

Two Brunswick teachers to study wild cats, horses in global master's program

Posted by Debbie Palmer June 22, 2009 13:56PM

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Two Brunswick City Schools educators have been selected to join the inaugural year of a global master's degree that includes travel this summer to study wild cats and wild horses in Mongolia, "the land of the blue sky."

From June 14 to June 23, Veronica Balogh, a seventh-grade science and social studies teacher at Visintainer Middle School, will study in Mongolia, visiting a primary research site for the Pallas Cat Conservation Project and then traveling to Hustai National Park.

In these two locations, the group of 20 U.S. educators will explore the great steppe of Mongolia and engage in the conservation stories of two key local species: the Pallas cat and Przewalski's horse, which is considered to be the only true wild horse left in the world.

Later in the summer, Edwards Middle School science teacher Trista Smith, another student accepted into the global master's degree program, will travel to the Central American country of Costa Rica to study neotropical systems, including lowland rainforest, cloud forest, and coastal environments.

This group of educators will conduct field research projects exploring the biotic, physical and cultural forces that affect tropical biodiversity.

Balogh and Smith are two of 150 U.S. and international educators accepted to the first year of the Global Field Program (GFP) from Project Dragonfly at Miami University. As part of the program, all GFP students will engage in field conservation work this summer in Africa, Asia or the Americas.

Groups of GFP educators will also study cheetahs in Namibia, tag leatherback sea turtles in Trinidad, investigate howler monkeys in Belize, research marine and terrestrial ecosystems in Baja, and study the relationship of wildlife and the Maasai people of Kenya.

Throughout, the master's students will engage with international colleagues and scientists to work together to bring about local and global change.

The GFP master's degree is based on the successful Earth Expeditions program from Dragonfly and the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden. Since 2004, when Earth Expeditions began engaging educators in firsthand educational and scientific research at conservation hotspots around the world, more than 750 educators have been selected from 43 states and several international countries. More information is located at www.ProjectDragonfly.org.