Volunteer & Student Project-Based Learning Program

Through our Volunteer and Student Project-based Learning Program, the WCA offers learning experiences that empower students and life-learners from around the world to become more conscious about the impact of their lifestyle on our planet. Through their experience with us, we aim to teach our program participants about the research we conduct and its relevance to human and environmental health while inspiring them to think critically about sustainable tourism and development.

We work directly with local community members and organizations at the Ostional National Wildlife Refuge in Costa Rica, with profits returning to our programs and in donations to the Ostional Refuge to support conservation.

Participants will learn by volunteering in day-to-day tasks and working on a project relevant to one or more of the WCA's programs while aligning with course curriculum objectives (when applicable). Our participants will work either individually or as a team to create a lasting project that will inspire change and generate awareness on conservation issues based on their learnings during this experience.

Projects are established as a collaboration between the WCA and the participant -- led by the needs of the WCA and our partnering communities and organizations, but inspired by the participant's particular skills, passion, and future career interests.

We require a 3-month minimum commitment from volunteers to ensure the sustainability of our program. In addition to an orientation, weekly check-ins, and exit meeting, at which time volunteers are expected to submit deliverables agreed upon in the orientation meeting. Participants receive training and guidance at the beginning of each project and intermittently, as needed. Activities are dependent on each participant's interests, skill set, time constraints, and whether work is remote or in-person.

Volunteer & Student Project-Based Learning Program

CURRENT PROGRAMS:
- Water Quality Monitoring
- Terrestrial Biodiversity Monitoring
- Marine Biodiversity Monitoring
- Virtual Learning Experiences

MAJOR TOPICS AREAS:
- Wildlife (e.g., diet, animal behavior, interspecies relationships)
- Threats to wildlife (e.g., habitat fragmentation, water pollution, light pollution, noise pollution)
- Sustainable use of natural resources (e.g., wastewater treatment, renewable energy)
- Biodiversity and ecosystem services (e.g., mangroves, coral reefs, forests)

DAY TO DAY VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES & PROJECTS I Some examples of include:
- Translation tasks (English, Spanish, French for newsletters, blog, website, educational materials)
- Website tasks:
  - Make all of our website images accessible and closed-captioned
  - Improve our website SEO
- Education tasks:
  - Develop an educational workshop that could be implemented in communities or schools
  - Develop a worksheet to evaluate students learning for one of our activities
  - Research existing educational materials related to WCA programs and topic areas for us to use and share
- Marketing & design tasks:
  - Write a brief newsletter or blog article to summarize the progress and results of our work
  - Create and schedule advocacy and educational posts on our social media and blogs
  - Plan our social media content calendar using Later
  - Design infographics or draw illustrations for use in our educational materials
  - Collect video and photo content of WCA programs, events, or topic areas
  - Edit video content to create short educational films
- Sea Turtle Conservation
  - Conduct morning beach surveys to monitor and report sea turtle nests
  - Analyze video footage for sea turtle behavior
- Water Quality Monitoring Program
  - Collect water samples for analysis
  - Conduct standardized testing protocols on water samples
- Biodiversity Monitoring Program
  - Conduct a terrestrial or marine biodiversity survey and report species observations on iNaturalist
  - Analyze video footage for biodiversity
- Fundraising & Development tasks:
  - Research grants and funding opportunities for which the WCA could apply
  - Write grants and research proposals
  - Plan and host a fundraising event