

uVolunteer Reports

Week 1:

My arrival in Costa Rica went smoothly and I was warmly welcomed at the airport by a uVolunteer representative. After an in depth discussion about the ins and outs of Costa Rica, I was given detailed instruction about how to get to my project site in Tilaran the following day. Upon arriving in Tilaran, I was greeted by Roberta who brought me to my host family's house and helped me get settled in. On Monday, Omar, one of the workers at La Reserva, and I set out for our long walk to La Reserva at the early hour of 5 AM. It was truly an amazing site watching the sun rise over the mountains and seeing the reflection on Lake Arenal. Upon arrival at La Reserva, I worked with Omar to water newly planted seedlings in the nursery, to prepare guanacaste seeds for eventual planting and to care for the chickens. Later that week, we were tasked with the job of building a new pen for the baby chickens and mother to live in. It was really a great time building a whole new structure from scratch, using wood we recovered from around La Reserva and designing the new pen as we went along. The project took all day but when we finally put the family in their new home, I felt a true feeling of accomplishment and reward. Additionally, we worked on a variety of tasks throughout the week including clearing leaf litter from the trails and permaculture garden, planting new seedlings in the nursery and preparing compost for use in the garden.

Week 2:

This was another great week at La Reserva. On Monday, Roberta took all day to teach me tons of stuff about the mission and history of La Reserva, the current events surrounding cap and trade and other global issues that impact La Reserva and information about all sorts of species of trees and animals in Costa Rica. The next day, Omar and I set off to find trees that La Reserva needed to stock. We ventured back through the long maze of trails on the property in search of a variety of species that we could dig up and replant in the nursery. It was really great to get a chance to explore all the lands of La Reserva and see how quickly the forest was able to regenerate in just 8 years. I also got the chance to see tons of wildlife and a vast array of plantlife. While we were on the trails, we also checked to make sure the fences were secure and put in new barbed wire where needed. Thursday turned out to be a very exciting day as, in addition to being my birthday, we said our goodbyes to Peluchi (the orphaned sloth that has been living at La Reserva for a few months) and set him free. It was a nice feeling seeing Peluchi climb up the tree and finally be able to venture out on his own and return to his natural habitat. Additionally that day, I got a chance to go on a tour that Roberta was giving two visitors. The tour taught me a great deal about the different species of plants and animals found around La Reserva and it was great to see new visitors enjoying all the beauty La Reserva has to offer.

Week 3:

This was another very productive week for us here. Although technically the "rainy season" began a week ago apparently Costa Rica didn't get the memo as there still wasn't much rain at all leaving us with the task of watering the newly planted trees each morning. On Tuesday, Omar and I headed off to the corridor that La Reserva designed and planted a year ago which connects two primary forests through a field of cattle pasture. It was a moving experience for me to see first hand some of the finished work the organization has accomplished and made me feel very proud to be a part of the team. As we walked through the corridor we cleared out some brush that was growing around the small trees and repaired any holes in the fence. Besides the blazing heat and the ant hill that I inadvertently put my elbow in, it was a great time over at the corridor. Additionally that week, Omar and I cleared additional space in the nursery to make room to plant new seeds for the many projects that La Reserva has coming up. It was tough but rewarding work that required us to clear tall grasses with a machete, shovel and pitchfork.

Week 4:

My last week at La Reserva was filled with the tasks of clearing the many trails and lands of the area. Omar and I walked the interwoven trails clearing grass, vines and logs that were encroaching on the pathways. It was a great deal of work given the sheer size of the property but it was also enjoyable as I got to walk the trails one last time and enjoy the beauty during my last week here. On Tuesday, there was some unexpected excitement as Omar and I spotted a sloth in a tree on the property. After Omar repeatedly called the name Peluchi and the sloth gave a quick look towards us, we knew that after 12 days of being free Peluchi was doing well and still hanging around La Reserva. Additionally, the rainy season officially began this week as every night has seen heavy thunderstorms which kindly relieved us of our duty to water the saplings. Also this week I prepared some more Guanacaste seeds to be planted and planted some other seeds in the back of the nursery. As my time here at La Reserva, and in Costa Rica, winds down I feel a great sense of pride and reward knowing that my efforts over the last four weeks have really helped La Reserva carry out its mission and ultimately help the world and its battle to preserve our forests.