



Monteverde Friends School/Escuela de los Amigo

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www.mfschool.org

Learning about Nature



Even living in an amazing place like Monteverde, it is possible to take for granted the natural beauty that surrounds us. That can be particularly true for children who have never known different surroundings. We want to help them to be more aware and empower them to protect this precious nature.

We know that today's young people will face a huge challenge in saving the earth as climate change advances. In our school, we want to develop individuals who cherish all of nature – both flora and fauna – enough to fight to protect it.

We envision that as a three-step process. First, we want to expose students to nature in the hope that they find some favorite animals or plants and the motivation to protect them. The second step is to teach them what they can do to protect nature. The third step is to encourage them to engage in conservation.

*As we enter our MFS campus, we are greeted with information about the endangered **ocotea monteverdenis tree**, and the birds that seek it out. Our kinder students got to learn about the tree on a forest visit (see below).*

Except for an environmental science course for our high-schoolers, this process is not a separate class or course. Instead, it is woven throughout most of what we do.

We devote this issue of our newsletter to examples of how we transmit love of nature and the desire to protect it. What follows are just some key examples; we would need far more space to cover all we do to emphasize nature at MFS.

Study Abroad at

Monteverde Friends School

Join us for the 2024-2025 school year!

Experience life in the cloud forest, live with a local Costa Rican family, learn Spanish, and become a part of the MFS community!

We have 2-3 spaces available in our 11th grade class for international students interested in spending a semester or full academic year in Monteverde, Costa Rica.

If you'd like more information, visit our [website](http://www.mfschool.org) or contact us at info@mfschool.org for more information!





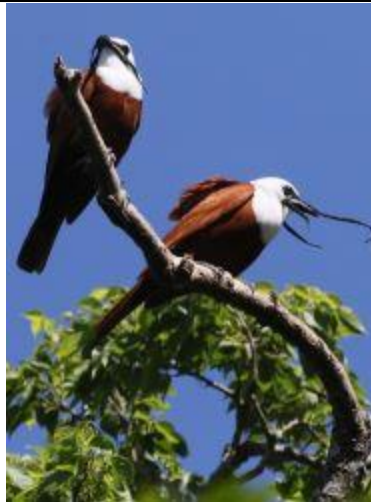
Environmental Lessons Are Embedded throughout Our Curriculum

Environmental awareness is included in all four years of science taught to our colegio students, in additionn to a full-year course in Environment Science that is taught to our 11/12 class. But that is far from the first that they hear about the environment! Awareness of nature is included at all levels and often all classes.

Here are just a few examples:



Wangari Maarthal, founder of the Green Belt Movement that works on conservation, community empowerment and women's rights.



Two male three-wattled bellbirds. Males are sometimes found together; scientists don't know why.



11/12th grader Yerica washes a small fraction of the dishes, bowls and pans from the 65 meals they sold today!

The 7/8 humanities class is studying human rights this quarter.11/12th We have examined collective rights, such as the right to a clean and healthy environment.

We learned about the Green Belt Movement, a grassroots environmental organization founded by Wangari Maathai. Its primary focus is on

Sample trigonometry test questions:

Sofia and Pablo observe a bellbird at the top of an ocotea monteverdensis with elevation angles of 59 and 71 degrees respectively. If the distance between Pablo and the bell bird is 22.36 m, what is the distance between Pablo and Sofia? Suppose that both are observing from a point

On a rotating schedule for Wednesdays, each of our classes prepares and sells a lunch or bake sale for all who are on campus. Typically they sell 60 to 80 lunches each week.

This offers benefits in two major ways:

Classes learn responsibility by funding a large portion of the cost of a class trip at the end of the year.

environmental conservation, community empowerment, and women's rights. Wangari Maathai was the first environmentalist to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Her work focused on planting trees to combat deforestation, soil erosion, and environmental degradation in Kenya and it later spread to many countries around the world.

Note: Since 1994 the Costa Rican constitution has stated "Every person has the right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment, being therefore entitled to denounce any acts that may infringe the said right and claim redress for the damage caused."

on the ground and that both Pablo and Sofia and the tree are collinear.

From the bank of the San Luis river, a tourist of 1.70 m height observes a stone on the other bank of the river, with a depression angle of 17° . What is the approximate measure, in meters, of the width of the river?

From a tree at a height of 2.34 m, a caucel observes a mouse lying on the ground. If the angle of depression with which the caucel observes the mouse is 39 degrees, what is the distance, in meters, between the caucel and the mouse?

