**MU students to travel to Central America**

**Ecology class will conduct scientific research**

**DEMELEY SMITH**

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A Marshall University ecology class will travel to Central America this summer to conduct research.

Tropical Ecology students will be in Belize from May 12 to May 31.

First-year students will learn research skills and second-year students will conduct research.

The trip consists of a tour around the country including the tropical rain forest and barrier reef island.

Local cultural events will also be highlighted during the trip.

The estimated cost for the trip is $3,000 with all-inclusive transportation, food, lodging and activities.

Topical Ecology will count for four credit hours of upper-level elective science biology credit, integrated science or biology credit during Summer Session A.

"We will be snorkeling, scuba diving, tropical fish research and tropical rain forest studies," said Sean Collins, graduate biology student from Huntington. "I'm just really excited to get down there."

About 15 students are currently planning to attend and there is room for about 10 more students

Each week students will explore different regions of the country including Barrier Island, tropical lake and rain forest each week.

"I have been on one trip as an undergraduate here," Collins said. "This is my first trip as a graduate student."

Thomas G. Jones, assistant professor and aquatic ecologist, said the trip gives students a better understanding of the world.

"The trip is important to me because most people don't have a lot of national exposure," Jones said.

Jones said returning to Belize for a third time is a rewarding experience.

A few other classes also traveled to Australia and Bonaire, an island off of the coast of Venezuela.

"People will treat you differently while you are there," Jones said. "You are the richest person they have ever met, compared to Mayans living in the Belizean rain forest."

Jones said Mayans live in small homes with dirt floors. They do not have the luxuries Americans have.

"I feel it has more impact on more people by teaching more than just science," Jones said. "When we go to Belize we always try to do something good."

The trip is for allstudents who are interested in traveling with the group.

"It is the nonmajors who are most impacted," Jones said.

Jones said on the previous trip to Belize the students collected trash from the beach to help turtles.

Every student is required to use video and digital cameras to take pictures as part of the research portion of the class.

Demeley Smith can be contacted at smith496@marshall.edu.

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