MSc Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development in the Caribbean

Handbook

for the

Terrestrial Field Course

Brownsberg Nature Park, Suriname

Version 2.0
2013
Introduction

This Handbook was developed to provide students of the MSc Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development in the Caribbean with basic information on logistics, field conditions and expedition etiquette while on the MSc’s Terrestrial Field Course, at Brownsberg Nature Park, Suriname. The 2-week field course is a mandatory element of the MSc. and is intended to provide a “capstone” to the theoretical work undertaken in the programme, by introducing students to the field elements of biodiversity conservation. While, the field teaching team have attempted to provide a sense of the logistical requirements for students while on the expedition, and of some of the conditions to be expected, this handbook is not expected to be a substitute for student participation in the pre-expedition briefings and any online training sessions provided by the field teaching team and/or the Course Convenor, Dr. Paul Ouboter of the Anton de Kom University of Suriname.

Dates of Field Course

The field course is typically held in July, unless otherwise determined by the Academic Management Board for the MSc. Programme. The dates for the next 2-week field course at Brownsberg are:

1 July to 14 July, 2013

Location

On entering Suriname you will be required to indicate your address on the relevant immigration forms. In this regard, you will be staying at the following address in Suriname:

Jeugdherberg STINASU
Brownsberg Nature Park
District Brokopondo
Suriname

Contact information

While in Suriname you may contact Dr Paul Ouboter at 597-465558 Ext 333 or 597-494756 (office numbers).

Payment of practicum fees

The cost for the field practicum exclusive of the airline tickets is US$900. TT students may deposit the money to account #17063-1753-5229-1 at the Bursary cashier, UWi, St. Augustine or at any Republic Bank (see TT deposit information for local students at Appendix I). International and Regional students may wire transfer their funds using the US deposit information (see Appendix I). Please indicate on the wire transfer or deposit that the payment is for the Field Practicum BIOL 6210/5210. Students are to either scan a copy of the receipt showing proof of payment and email it to the team or submit the hardcopy to our office. We must have this before you are allowed to participate in the course.
Registration
Students are to register for this course as well as the Taxonomy course in May for Semester 3. Fulltime students are to also register for the Research Project. No other tuition fees are to be paid for Semester 3.

About Suriname
The official language of Suriname is Dutch, although many people speak English. The currency is Surinamese Dollars (SRD). Currency can be changed at the airport on arrival in Suriname. US Dollars and Euros are also accepted at many shops. At Brownsberg Nature Park there is a restaurant where drinks and additional meals can be bought; apart from this restaurant there are no other shops or supermarkets at Brownsberg.

The voltage in Suriname is 115Volts. European adapters are required for any US/UK plugs. Power cuts are frequent at Brownsberg Nature Park. Remember to bring spare batteries for any electrical items that you take with you.

Equipment
You will be required to bring a laptop with you, which you will need to use for data analysis of samples collected in the field and for preparation of presentations.

While field equipment for conducting biological survey work will be provided by the University of Suriname (AdeKUS), students are advised to bring the following personal equipment with them for use on the field course:

- Long trousers
- Hiking boots or strong sport shoes with a good profile
- Bath thongs (slippers)
- Hat
- Sun block
- Insect repellent, preferably with a statement that it works against ticks and chiggers (there is no limes disease in Suriname, but the itching can be terrible)
- Person-specific medicines as needed
- Toiletries (soap, toothpaste, toothbrush etc.)
- Bath towel
- Sheet, pillowcase and blanket (or thin sleeping bag)
- Headlight (preferred) or flashlight
- Day pack (back pack)
- Digital camera (if available)
- Binoculars (if available)
- Laptop (with European adaptors)
Notes on Clothing, Footwear and Laundry:

Long trousers are necessary for field work. It can get cold in the mornings and evenings at Brownsberg Nature Park, so bring at least one warm layer for the evenings. July is also the middle of the long rainy season in Brownsberg, so rainwear is also advisable and quick drying clothes are recommended.

Comfortable footwear, with ankle support is recommended. Hiking boots are most appropriate, and sports trainers/running shoes are typically not sufficiently durable, nor will they provide sufficient support on the uneven trails. Remember to “break in” your footwear before you arrive. Since the field course involves a lot of walking, it is important that you are not “breaking in” new shoes in the field, as you will be sure to get blisters. Some field work will involve working in rivers, so a change of footwear is advisable for these days.