A forest ranger sees a fire with a depression angle of 7 degrees while watching from a tower measuring 825 m. Approximately how far from the tower is the fire?

There are environmental considerations in how the meal is prepared and served

- Single portions are served out of large pots or containers that are not disposable
- Food is served on individual non-disposable plates and cups
- As a result, a key part of lunch duty is washing out all of the serving pots, pans and bowls used as well as all 60-80 dishes and 60-80 cups.
- All food scraps are composted

When classes work with physical displays, such as with art, they often make use of materials that might otherwise be recycled or thrown away. As a case in point, here is art made from used egg crates.

Another example is that assignments often require the use of compostable materials or the reuse of materials from our recycling bins. When science students try the egg drop exercise involving mass and velocity, they use leaves and other vegetation to wrap their egg in the hope that it will cushion their egg enough that it does not break when dropped from the second floor.



We are in the midst of allocating financial aid for the 2024-25 school year, based on what we raised in 2023.

Now it is time to put together financial aid for 2025-26! We hope you will help us assure that local students who already study with us can continue to study at MFS, even if their parents cannot afford the tuition.

Click below to see how you can make a tax-deductible donation in the United States, in Canada and in Costa Rica!



Nature Studies for Our Youngest Students



*From left, the outdoor presentation about *ocotea monteverdensis* trees, along a canopy bridge at Treetopia Park, and kids in trees -- a favorite activity for recess.*

We very deliberately include experiences of nature as part of our program for Pre-K, Kinder and Preppa classes. Children at those ages, 3 to 6, often have an inborn desire to be in natural settings, so we focus on presenting them with information about what they see and concerns about preserving our natural resources.

Recently, these students have gone on some field trips focused on learning about nature.

One such trip introduced them to the *ocotea monteverdensis* tree (pictured in the Introduction, above). All 21 children walked to some land about a kilometer from the school, where they gathered near one of the trees.

Dev Joslin, a member of our Friends Meeting, has worked hard for the survival of this tree, and he met the group there to tell the little ones about the tree. Dev has been instrumental in putting signs near some of the surviving trees with information about the tree, its endangered status, its foliage and the birds it attracts.

The children learned that this tree only grows between elevations of about 1,200 to 1,500 meters above sea level -- including Monteverde at 1,400 meters -- but that they are very endangered due to previous tree cutting.

Our Kinder and Preppa students are working on plant and water studies. As part of that, Jonah Chaffee from **Valle Escondido Nature Reserve Hotel and Farm** joined the class to teach the children about identifying different plants. Jonah has also worked recently with our first and second graders, bringing plants that they planted in a garden on the MFS campus.

*The sign indicating an *ocotea montaverdensis* tree at the entrance to the MFS campus.*



Other chances to explore nature range from a trip to [Treetopia Park](#), walking the canopy bridges to see the tops of trees to the day-to-day experiences with recess and tree climbing in the forest surrounding our campus.

We hope that whatever as these children grow to adults, this baseline of caring for nature is carried with them throughout life.

Exploring Nature in Our Minicourses

On Friday afternoons, we end our weeks with mini-courses for an hour or so. Each quarter, both teachers and community members offer classes on various topics. Each topic is offered to students of various grade levels for a nice mix of ages.

With the relatively dry weather of the third quarter of the school year, it is a wonderful time to take coursework outside. It is a great time for getting in touch with nature.

Perhaps the biggest challenge of the mini-courses is choosing just one each quarter! Some of the choices for the current quarter, as presented to students:

Outdoor Art: “Each week we will do several different art projects outdoors including painting, building with natural materials, collage, chalk, mobiles, and printing”

Minatas (Walks): “Hiking is an excellent opportunity to exercise with friends while appreciating nature.”

Tracks of Terrestrial Mammals: “Students will learn to identify the tracks left by land mammals in the forest. They will also reproduce the footprint they observed in the field in plaster.”

Paper Mache Sculptures: “Make paper mache and learn how to sculpt small or mobile animals and bring them to life with lots of color with acrylic paints.”

Additional choices include **bicycling, mural art for an outdoor display, outdoor meditation and hiking for physical training.**

What a challenge to choose just one of these!





Students enjoying their minicourses.

Top: This 7th grader was delighted to pause his bike ride so that he could swing on a dead vine.

Middle: A young woman focuses intently as she works on an outdoor mural in chalk on a blackboard. The blackboard is located on the back of a bus stop and faces a busy common area in the center of Monteverde.

Left: Two boys who selected the hiking minicourse admire some cheerful flowers.

