What’s Happening in...
Geography

Exploring the Amazon: an interdisciplinary field trip

Have you ever dreamt of seeing hummingbirds and caiman, watching sustainable logging, visiting tropical Brazilian homes – and not only from the comfort of your sofa? Well, this new fieldtrip, run for the first time this year by Lancaster’s Geography Department may well interest you. Dr Luke Parry, a Lecturer in Human Geography who has spent the last ten years studying human-wildlife interactions in the region, explains how “We wanted to explore a microcosm of Amazonia.” And to do that, with a colleague, he travelled with fourteen students first to the city of Belém, at the mouth of the Amazon River, before travelling into the Jari region to study urbanisation, sustainable development and biodiversity. They visited remote rural communities as well as urban neighbourhoods in a rapidly expanding rainforest city, talking to families about their work, aspirations and access to public services.

This fieldtrip will now be run every year for students studying either Geography or Ecology and Conservation at the Lancaster Environment Centre. It is a great example of how Geography students at Lancaster have the opportunity to study current environmental issues from the perspectives of the social and natural sciences and to mix with students from other disciplines. As Dr. Parry, explains, this interdisciplinary approach is probably one of the best ways of understanding and acting on contemporary problems facing Amazonia’s human and nonhuman populations; “It helped students to understand the Amazon as a system - the interactions between people and the environment, rather than looking at scattered unconnected case studies. We wanted students to see linkages and grasp the fallacy of silver bullet solutions. You can't easily solve the Amazon’s social and environmental challenges.”

Here are two reactions of students asked about the trip’s highlights;

“Seeing animals such as hummingbirds and caiman and hearing the roar of howler monkeys was unlike anything I had ever experienced before.”

“It provided me with a deeper insight into how humans are reliant on the rainforests for their livelihood. Before the trip I was aware of this reliance but I still felt they should be conserved in a pristine state regardless of the affect that would have on human populations.”

For more details about the reports above or about Geography courses on offer at Lancaster University please contact the Geography Admissions Staff.

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