



KING EDWARD'S SCHOOL, BIRMINGHAM

ECUADOR EXPEDITION 2014

Dear parent,

We are writing to invite you on the KES biodiversity expedition to Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands 2014, to take place at the end of the summer term. This is an amazing opportunity to spend time learning about and living among the wildlife of South America, and to work on research projects with field scientists to help conserve that wildlife. As in previous years, we will be working with *Operation Wallacea* (OpWall) – an organisation of scientists and researchers with considerable expertise in biodiversity research and conservation – and living and working in the rainforest for the duration of the two week expedition.

Structure of the Expedition

There are 3 phases to the expedition. We **depart on Mon 7th July**. Week one is spent a research centre in the Santa Lucia reserve in the 'cloud forest' of the Ecuadorean Andes. Here, students will learn about tropical ecology, survey techniques and jungle 'survival skills' before heading into more remote rainforest in the second week. We will set mist-nets to assess bird and bat species, walk transects through the forest in search of mammals and herpetofauna, and set lights traps for insects. In week two, we move to the wetter lowland forests in the Chocoan region of west Ecuador. Sleeping in hammocks under canvas, here we will put the survey techniques learned in the first week into practice, and have a greater chance of observing primate behaviour close-up.

Some students may wish to return home on **Tues 22nd July**, after week 2. But there is the option for others (at extra cost – see below) to visit San Cristobal island in the Galapagos in week 3. Here, an entirely different ecosystem awaits: based at the *Galapagos Academic Institute for the Arts and Sciences* (GAIAS) on the island, we will examine birds, marine life, herpetofauna and the famous tortoises on this volcanic archipelago. *Please note we will require a minimum of 6 students interested in this extra week to make it a viable addition to the expedition.* Those who choose to attend week 3 will **return on Tues 29th July**.

What will I gain from the expedition?

Aside from the obvious exposure to a great diversity of wildlife, hands-on instruction in field research skills and conservation, and the chance to work alongside experienced scientists which will interest those with interests or ambitions in biology and related degrees, the expedition brings even more immediate benefits to students:

- The opportunity to collect data and ideas towards the '**Extended Essay**' component of the International Baccalaureate. First-hand scientific data and observations on such a topic make for a very distinctive 4,000 word essay!
- Conservation is manifestly an activity which, again in the IB, can count towards the 'service' element at the diploma's core.

S E Lampard, Leader KES Expeditions

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- Students who complete the expedition will (through OpWall) be awarded the ASDAN 'Universities' Award', which gives them 70 points towards their future university applications through UCAS.

Instruction, Support and Guidance

Three members of staff will lead the expedition: all three will depart with the group; Mr Porter will return after week two with any students not continuing to the Galapagos; Messrs Lampard and Corns will accompany the remainder to the Galapagos. In the field, students are led by research scientists from OpWall, and have the constant medical presence of a doctor trained in tropical and expedition medicine.

Cost

For the two weeks spent in Ecuador, we anticipate a cost of **£2,600**, to include transport, food, accommodation, insurance, training, the services of experienced and qualified leaders, OpWall support staff, medical staff and scientists. For the Galapagos week (week 3), we anticipate an additional cost of **£1,500**. We are aware of the hefty cost of the expedition, and hope that you will find that some of the benefits listed above make it worthwhile. Furthermore, we are organising a **fundraising meeting** to be run by a member of the OpWall staff on **Tuesday 5th February** starting at 6.30pm in Geography room A. We encourage pupils and parents to be present at this meeting, which will determine how (as a team) we can raise money to go some way towards paying for this once-in-a-lifetime experience.

How will we prepare for the expedition?

Fund-raising is our first task. Our second is 'expedition training', for which we will run a training weekend later in the year to equip participants with some basic forest survival skills, strengthen the team identity and introduce some of the biodiversity research techniques we will be using in Ecuador. This will take place at Andrews Coppice, the school camp site.

By way of finding out more about OpWall, Ecuador, the Galapagos and the activities in which we will be engaged, we have gathered several resources together on the school's 'KES Wildlife' site at tinyurl.com/keswildlife (or Google 'KES Wildlife'). Look under the 'Expeditions' heading. These include:

- OpWall's presentation (.ppt) on the expedition, full of photographs, maps and information. A great place to start.
- A detailed account of the trip itinerary and aims, which goes into specifics on the research methods used and the likely species to be encountered.
- A copy of Opwall's *Fundraising Overview*, which can be read in advance of the meeting in February.
- A link to OpWall's own site, which has further information about the expedition.

If you are interested in the expedition, or have any questions, please have your son come and talk to me, or feel free to contact me by email.

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