

# 6 Epilogue

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## 6.1 Epilogue: letter of commendation

**Carl  
M. Rovainen**

In its 17 years of operation CEIBA Biological Center has provided educational, research training, and research opportunities to about 2118 international and local participants, including 456 from the University of Guyana, 495 Guyanese high school students, 75 middle and high school students from North Broward Preparatory School, 315 Florida Atlantic University and University of Missouri-St. Louis students, 39 from Wesleyan University, 713 British high school students, 31 researchers from the USA, Belgium, Canada, England, and Venezuela, and three Guyanese have utilized the research facilities and contributed to increasing local capacity, and 25 neighborhood children trained in our “Reading is Essential Program” based on rainforest environmental themes. CEIBA provides safe and unique opportunities for scientists and students to engage in ecological, evolutionary, and conservation research in a region with diverse and complex species assemblages influenced by both natural and anthropogenic selection pressures. Here is what one now retired medical research scientist had to say about his experiences in an ecological course at CEIBA Biological Center.

April 2, 1999

Dr. Albert Derby, Chair  
Department of Biology  
University of Missouri-St. Louis  
8001 Natural Bridge Road  
St. Louis, MO 63121-4499

Dear Dr. Derby:

This letter commends Dr. Godfrey R. Bourne in your Department for his leadership, excellent planning, and biological knowledge on his spring field trip in tropical ecology to the CEIBA Biological Center in Guyana, South America, March, 14-22, 1999. I was a guest participant, along with eight UMSL students in Godfrey’s spring course and his wife Carol. We stayed at three sites: CEIBA (secondary and primary forest on white sands), Dubulay Ranch (coastal savannah on the Berbice River), and Kaieteur Falls National Park (bromeliad glades and cloud forest in the interior).

Godfrey was most concerned that no one be hurt or sick and insisted on the necessary medical preparations. He planned air and surface travel and made all the local reservations and arrangements for food, water, and shelter, as well as immigration, customs, currency exchange, and a visit to Georgetown and the Biodiversity Centre at the University of Guyana. The academic components of the field course were orientation walks with lectures and identification of plants and animals, specific walks to observe avian and primate species, individual research projects, and evening programs on savannah and rain forest. Every day was a biological adventure and immersion in biodiversity.

Each of us planned a research project with background reading in St. Louis to focus our attention on one of a multitude of fascinating biological and ecological problems virtually unexplored in the Neotropics. Your Masters student, Jacqueline Bratten, and I worked on a project to measure porosity and hydraulic conductivity in white sand soils and to survey the prevalence of mycorrhizae in root samples from forest, marsh, savannah, and degraded sites. Some of the other interesting student projects were distribution of tadpoles and frogs in relation to water chemistry in bromeliads, thermoregulatory behavior of forest lizards, incidences of vampire feeding on livestock, foster-motherhood in black-bellied sheep, and ant-plant mutualism. An ichthyologist from the University of Guyana joined us at Kaieteur for a survey of aquatic species during the dry season.

Godfrey was an ideal leader for the trip and course. As a native of Guyana he knew the country and people well. He tapped his network of friends and associates for local arrangements and help. His knowledge of wildlife was encyclopedic. Typically he would hear or see a flying or perching bird, identify it, and leave it to us to confirm in a book. In his walking lectures he explained the ecological relations of animal species and plants. Personally, he was a quiet and effective leader and built an interactive and functional team of the group.

In conclusion, Godfrey Bourne's Neotropical ecology course/field trip was an outstanding learning experience. I thank him and your school for the opportunity to join the group.

Sincerely,

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