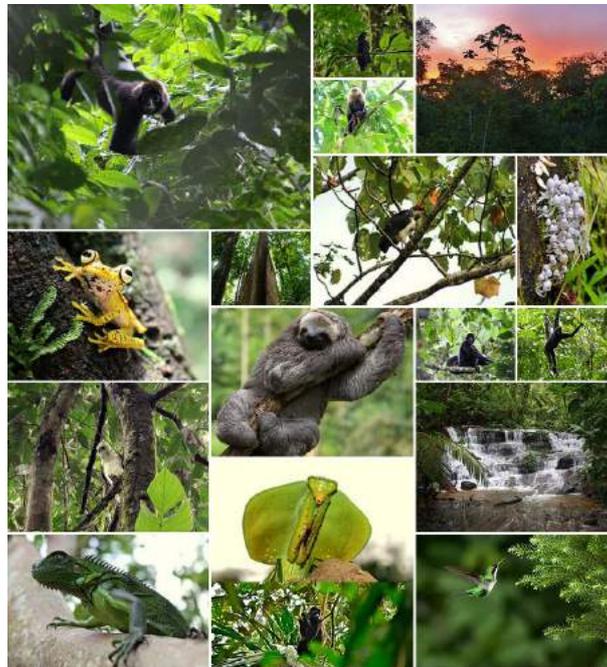




Tesoro Escondido Spider Monkey Reserve

Volunteer guide



The Tesoro Escondido Spider Monkey Reserve

The recently established Tesoro Escondido Reserve (www.tesororeserve.org) in the Chocóan ecoregion of Ecuador, provides a vital stronghold for one of the most threatened primates in the world: the Critically Endangered Ecuadorian Brown-headed Spider Monkey (*Ateles fusciceps fusciceps*).

The Reserve is the result of twelve years of research and active conservation work led by the University of Sussex (<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/lifesci/pecklab/>) to identify

and protect remaining wild populations of the spider monkey and establish sustainable livelihoods compatible with forest conservation.

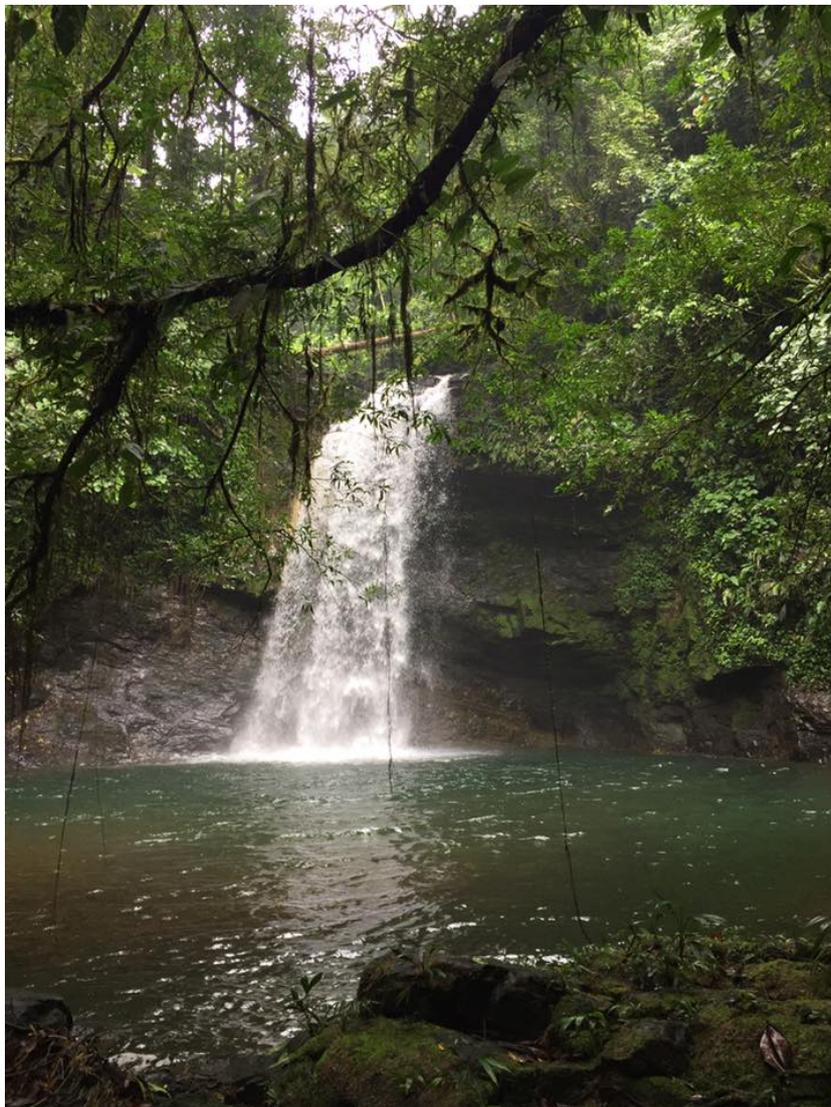
The Reserve now protects some 150 brown-headed spider monkeys from an estimated global population of 250 individuals in one of the most neglected rainforest ecosystems globally. In its 2000 hectares, the Tesoro Escondido Reserve is also home to 44 percent of mammal species recorded in Ecuador (including jaguars), threatened birds such as the Endangered Great Green Macaw and the Baudo Guan, as well as multiple Endangered amphibians.

