

QLF/ Atlantic Center for the Environment

**2007 Land Stewardship Fellowship for Conservation Professionals
From Latin America and the Caribbean**

— PARTICIPANT PROFILES —

Junnel Cruz (Belize) is the President of the Sarteneja Wildlife, Environment and Ecotourism Team (SWEET). SWEET is a fledgling organization that is now in the process of signing a co-management agreement with the Government of Belize to manage the Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, the largest marine protected area in Belize.

Edgar Enrique Escalante Agreda (Guatemala) is a Technical Project Coordinator and Environmental Consultant with the *Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli* (CISP)-UNION EUROPEA. He works on the Project for *Protection and Regional Management of the Marine and Coastal Resources in the Gulf of Honduras*. The project seeks to consolidate a regional system of protected areas and adjacent zones to manage and conserve the marine resources of the Gulf of Honduras.

Dirk Francisco (Belize) is the Publicity Coordinator & Volunteer/Internship Coordinator for the Belize Audubon Society (BAS). He actively promotes the work of BAS, liaises with national and international partners, and conducts environmental education activities. He also assists in the advocacy programme for sound environmental management and development.

Lorena Franco Vidal (Colombia) is a co-founder of Fundación Humedales, an NGO dedicated to the conservation and sustainable use of wetland ecosystems in Colombia. Trained in conservation biology, she is currently working with a team to develop a conceptual proposal on the dynamics and management of lake Fúquene and its associated wetland complex. Lorena has worked on various projects in the high Andean wetlands focusing on management, inventory and monitoring, and strategies to deal with climate change.

Soledad Luna (Ecuador) is a researcher at the NAZCA Institute for Marine Research in Ecuador. She is currently working on the Conservation Plan for a Marine Protected Area in the south of Esmeraldas province. She is also conducting an Evaluation of the Machalilla National Park Management Plan. Soledad was involved in the process of participatory management at the Galapagos Marine Reserve; she remains committed to the work in Punta Galera, an ongoing eight-year endeavor.

Celia Mahung (Belize) is the Executive Director of the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE) Belize. Celia is committed to the long-term sustainability of the natural resources of Toledo, and committed to the continued growth of the organization.

Sergi Marí-Pons (Spain) lives on the island of Minorca and is a member and recent President of the Balearic Group for Ornithology and Nature Conservation (GOB), a leading conservation NGO in the region. GOB developed a program of stewardship, environmental education, sustainable gardening, wild fauna and political lobbying toward the establishment of conservation regulations. Sergi's participation relates to ongoing programs with Catalan lands, and exchange between Iberia and Ibero-America.

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Junnel Cruz

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Position and Organization Affiliation

Junnel Cruz is the President of the Sarteneja Wildlife, Environment and Ecotourism Team (SWEET). SWEET is a fledgling organization that is now in the process of signing a co-management agreement with the Government of Belize to manage the Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary (the largest Marine Protected Area in Belize).

Current Projects

SWEET recently received two grants to help the village of Sarteneja residents to make the switch from fisher folk to tourism types. The small village is under stress brought on because of the unsustainability in the fishing industry. Junnel and the SWEET staff will be training local people to be tour guides. Junnel is working on capacity building for the staff, improving the infrastructure of SWEET, and purchasing equipment for the use of the local people. This is in the hope of creating an information center, and a centralized base for the developing tourism industry.

Background

Corozal Bay is located at the north end of Belize, and represents the boundary with Mexico. The (Manatee) Wildlife Sanctuary is a preserve of approximately 180,000 acres, including all of the Belize side of the Bay. It is a transboundary-protected area, as the Mexico side is also protected, by the *Santuario del Manati* (Manatee Sanctuary).

Goals of Fellowship

As a young and emerging conservation leader of a new, community based NGO, Junnel is interested in all aspects of organizational development, fostering economic activities compatible with protected areas, marine protected area management and community-based conservation in general.

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Position and Organization Affiliation

Edgar has worked for CISP for the past four years as a Technical Project Coordinator and Environmental Consultant. Some of his responsibilities include implementation of action plans and supervision and monitoring of project activities. CISP is an Italian NGO working in Guatemala since 1994. The organization works on education, development of working skills, food security, human health and emergencies, environmental protection, women and microfinance, and rural development. The ultimate goal is to improve quality of life and to reduce the levels of poverty in several regions in Guatemala.

