CVB News

Eco Stewards in Full Swing

It’s been a busy past few weeks for our twenty Eco Stewards! As part of our new capacity-building initiative, twenty professionals from across Madagascar will be training to become the next generation of Malagasy researchers, ecotourism guides, and parks officials.

This week, representatives from Madagascar National Parks gave the students an introduction to smart technologies used in the creation of new national parks. Students practiced using smartphones and GPS equipment both in the classroom and out in the field, while learning about park rules and what it takes to manage protected areas like Ranomafana National Park.

In their lectures on biodiversity, conservation, and climate change, CVB’s Head of Biodiversity Dina Andrianoely and Head of Research Dr. Hasina Malalaharivony prepared students to dive deeper into the next few weeks of herpetology, botany, entomology, and primatology lessons, which are taught by CVB’s longest-serving biodiversity experts and research technicians.

In May, the group will embark on a ten-day cross-country trip through some of Madagascar’s most imperiled ecosystems, stopping along the way to hear from local parks officials and tour guides working to protect these places and the unique biodiversity within them from disappearing.

Volunteer Spotlight: Jack Scheutzow

Jack Scheutzow is a medical student at Stony Brook University and recently joined the Mobile Health Team for a ten-day expedition to our central intervention zone, delivering healthcare to more than 250 patients. His encounters ranged from malaria to respiratory ailments, from hypertension to back pain. Additionally, he facilitated educational initiatives in each village, with a focus on culinary nutrition demonstrations and First Aid training sessions.

Reflecting on my experience, I am immensely thankful to Dr. Thomas and the rest of the Mobile Health Team for granting me the opportunity to participate in this expedition. Above all, this journey underscored the significance of establishing trust with patients. Upon our arrival in the village, prior to any consultations, the entire team conducted a comprehensive two-to-three hour meeting with the entire community. During this session, each team member thoroughly explained their role, discussed the services they could provide, and allotted time to address any concerns from the villagers. Witnessing this impactful process has inspired me to adopt a similar approach in cultivating relationships with my patients in the United States.