We host an innovative ‘Community Research Hub’ that provides opportunities for scientists and volunteers to work with local communities to investigate, monitor and record species residing in the Reserve. The hub is supported by a ‘Parabiologist Programme’ where local people are trained and hired to work as field research assistants and active community-based conservationists . This scientific training program provides an alternative source of income for young people in Tesoro, developing a sustainable livelihood opportunity that is associated with conservation efforts (www.rainforesttrust.org/news/education-and-empowerment-in-ecuador).

Experience over the years with the Tesoro community has shown that involving local families in land protection and the research process positively affects attitudes toward the forests and visiting scientists, creating a sense of empowerment that ultimately leads to a common decision to conserve the environment. Close engagement with the community allows identification of local solutions to drivers of deforestation acting as a model for regional development and conservation.



The Ecuadorian brown-headed spider monkey *Ateles fusciceps fusciceps*, by Yadira Giler



One of the two beautiful waterfalls at the Reserve

Volunteer programme

The Tesoro Escondido Reserve welcomes national and international volunteers from all backgrounds. Our programme offers the unique opportunity for volunteers to gain experience in out of the most biodiverse ecosystems in the world.

Volunteers collaborate in the development and implementation of conservation strategies on the ground working directly with the local community and researchers. Activities may include assisting with data collection for on-going research, helping with the establishment and maintenance of the research station, training parabiologists, developing environmentally friendly solutions for energy and waste management, collaboration with local schools, awareness activities and much more.

Current research and activities

Restoration and reforestation project

Funded by the NGO Synchronicity Earth, the Reserve is setting up a native tree nursery of 17500 plants. We plan to work on soil restoration and reforestation of 15 hectares of strategic connectivity areas. This project has a strong community-based component involving farmer families, local schools and high-schools in the process. Volunteers are involved in the seed collection and identification, setting up the tree nursery, setting up restoration plots, planting seedlings and monitoring the project.

Research - University of Sussex

At the moment we are working with the following projects, volunteers can help as research assistants. The projects this year are: 1. Assessing population status of *A. f. fusciceps* around the Reserve using innovative playback methods; 2. Habitat and amphibian diversity; 3. Human Wildlife Conflict – identifying solutions using participatory approaches; 4. Restoration reforestation – identifying priority areas, monitoring progress using drone imagery (to start in February 2018); 5. Microhabitat and bird diversity.



Volunteers collecting seeds in the forest



Volunteers and parabiologists identifying seeds

Training parabiologists

The Parabiologist Programme requires continuous capacity building of local research assistants. Volunteers can help by teaching them different subjects such as computer skills, general biology, English, GIS, mapping skills, etc. This depends on the volunteers' expertise. The Reserve is working on including more local women in the programme, so there is also the opportunity for volunteers to contribute in women's workshops focusing on gender equality and the role of women in conservation.



Yulexy, the first woman in the parabiologist team with Emma, a volunteer who contributed in the training of parabiologists

Community work

Our work in the community focuses on supporting projects in the local schools and health centres. Volunteers can be involved in teaching English at the schools and to groups of interested farmers, setting up eco-tourism projects and assisting in setting up eco-friendly solutions for waste management.



A group of medicine students (Central University of Ecuador) delivered a four month first aid course to the Tesoro Escondido Community

Marketing

Volunteers can be involved in all the marketing and advertisement of the Reserve such as updating Website, Instagram and Facebook, designing T-shirts and other products for sale, designing brochures and flyers, etc.

Accommodation

Farmers living around the Reserve offer accommodation for visitors. Rooms are shared with other students and volunteers and the house is shared with the Reserve's staff. Accommodation at the Reserve and in towns around the Reserve. Rotating between different houses provides visitors with the experience of getting to know the life in rural Ecuador as they can participate in daily activities such as cacao harvesting. The Reserve also has a camp in the middle of the forest which offers a unique experience.