Current Projects

Edgar works on the *Protection and Regional Management of the Marine and Coastal Resources in the Gulf of Honduras* Project. This project seeks to implement economic and legal measures to improve the quality of life of communities dependent on marine resources. He trains and educates fishermen about better management practices of the marine ecosystem. In addition he is responsible for implementing and evaluating Action Plans, organizing international environmental trainings, and supervising and monitoring environmental issues.

Background

Edgar has held a number of positions at CISP including Coordinator of Action Plan for Manatee, and Coordinator of Relationships of the Tri-national Alliance for the Conservation of the Gulf of Honduras, between Guatemala, Honduras and Belize. Before joining CISP Edgar worked with CONAP as the National Coordinator of Monitoring and Evaluation of Protected Areas of Guatemala. He holds an Associate Degree in Environmental Science from Berkshire Community College, in Pittsfield, MA; he is trained in Forestry from the Escuela Nacional Central de Agricultura, as well as in Technical Agriculture from the Escuela de Formación Agrícola, both in Guatemala.

Goals of Fellowship

Edgar would like to meet and share ideas, and learn from the experiences of other fellows from Latin America and the Caribbean. He would also like to form new linkages with staff and coordinators at QLF for future support towards formulating proposals for environmental projects in Guatemala. From his experience he hopes to support the work of local people in Guatemala who are actively asking the government to focus on environmental issues, and environmental destruction from hurricanes and tropical storms.

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Position and Organization Affiliation

Dirk is the Publicity Coordinator & Volunteer/Internship Coordinator at the Belize Audubon Society (BAS). He promotes the work of the organization through environmental education activities for target communities buffering protected areas managed by BAS, as well as the wider Belizean community. Dirk also assists in the advocacy program for sound environmental management and development. He organizes major events, and liaises with national and international organizations. The mission of BAS is the sustainable management of Belize's natural resources. It also serves as a training society for national and international students interested in environmental affairs.

Current Projects

Dirk manages the BAS membership program and conducts publicity projects (brochure development, banner development, radio & television). He writes proposals and develops promotional materials to generate funds, and support the work of BAS. He also develops publications for conservation programs by BAS or in conjunction with other relevant organizations. He is currently implementing the BAS membership strengthening program project being funded by AVINA. One of his passions is bird conservation, and he also coordinates the development of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Belize, another tool for Protected Areas Management.

Background

Dirk holds an Associate's degree in Natural Resources Management from the University of Belize. He is working on his undergraduate degree in the same discipline, and will complete it in 2008. He has participated in training with national and international organizations; including the International Red Cross, Women's Issues Network, Global Vision International and the UNDP. Dirk has a passion for wildlife and nature photography, and has won several national awards for his photography skills.

Goals of Fellowship

Dirk hopes to contribute to building the institutional capacity of the Belize Audubon Society.

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Lorena Franco Vidal

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Position and Organization Affiliation

Lorena is a member and co-founder of the *Fundación Humedales* (Wetlands Foundation), which works on the conservation and management of Colombia's Andean wetlands. The Foundation supports the work of local communities dependent on fisheries, as well as reed artisans, small cattle and dairy producers, and local authorities. The aim is to develop a holistic, dynamic approach to management and conservation. Lorena also started the HumedAndes Initiative, for the development of the inventory of Andean wetlands, thought a conceptual and technical framework.

Current Projects

Lorena currently works on the development of a field guide for identifying wetland plants in the Cundinamarca and Boyacá Plateau. She is also writing a proposal for the second phase of a project on the "Conservation and Sustainable use processes of lake Fúquene ecosystem: towards a high Andean model wetland."

Background

Lorena has a Master of Science in Biology from the National University of Colombia, with an emphasis on biological conservation of coastal resources for human populations in the Pacific coast. Her undergraduate degree is in Microbiology, from the University of Los Andes.

Goals of Fellowship

Lorena is interested in institution-building. One of her main concerns is the propensity of the government of Colombia to work through static management systems. She wants to bring models of modern and dynamic conservation frameworks, to promote the inclusion of local communities in the management of their ecosystems and to overcome a lack of adaptive capacity of institutions and persons for management. She also hopes to share with the other fellows and to build cooperation networks.