There are no laundry facilities at the field station, but clothes lines are available at the field station to allow for hand washing. Transportation to the field station is limited and expensive, so please pack light!

Food

A cook will prepare meals during the field course and this is included in the cost of the field course. Meals will typically consist of a cooked breakfast, with the main meal being lunch, which is served on returning from field work. There is also a light evening meal. Items for the preparation of sandwiches to take with you during field work, will be provided. You will be required to prepare these as you need them. Students are expected to assist the cook with washing dishes etc. Surinamese cooking is very cosmopolitan, ranging from Indian and creole to Javanese and Chinese styles. For those of you with specific dietary requirements you are advised to inform the MSc team of these restrictions WELL IN ADVANCE of the field course, and these will be catered for by the cook.

Although water in Suriname’s capital is generally potable, water at the field station is not drinkable. Drinking water will be provided for you during the field expedition. Please bring a reusable 1-2 litre water bottle with you to reduce the waste generated by the field course.

Housing

The field station is one of several lodgings at the Brownsberg Nature Park. The sleeping arrangements at the field station are shared rooms with bunk beds (4-8 persons in a room). Sheets and pillows will be provided by STINASU park officials. However, you may wish to bring your own sheet or light sleeping bag if you want an additional layer. Bathrooms in the field station building are also shared, and there is no hot water.

Communication

There is no internet access at Brownsberg Nature Park. Cell phone communication is very limited and sporadic due to the remoteness of the site; however,
it may be possible to walk to certain locations along the forest trails and receive limited reception. Digicel is one of three cell phone providers in Suriname (the other two are local providers).

Contact information will be provided to you in case your families need to contact you in case of an emergency. A list of contact details of all the students attending the field course will be circulated prior to the start of the course.

**Travel**

You will be required to book your flights to/from Suriname individually, once your application to attend the field course has been approved. Remember to book early to avoid increasing costs of flights and to ensure you arrive by the required date. Please submit flight numbers, arrival and departure dates and times to the MSc Programme team to coordinate your arrival with the other students. You will be met at the airport (or arrangements will be made for meeting you if you are travelling overland), and taken to lodgings overnight near the airport. You will be transported to Brownsberg Nature Park the following day. Brownsberg Nature Park is a 3 hour drive from the airport. It is important that you arrive with everyone else and not after the flight arrival date, as you would be left behind.

Due to the limited duration of the field course, no time is provided during the field course for shopping or sight-seeing. If you wish to undertake any additional activities during your time in Suriname, please make provisions to extend your stay before or after the field course. In this case, please contact the team to coordinate logistics for meeting and/or leaving the group.

**Visas**

Caricom nationals do not require a visa to enter Suriname. Non-Caricom nationals should check with their Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the local Surinamese embassy in their country, and the specific visa requirements relevant to their nationality. If you require a visa, do not wait till the last minute to arrange this, as in some cases it may take more than one day to process. Also, ensure that your passport is up to date and has more than 6 months before the expiry date when travelling.

The following website provides information on VISA requirements for Suriname: http://www.surinameembassy.org/visa_extension.shtml

**Vaccinations and Health**

Prior to the field course, please make sure you have your vaccinations up to date, including yellow fever, tetanus, Hepatitis B etc. There is no malaria at Brownsberg Nature Park.

Please advise the MSc team of any health issues that you may have. These will be taken into account during the field course when developing daily work assignments. Please bring all medication you require for the duration of the field course, as there are no nearby pharmacies/hospitals.
Insurance

The University of the West Indies’ students are covered under the UWI insurance policy for the duration of the field course. Students of other partner Universities in the Regional MSc should verify their coverage with their Institutional Focal Point and administrators at their home campus. You will not be covered by University insurance policies for any travel prior to or after the official dates of the field course. You may seek travel insurance coverage as a supplement to that provided by the Universities. Students are required to complete a medical form, which can be found at the following link: https://sta.uwi.edu/fst/lifesciences/documents/medical.pdf Please sign it electronically and email it to the MSc team.

Safety

Getting lost: No unsupervised walking on the forest trails by students is permitted, unless specifically authorised by University staff members. Brownsberg Nature Park is a wilderness area and although the risk to you individually is relatively small, it is easy to become disoriented and lost in the forest, particularly if you become hurt while exploring on your own, even with a GPS. For this reason, we urge students to comply with all staff instructions on safety.

