**Paid Internships in Tropical Forest Ecology at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (Panama)**

Two intern positions are available at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama. The interns will work directly with Dr. Evan Gora, and in collaboration with an international network of ecophysiologists and forest ecologists, to address key knowledge gaps in our understanding of tropical forest dynamics. These internships will prioritize professional development; interns will have opportunities to conduct independent research, develop quantitative skills, and coauthor peer-reviewed publications. We are seeking motivated individuals capable of working independently and collecting field data in tropical forest conditions. Previous field research experience, particularly in tropical forests, is preferred but not required. The internships are available for two distinct projects:

1. **Determining how lightning kills trees and certain tree species survive.** Our collaborative work recently revealed that lightning is a major cause of tropical tree death. Therefore, the ability of certain species to survive lightning strikes likely influences forest dynamics, differences in forest composition, and tree species coexistence. The intern will conduct experiments and collect field data to test the physiological and electrical mechanisms by which lightning kills trees and certain tree species survive.

2. **Evaluating the factors that regulate the decomposition of entire trees.** Dead wood is a crucial component of global carbon cycling and it functions as a keystone resource that maintains forest diversity. However, our understanding of wood decomposition in its natural context is severely limited. Dead wood primarily exists as large pieces that decompose over many years, whereas most decomposition studies are conducted using small substrates over a few months. This is problematic because the results of short-term, ground-level studies often differ substantially from the decomposition of entire trees in the same conditions. The intern will conduct field research and perform analyses on the first long-term, large-scale, and community-wide study into the decomposition of entire trees in tropical forests.

---Who should apply? Advanced undergraduates or graduates (BA or BS) seeking training and experience in ecological research, particularly those considering graduate school.

Applicants should submit three documents combined into one .pdf document: (1) a one-page cover letter describing relevant experience, interest in these positions, and how this internship will contribute to your career goals; (2) Curriculum Vitae (CV); and (3) contact information for two references including their professional affiliation, email address, and phone number. If you are only interested in one of the intern positions, then please state so on the first line of your cover letter. Otherwise, applicants will be considered for both positions. Submit applications to Evan Gora at emgor22@gmail.com with the subject line: “Internship Application - (Applicant’s last name)”. Applications are due by February 21st and the anticipated start date is May-July of 2020, although there is some flexibility.

Additional information: The Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) is a prestigious research organization with a large and vibrant community of staff scientists, postdoctoral researchers, interns, and technicians/assistants. STRI operates multiple field stations in some of the best-studied forests in the world, including the Barro Colorado Island and Gamboa lab facilities where research will be conducted. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability or protected veteran status or any other characteristic protected by law and STRI policy.