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Earthwatch Study Trip 2007

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It has become a fact that climate change is happening, but what are its effects? How will our environment change? Are we the only ones affected? My trip to Atherton Tablelands (Northern Queensland, Australia) answered these questions and more.

Climate models predict that the temperature in Queensland will rise by about 3.5oC in the next century. As temperatures warm, the animals living in islands with the cooler mountaintop habitats will be forced even further uphill until they run out of grazing space. This loss of habitat can possibly result in a 50 percent extinction rate.

The Earthwatch Study Trip is a unique opportunity for me to visit some of the region’s most magnificent rainforests and see a diverse array of forest animals from leaf-tailed geckos to possums.

Working with a team of PhD students from James Cook University, I sampled the abundance of birds, reptiles, mammals, frogs, plants and insects at 200 metres intervals up in the mountain tracks. Along the way, I set insect traps and sort their contents, trap small animals, hunt for lizards, comb tropical streams and forest transects for calling frogs, collect bird abundance data, and spot for nocturnal mammals and reptiles.

It was not easy as we camped out in the open for 2 weeks, sustained by water from nearby creeks. There was no electricity, no lighting, no showers available and to top it all off, it rained everyday – conditions an urban youth like myself could never imagine. I personally thought preparing dinner and having dinner with headlamps were unbelievable! In Singapore, even without the lights on, the reflections from street lamps, or the corridor lights were bright enough for you to see your way around. However, at our campsite, as early as 6pm everyday, you would not be able to see your own fingers.

These have taught me many lessons of how forest data is being recorded and analyzed. The data collected allowed us to understand how to better conserve the rainforest biodiversity in the face of enormous changes. Our forest is a fragile one, it is one that is easily affected by climate change because these trees takes hundreds of years to grow to their present heights. Also, some animals can take more then 50 years before they start reproducing. That all contributes to the reason why we should start acting on reducing our impact on climate change and think of ways we could contribute to conserving the environment.

The experiences from this trip have fueled my passion to spread awareness to other youths and engage them to contribute their part for the environment. In relation to this, the SP Environment Club has been actively organising awareness programmes, environmental events and supporting other external eco-organisations. My wish is for more youths to experience some of these very interesting projects organised and perhaps even initiate projects that could be



beneficial to the student population. It is through taking these actions that we realise how much we could contribute to the environment.

Last but not least, I would like to thank HSBC and NYAA for their kind sponsorship to be part of this meaningful project. Their continual support in promoting environmental awareness amongst youths is commendable! It is of utmost importance in ensuring that the next generation is educated to make responsible decisions on how developments in Singapore should take place.

As the President of the SP Environment Club, I would like to appeal to SP students to take the initiative to be engaged in environmental projects. Join SP Environment Club & participate in its activities. Visit our website at <http://spenvclub.blogspot.com> or email us at sp.env.club@gmail.com.

