

Tropical Ecology & Conservation Field Course

Content

This Tropical Biology Association (TBA) field course is designed for early-career researchers with the objective of building skills in project design, critical thinking, field techniques, and scientific communication. The course emphasises learning through direct experience, with students applying ecological theory to real-world conservation challenges in tropical ecosystems. It is taught at Master's level by faculty from leading universities and research institutions, alongside local experts. TBA staff coordinate the course and provide academic supervision throughout.

Delivered over approximately one month at a tropical field station, the course begins with guided workshops and field exercises introducing key habitats, taxa, and themes. Evening lectures and seminars cover up-to-date concepts in ecology, alongside real world examples of research projects. Students are encouraged to develop their own questions and interests. The final half of the course is devoted to an independent research project carried out in pairs. Students formulate a research question, design appropriate methods, collect and analyse field data, and present their findings as a short scientific paper and oral presentation.

Learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course, students can:

- Explain key ecological principles and conservation approaches relevant to tropical ecosystems
- Design and implement field-based ecological research
- Apply appropriate statistical methods for analysis of data
- Communicate research project findings clearly through a written report and oral presentation
- Collaborate with peers from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds

Assessment

Assessment is based on performance across course activities, with particular emphasis on the design, execution, and communication of the independent research project. Tutors collectively assess student performance on the following scale, with Good being the equivalent of a pass at Master's level: Poor – Acceptable – Good – Excellent – Exceptional.

European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) recommendation

The TBA recommends that its field courses are equivalent to 10 credits under the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). This allocation is based on benchmarking by academics from UK and European universities, who reviewed the structure and teaching of TBA field courses against their own credit systems. The 10 ECTS represents the average across these assessments and is reviewed annually by TBA course tutors.

The academics who initially assessed the courses and agreed on the ECTS allocation were:

- Professor Tim Clutton Brock, University of Cambridge, UK
- Professor Donald Quicke, Imperial College, London, UK
- Professor Walter Hoedl, University of Vienna, Austria
- Dr Jens Olsen, Aarhus University, Denmark
- Professor Michael Boppré, University of Freiburg, Germany
- Professor Paul Brakefield, Leiden University, Netherlands
- Dr Michelle Sheehy Skeffington, University of Galway, Ireland
- Professor Sandro Lovari, University of Siena, Italy
- Professor Herbert Prins, Wageningen University, Netherlands
- Dr Ryszard Laskowski, Jagellonian University, Poland
- Professor Thomas Elmqvist, Stockholm University, Sweden

For more information about TBA's field courses, please visit our website <https://tropical-biology.org/about-field-courses> or contact us at tba@tropical-biology.org

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