Belize Ecology: Educational Expeditions

Marine Ecology – Sample Itinerary

In Belize, marine ecology starts from the land. We begin our investigation of marine ecology from a river that empties its nutrients and sediment load into a mangrove-lined estuary that is a community-managed wildlife sanctuary for the largest concentration of manatees in the Caribbean.

From here we depart on a four to seven day sailing trip over sea grass beds, patch reefs and shallow seas to the cayes and barrier reef beyond. Some nights will be spent camping on deserted, sand covered cayes, others at any of various marine research stations available to traveling student groups.

Day 1: Arrive Belize Int'l Airport, transfer to Gales Point Manatee Village. Settle into village, afternoon orientation.

Day 2: Tour estuary and river mouth. Lecture on estuarine ecology, role of mangrove forest at river coastal zone. Manatee sightseeing.

Day 3: More estuarine ecology, water sampling activities. Cultural exchange activities with villagers. Guest lecture on the manatee conservation project.

Day 4: Depart on a local fishing sail boat to a nearby caye. Snorkel the surrounding sea grass beds. Lecture on sea grass ecology. Spend the night camped on the beach.

Day 5: Sail to outer cayes on the Barrier Reef. Snorkel patch reefs along the way. Lectures on patch reef ecology and geological history. Camp at inhabited caye with research station.

Days 6-9: Snorkel back reefs, fringe reefs, patch reefs, and fore reefs. Daily lectures and sampling activities. Student independent or group projects using research station facilities.

Days 10-11: Sail to small nearby caye with shops, services, tourism activities. Time to relax, write up projects, and purchase souvenirs.

Day 12: Water taxi to Belize City (one hour) and transfer to Belize International Airport.