Academic Life: Ceiba Foundation embraces the idea of using the natural world as your classroom. Often times on mountain hikes or forest tours our instructor would hush the group and quietly pull us to a clearing to observe a monkey in its natural habitat or uproot a plant or rip off a leaf and begin to lecture about adaptations unique to this plant for survival. There were no textbook examples because any ecological information you needed was right there for you to observe. Lecture was usually on the go, but when it wasn’t they lasted about 2 - 2.5 hrs. It is a semester condensed into a 4-week course.

Most Memorable Moments: I found insect diversity sampling to be my most enjoyable experience. I was assigned to the pasture area, and it was three hours of chasing butterflies for capture or stalking insects through the tall grass with a hack and slash sweep net. This program did a great job of incorporating fun and frolicking into a scientific context.

Cultural Difference: In Ecuador everyone is really laid back, which is in direct opposition to the United States in which people must adhere to strict schedules. They call it “Ecuadorian Maybe Time” because they might be there on time, but then again they might not. It’s nice because there’s no set time to arrive anywhere really, but it can get frustrating since you might be waiting for someone to arrive to a meeting on time.

“Understanding the world in a global context will allow me to better assess my choices and make decisions that will impact the world for the better.”