

Corcovado National Park is my favorite place in Costa Rica. I previously studied biology in Costa Rica for a semester in 1998; the three days I spent in the Park were the most memorable of that visit. When I learned that Conservation Clinic needed someone to travel to Costa Rica and prepare Corcovado's nomination as a World Heritage Natural Property, I jumped at the opportunity. Through the Clinic I worked closely with Steve Mack, a UF Law alumnus who works with several non-profit groups in Costa Rica, to prepare the World Heritage Nomination. This process involved sifting through a mountain of documents and interviewing knowledgeable individuals to gather information about the biology and management of Corcovado National Park. We met with numerous government representatives from the Ministry of the Environment (MINAE) and the National Parks System (SINAC) as well as biologists who were familiar with the Park. Needless to say, this work forced me to improve my Spanish.

In addition to spending numerous hours in government libraries and meeting rooms, I was able to spend a total of two weeks on the remote Osa Peninsula, where Corcovado National Park is located. Visiting the Park helped me maintain my level of enthusiasm for the project. Talking with park guards and those who live near Corcovado helped me appreciate the problems threatening the future of the park, such as poaching and a general lack of funding. I had many adventures on the forest trails and beaches of Corcovado, where I saw peccaries, tapirs, and all four species of monkeys. Perhaps the highlight of my trip was flying over the park in a small four-passenger plane. The birds-eye view allowed me to appreciate the sheer immensity and beauty of the park. I will never forget the way the thickly forested mountains, shrouded in mist, appeared like a sea of green below me. The government of Costa Rica has submitted the World Heritage nomination, and I am keeping my fingers crossed that Corcovado National Park will receive the international recognition that it deserves.