

Students examine biodiversity, conservation in Bali

"It's an experience I can take through my whole life," says Jazmin, a junior biology major and pre-med student. "I was able to come back here and share my experience and enlighten people."

The Dominican students discovered during their 14-day trip to Indonesia the challenges Bali confronts with regards to its environment, conservation and socio-economic issues. The students hiked through West Bali Natural Park to see rare species of birds and mammals and visited Project Penyu, a Reef Seen Turtle Hatchery project to help the plight of sea turtles. They also observed Pemuteran's Coral Restoration Project, which is helping to restore some of the coral reefs and fisheries of Pemuteran Bay that were damaged in the past by environmentally destructive practices such as dynamite and cyanide fishing.

Brandi, a senior biology major in the process of applying to pharmacy school, noted how Indonesians maintain relationships with the environment, their spirit and their people.

"They humanize everything there," she says. "They honored and prayed for water. For trees. For flowers. They taught us what each prayer meant and each gesture meant."

Students kept a field diary of the trip, in which they wrote down their observations and learning experiences and passed their final reflections onto Coelho. She is associate professor of Biology in the [Department of Natural Sciences and Mathematics](#) and a marine ecologist who is currently researching the prevention of coral stress and mortality due to the rise of water temperatures.

"In reading my students' field notebooks, it was so rewarding to see how much their understanding of sustainability issues deepened, as well as their sense of interconnectedness, compassion and personal responsibility," Coelho says. "What students learn in this course I cannot possibly impart in a classroom. It is such an exquisite opportunity to teach, because not only what I say in class but also what they learn in other classes, suddenly come to life. It is my great joy and privilege as a teacher to witness such deep and integrative learning as it happens."

One of the privileges the students had was to meet Agung Prana, a member of the Royal Family of Mengwi. As a pioneer for eco-tourism, he endorses the need for education and to protect the environment to prevent spoilage of Bali's natural beauty. Mr. Prana recognized the value in Dominican's trip and its mission.

"He understands that tourism is to strengthen the economy, but he told us that he really liked what we were doing," Jazmin says. "Coming to the country and learning instead of just seeing the country."

The field trip portion of the BIO3505 course at Dominican was prepared by Coelho in collaboration with Kati Bell, director of the [Dominican's Global Education Office](#) (GEO), and Marcia Jaffe and her team from the Bali Institute for Global Renewal (baliinstitute.org).