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Position and Organization Affiliation

Soledad is a member and researcher at the NAZCA Institute for Marine Studies, based in Quito, Ecuador. Since 2004, the Institute has worked to create a scientific information center, identify conservation and research priorities, and establish long-term monitoring and research programs.

Current Projects

Soledad conducts various projects with the NAZCA Institute throughout mainland Ecuador. Her particular expertise lies in developing management programs that prevent environmental degradation and diminish negative social impact. She is currently working on the conservation plan for a marine protected area in the south of Esmeraldas province. She is conducting an evaluation of the Machalilla National Park Management Plan. In addition, she is working in Punta Galera (northern coast) with the aim of developing a management model of a marine protected area in mainland Ecuador; the first such program in Ecuador beyond the Galapagos Island.

Background

Soledad holds a Master of Science in Aquatic Tropical Ecology from the University of Bremen, Germany. Her Bachelor of Science degree from San Francisco de Quito University, Ecuador, focused on environmental control and management. She has extensive research experience in the Galapagos Marine Reserve and in mainland Ecuador.

Goals of Fellowship

Soledad hopes to establish lifetime linkages with fellows and with the organizations participating in the program. She hopes to replicate the exchanges in her home country and to enhance the work of NAZCA through her training. She is committed to learning from the experience of fellow participants and to sharing that of Ecuador.

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— PARTICIPANT PROFILES —

Celia Mahung

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Position and Organization Affiliation

Celia is the Executive Director of TIDE, in southern Belize. Founded in 1997, TIDE's mission is researching and monitoring Toledo's natural resources, to assist in protected areas planning and management and to lead the development of responsible tourism and other environmentally sustainable economic alternatives by providing training and support to local residents. Celia is committed to the long-term sustainability of the natural resources of Toledo, and committed to the continued growth of the organization. Her particular strengths lie in her passion for the development of the Toledo District, leadership experience, capacity-building expertise, knowledge of local and national people and customs, and her familiarity with TIDE's conservation efforts.

Current Projects

TIDE is currently involved in a number of projects. These include:

- Co-management of Port Honduras Marine Reserve: patrols and maintenance of the park
- Co-management of Payne's Creek National Park: patrols and maintenance of the park
- Private Lands Initiative: acquisition of lands to be held in perpetuity for the people of Belize
- Freshwater Initiative: monitoring and research of all freshwater sources in the Maya Mountain Marine Area Transect
- Educational Programs and Community Outreach: scholarship program; swimming day camp and junior ranger camp; radio program
- Tri-National Alliance for the Conservation of the Gulf of Honduras member: cooperative effort between organizations in Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras

Background

Celia Mahung has been an active member of TIDE's Board of Directors. She was instrumental in the growth and success of the organization, through representing TIDE at international meetings on sustainable development. For the past three years, she represented the University of Belize, Toledo Campus on the Port of Honduras Marine Reserve Advisory Committee.

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Sergi Marí-Pons

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Position and Organization Affiliation

Sergi is former President and longtime member of the Grup Balear d'Ornitologia i Defensa de la Naturalesa (Balearic Group for Ornithology and Nature Conservation - GOB). He is based on the island of Minorca, part one the Balearic Islands of Spain. GOB is an important NGO in the region, with the objective of preserving the environment by making human activity more compatible with nature. He is also the Director of the Socio-Environmental Observatory of Minorca (OBSAM) in the Institute for Minorca Studies.

Current Projects

Sergi oversees the participation of GOB in various areas: stewardship, environmental education, sustainable gardening, wild fauna, and lobbying for better conservation regulations. His particular responsibility lies with stewardship activities and projects. He also represents the GOB in the Council of the XCT, a network of stewardship organizations. In his capacity at OBSAM, Sergi oversees a project that analyses information on local climate; the effort is to contribute toward developing tools for observing climate change.

Background

Sergi holds a Master in Science in European Economy from the Université Libre de Bruxelles, in Brussels, Belgium. He has a Bachelor of Science in Economics from the Universidad Autonoma de Barcelona, Spain. He has worked as an economic advisor through Spain, and for the European Parliament in Brussels.

Goals of Fellowship

Sergi is committed to enhancing the capacity of GOB to promote stewardship. He is interested in advancing stewardship through regional laws and conservation policy. He hopes to capitalize on the current interest of the Spanish government, in developing the stewardship approach in Spain.