

MY PRIMATE RESEARCH INTERNSHIP IN THE AMAZON RAINFOREST



UNIVERSITY OF
SURREY

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OVERVIEW OF ARCAMAZON

- Non-governmental organisation based at the Las Piedras Amazon Center in the Madre de Dios region of Peru.
- Aims: To conduct research on local species while helping preserve the land and create a corridor for flora and fauna in a region where hunting and timber extraction is predominant.

MY ROLES

- To collect ecological and behavioural data on *Ateles chamek* as part of the primate team.
- To collect data on fruit trees such as fruit quantity, species and tree DBH.
- To co-author a scientific paper on *A. chamek* titled, 'Demography, habitat use and activity budget of a wild group of black-faced black spider monkeys (*Ateles chamek*) in Las Piedras, South-Eastern Peru.'

MY DEVELOPMENT

- Leadership**
- Different styles of writing** - scientific/professional, lay
- Communication** - in the field, with other researchers and tourists
- Resilience** - environment, personal struggles

AMAZING EXPERIENCES

- Seeing a puma run past on the trail.
- Watching a documentary being filmed at a wildlife rehabilitation centre.
- Rebandaging the surgical wound on a wild green anaconda.

MY CONTRIBUTIONS TO ARCAMAZON

- Helped develop the methodology for the fruit transect task.
- Helped guide volunteers and explain our research to tourists.
- Helped write a project proposal for a spider monkey adoption project to a partner NGO.
- Hopefully help send another future student (or volunteer through WorkingAbroad) and therefore raise funds.

LINKING THE UNIVERSITY + THE FIELD

- The University of Surrey is listed as my institution on the scientific paper I co-authored with my supervisor.
- Networking:** I became close with professionals like my supervisor, a wildlife photographer, and published researchers.

HELPING FUTURE STUDENTS

- Three students have emailed asking about the placement and I have tried to be as detailed and helpful as possible when answering their questions.
- At the poster presentation for first and second years I tried to attract as many students as possible to my poster.
- Surrey PTY placement portal: increased options for students interested in wildlife, ecology or animals.



GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT

Taking over my supervisor's job for one month was what immersed me in my placement. This role involved leading volunteers on primate follows, often off-trail. At first I was hesitant to accept this role as it included being responsible for volunteers and in charge of delegating responsibilities to others, including people older than myself. However, I saw it as an opportunity to step out of my comfort zone and improve upon my leadership skills. I ended up enjoying this time the most out of my seven months in Peru, and one highlight was leading my visiting tutor, his family, and three volunteers to a macaw claylick.

