Madagascar Field School 2014
Tentative Program Schedule

* Please note that this schedule is subject to change, depending on weather, the availability of guest speakers, student interest and the progress of the course.

**Week 1**
After arriving in Madagascar’s capital city of Antananarivo we will spend a few days exploring this bustling city. Highlights of Antananarivo will include visits to:

- The University of Antananarivo, where we will meet with Malagasy students and learn about higher education in Madagascar.
- Parc Tsiribihina, where we will view the native animal collection, botanical garden, and natural history museum.
- The Rova (Queen’s Palace) and Prime Minister’s Palace, where we will learn about the history of Madagascar's unification and the country's political history.

From Antananarivo we will then travel by bus to Ranomafana National Park (RNP), our home base for much of the trip. Here in the midst of the rainforest we will spend the rest of the week exploring the park's unique biodiversity, threats to that biodiversity and some of the remarkable adaptations found in the rainforest plants and animals. We will also meet with Madagascar National Park officials and Centre ValBio staff members to learn about ongoing local conservation efforts.

**Week 2**
During the second week of our trip, you will be trained in data collection methods for studying the biodiversity of RNP (including botanical inventories and small mammal trapping). The animal groups that we will study in the classroom and rainforest as part of this training, will include: lemurs, reptiles and amphibians, birds, and both aquatic and terrestrial insects. This practical training will provide the necessary skills for the collaborative ecological monitoring project that we will conduct in week four. During this week, we will also learn about the local culture, visit the town of Ranomafana (including its thermal pool), and learn some key words and phrases in Malagasy.

**Week 3**
The third week of the trip will be taken up with a cross-country adventure, on which we will see a wide range of ecosystems and habitats, including the spiny desert, tropical deciduous forest, coral reefs, savanna, and mangrove swamp. Much of the flora and wildlife characteristic of each of these habitats will be unique, and in many cases, such as with the swollen baobab tree, bizarre in appearance. As we make our way across country we will also have the opportunity to relax and (if we want) swim both in beautiful desert streams and also at the coast, where we will visit a coral reef. During this week, we will also learn about the culture and traditions of each region that we visit and have the opportunity to practice our Malagasy.
**Week 4**
In the fourth week we will spend our days (and nights) collecting data as part of our collaborative ecological monitoring research project, investigating the impact of invasive species of plants and mammals are having on the abundance and distribution of native species within RNP. We will also have the chance to meet with local school teachers to learn about conservation education efforts and participate in the festivities surrounding Madagascar’s Independence Day.

This is also the point in the course where you will have a few days of unscheduled time, where you will have the opportunity to explore a personal area of interest. Are you an artist? If so, use this time to hike the forest and sketch what you see. Interested in becoming a health professional? Spend a few days working with the health team. Planning to become a conservation officer? Make an appointment to interview members of Madagascar’s National Park Service about their experiences and approaches.

**Week 5:**
In our last week in Madagascar we will compile and present our preliminary project results to the Madagascar National Parks Officials in Ranomafana. Then, we will visit Andasibe National Park, where we will have the opportunity to observe the magical duets of the indri (the largest surviving lemur species) and see a very distinct type of rainforests. Finally, we will return to Tana, where we will visit an artisans’ market to shop for souvenirs. And, before leaving, we will also have the opportunity to present our research findings at either the American Cultural Center or University in Antananarivo.