The Paredes' house, where volunteers stay most of the time



Vounteers sleep on bunk beds, we provide bedding and mosquito nets



Marlene's house, an alternative house where visitors can stay



Working space



One of the towns where volunteers may spend time working with the local community

How to apply

To become a volunteer at the Tesoro Escondido Reserve, write us an email telling us about yourself, why you want to be a volunteer with us, the work you are interested in and how long you want to stay. Attach your *Curriculum Vitae* (maximum 2 pages long). You will be then interviewed by the Project Coordinator, in person or via Skype. We can then together design your stay at the Reserve based on the work you want to carry out.

Costs

We will ask you to pay for half of your stay before you start and half of your stay when you finish your volunteering. For longer stays (> 6 months) payments can be arranged on a monthly basis. Prices depend on the length of your stay:

- Short-term volunteers (< two weeks): \$25 per day
- Long-term volunteers (> two weeks): \$20 per day

This fee includes

- Accommodation at any of the family houses who collaborate with the Reserve, Research Station and local towns around the Reserve
- Three meals per day
- Local transportation between the local towns and the Reserve

This fee does not include

- Flights
- Visas (You can stay in Ecuador on a volunteer visa for 90 days. We help you with the process of obtaining a volunteer visa for stays longer than 90 days.)
- Pickup from airport (we can get you a discount!)
- Stay in Quito. We recommend volunteers to stay in Quito for a couple of days before travelling to the Reserve. Volunteers can stay in a house with a local family or we can recommend hostels in the city.
- Transportation to the Reserve (Volunteers cover the public bus and meals during the trip)
- Travel and medical insurance (Volunteers are required to be insured during their stay at the Reserve)

Contact

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Tel: +593 2 5147167 and +593 (0) 994906472 (Whatsapp)

Things to consider

It is important that you are aware that the Tesoro Escondido Reserve is in a very isolated place (around 1 day journey from Quito). There is no mobile signal or internet, however we do have a landline for emergencies. The closest town with internet is Golondrinas (2-3 hour drive from the Reserve).

The weather is tropical with two main seasons: the rainy season from November until May and the dry season from June until October. You should expect high humidity most of the times and a temperature ranging from 24 to 32 degrees Celsius.

Accommodation is basic both in the family houses and in the research station. Rooms are shared with other volunteers, students and parabiologists and you may sometimes have to sleep in tents. There is limited access to electricity in the evenings to charge equipment. Most of the volunteer work will require for you to be in a good physical condition. However there are less demanding activities you can help out with, such as coordinating marketing campaigns, updating website and facebook pages, delivering environmental education workshops, etc.

Spanish is the main language spoken in Ecuador, English is rarely spoken in rural areas so it is advisable that volunteers know basic Spanish when arriving to the Reserve. Farmers are making an effort to learn English as well.

Please be aware that mosquitoes are common and while working in the field you will find as well other insects, spiders, snakes, etc. It is recommended that you visit your doctor before traveling for advice on malaria prophylaxis and further inoculations you may need. Even though all the staff at the Reserve has been trained in first aid, it is important to point out that the nearest health facility is at least 2 hours walking and 4 hours by car

to the nearest hospital.

You will always count with the support and guidance from our staff, however you may be asked to work on your own on certain activities.

Recommended background reading

- **Tesoro Escondido Reserve website:**

www.tesororeserve.org

- **Tesoro Escondido Reserve Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/ReservaTesoroEscondido/>

- **Peck Lab - University of Sussex:**

www.sussex.ac.uk/lifesci/pecklab/

- **Synchronicity Earth:** www.synchronicityearth.org/projects/regeneration/sussex-university-the-cambugan-foundation

- **Rainforest Trust articles on the Reserve:**

www.rainforesttrust.org/project/new-refuge-brown-headed-spider-monkey/
and

www.rainforesttrust.org/news/education-and-empowerment-in-ecuador/

- **Article of Huella Volunteers on the Reserve:** <http://huellalatinameric>.

wixsite.com/huella/single-post/2016/03/14/Huella-y-Fundaci%C3%B3n-Cambug%C3%A1n

- **Biodiversity hotspots:** www.conservation.org/How/Pages/Hotspots.aspx

- **The Neotropical Companion by John Kricher:** The ideal guide for the tropical naturalist, John Kricher gives a broad overview of the important themes without compromising accuracy. He clearly explains ecological processes and descriptions of wildlife with a strong emphasis on conservation.

- **Tropical Nature: Life and Death in the Rain Forests of Central and South America** by Adrian Forsyth & Ken Miyata: The conversational style of the book makes this one of the key introductory texts for anyone wanting to start to understand the incredible interrelationships that make up the tropical rainforests. Ideal for the field, it contains facts about climate, flora, and fauna, with many examples drawn from Ecuador.
- **The Conservation Handbook: Research, management and policy** by William Sutherland: More of a textbook style but it is particularly useful as a field guide to techniques and methods that underpin conservation work. It provides the reader new to conservation with knowledge of planning, field skills, scientific methodology, statistical analysis, advocacy, policy and education.