



Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

Report Title: Traveling to Ecuador: Witnessing Evolution in Action & Learning Spanish
Name: Emily Rigotti

Other Team Members:

Program: Oakland Program

Trip Dates: 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001

Location Visited: Ecuador

Post Fellowship Reporting Template: PFR Template 01

Project Summary: According to my Spanish Teacher, Lucia, "The High Sierra's in Ecuador is one of the best places in the world to learn Spanish." According to Conchita, my host mother, "Galapagos is one of the most magical places on earth." Overall, these two extraordinary Ecuadorianas summed up the main reasons why I spent five weeks in Ecuador this summer. After the first week of taking one-on-one lessons with Lucia for five hours a day in the afternoon and speaking only Spanish with Conchita, I was already dreaming in Spanish (not to mention I could barely write emails in English to my family back home). My students' multicultural backgrounds inspired me to apply for a trip to South America and my background as a science "geek" steered me towards traveling to Ecuador to visit arguably the most famous archipelago in the world: the Galapagos. My first two weeks I lived in Cuenca. I had Spanish lessons every day at the Simon Bolivar Escuela de Espanol. Despues, I traveled to el Oriente (the Amazon), the Southern Coast, and finally the Galapagos. It has been a dream of mine to visit the Galapagos, as it is a Mecca for Biologists from all over the world. During my five-day tour on the Queen of the Galapagos (a catamaran that slept 16 people), I swam with hammerhead sharks, visited the Darwin research center, met lonesome Jorge (the last tortuga from Isla Santa Maria), and explored five different islands. I would have to agree with Conchita, Galapagos is one of the most magical places on earth.

Career Impact: ?Learned three different verb tenses in Spanish and could hold a conversation with my guides from the Amazon and Galapagos.

?Reflected on best teaching practices in my own classroom and had time to finally brainstorm ways to get students excited about Science, especially Evolution.

?Witnessed evolution first-hand by observing the vast amount of species differentiation and adaptation in Galapagos.

?Provided a deeper understanding of how many different ecosystems exist on the Equator.

Classroom/Community Impact:?Was able to have a conversation with my students and their parents during Back to School Night.

?Connect with students on a more personal level because I can practice speaking their language with them (every Tuesday and Thursday a group of students from my Advisory and I sit down to have a conversation in Spanish).

?In the classroom, I have more patience and understanding when it comes to students and their ability to learn something new.

?Provided students with multiple pictures from my trip to inspire them to travel and experience life outside their own comfort level.

?Created a new unit on Evolution & really looked at how to

Open Response: ?In the spring, I will be teaching a new unit called "Evidence of Evolution," where students will use my pictures from the Galapagos to create a digital story around how a species has evolved to adapt to a specific niche in the environment.

Quote: "Where else can you walk up to a Blue-Footed Boobie nesting on her egg or be two feet away from an Albatros courting for life but the Galapagos!"

Photos:



My Host Family in Cuenca



My Amazon Treking Gear



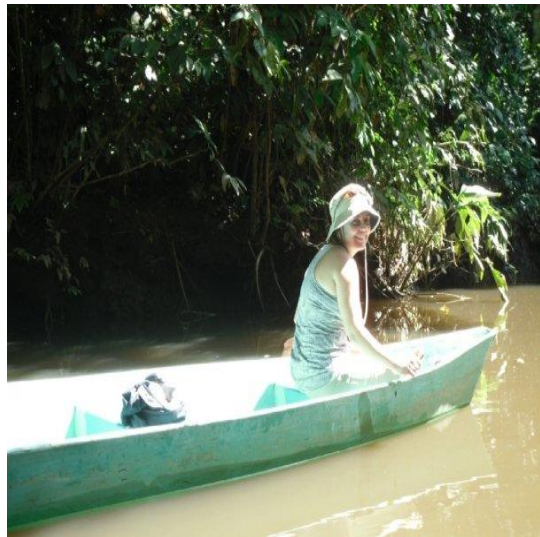
Fishing for Piranas



Catching Caymen in the Amazon



Learning how to use a blow gun



Me and my Amazonian Canoe



At the top of a bird-watching tower



At the top of the tallest tree in el Oriente