At night: Do not walk at night without a flashlight, even around the field station and other lodges. Fer-de-lances (*Bothrops* sp.) are frequently seen around certain areas of the lodges.

Terrain: As indicated above, the trails are often uneven and a lot of field work will take place off these trails. Take care where you are walking, as there may be fallen logs, vines and holes in the ground.

Snakes: The fer-de-lance (*Bothrops* sp.) is a common and poisonous pit viper in Brownsberg Nature Park. Snake chaps will be provided for all students to use during the expedition. Wear them at all times when doing field work. In addition, you are urged to watch where you put your hands and feet, especially when carrying out field work.

Treefalls: Falling branches are typically the most common cause of injury while working in the forest. Be particularly careful during periods of high winds and rain storms; when these events occur either get to an area of safety (with no overhead vegetation), or find shelter until winds subside.

Jaguars: The Brownsberg Nature Park is home to several large predators. Although attacks by jaguars on humans are very uncommon, we advise you to be cautious. Specifically, do not carry out field work on your own, and make sure others are nearby when stooping down or crouching in the forest.

A Typical Day in the Field

Depending on the survey technique, your day will start anytime between 6am-8am. Early starts are required for bird and small mammal surveys, and typically these groups will return to the field station for breakfast, before often returning to the field later in the day to conduct other field exercises. Field work will continue during the day until 2-4pm, depending on the survey technique and site of field work. Lunch will be
served on return to the field station, but sandwiches can be made to take in the field. Night surveys will be conducted on some evenings. It is expected that students will carry out data analysis, and presentation preparation in the afternoon and evenings.

Expect to walk between ½ to 1½ hours to get to field sites. Some survey sites are on the slopes of the Brownsberg plateau, and returning from these sites can take up to 3 hours walking uphill. Provisions will be made for those students with valid medical concerns.

Students will be expected to participate in all field activities. Sampling techniques that will be introduced during the field course will include vegetation, herptiles, fish, insects, macro invertebrates, birds, small mammals, camera trapping and social surveys. These sampling techniques will be placed in the context of methods for estimating species richness and other data analysis approaches that would have been taught to you in previous courses and introduced during the field course.

A programme for the field course will be distributed at the start of the field course, to allow allocation of individuals to groups and for selection of daily field survey sites, once students arrive at the field station.

**How to Behave in the Field**

Please act in an appropriate manner in the field. Be quiet; you will see more wildlife if you do not make too much noise. Do not handle the wildlife, especially snakes, without appropriate supervision and unless instructed to do so. Do not litter. Be aware that other people aside from the students on this field course will be in the Brownsberg Nature Park, so please do not spoil their experience with noise and inappropriate behaviour.

**Useful Links**

Links to Suriname information:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suriname

Links to Brownsberg Nature Park information:
http://www.stinasu.com/nature_parks.html

**Useful Readings**

Introduction to Biodiversity at Brownsberg. Please download this for use during the field course:
Appendix I

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES
ST. AUGUSTINE
INTERNATIONAL WIRE TRANSFER INFORMATION

US Deposits

Intermediary Bank

BANK OF AMERICA
100 WEST 33RD STREET
NEW YORK
NEW YORK 10001
USA

FW 026 009 593

SWIFT ADDRESS: BOFAUS3N

Account with

REPUBLIC BANK LIMITED
FOREX
59 INDEPENDENCE SQUARE
PORT OF SPAIN
TRINIDAD

ACCOUNT NUMBER: 65503 52163
SWIFT ADDRESS: RBNKTPPX

Beneficiary Customer
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES
ST. AUGUSTINE,
TRINIDAD

ACCOUNT NUMBER: 0002/110/10635

UWI CAMPUS BRANCH

REASON FOR PAYMENT
Appendix I (con’t)

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES
ST. AUGUSTINE

INTERNATIONAL WIRE TRANSFER INFORMATION

Trinidad and Tobago Dollars Deposits

BANK: REPUBLIC BANK LIMITED
FOREX
TRINIDAD
WEST INDIES

SWIFT ADDRESS: RBNKTTTPX

ACCOUNT NUMBER: 160 284 614 001

ACCOUNT NAME: THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES
GENERAL ACCOUNT

BENEFICIARY: THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES
ST. AUGUSTINE
TRINIDAD

REASON FOR PAYMENT: