Join us on an intergenerational course:

Connections: Belize Ecology and Natural History

General Information:
Belize, a British colony called British Honduras until 1981, is tucked under the "thumb" of Mexico, just south of the Yucatan Peninsula. It is bordered on the north by Mexico, the west and south by Guatemala, and the east by the Caribbean Sea. It is home to the longest barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere, second in the world only to the Great Barrier Reef of Australia. It also has the most forested area remaining of any Central American country (61% of its original rainforest). Because of these large natural areas, Belize is very diverse: 550 bird species, 65 bat species, hundreds of fishes, and thousands of insects (yes, including mosquitoes and bot flies...). The cultural diversity of Belize is also striking, including Mayan, Creole, Carib, Garifuna and Mennonite cultures, each with their own ethnic practices and cultures.

The primary goal of this course is to explore "connections" among the people, organisms, and environments of Belize. These connections include biological symbioses (some of the most fascinating interwoven lives in the world!), human uses of rainforest plants (medicinal and otherwise), and cultural connections between modern and historical native peoples and their environs. We will have the opportunity to talk about and listen to guest lectures on the ecology and natural history of the area, and to explore these subjects by land and by sea (including rivers!). We will visit Mayan archaeological sites and modern-day Mayan, Creole, and Garifuna villages. All of these activities will be "connected" by faculty and student presentations that will help to synthesize what we are learning.

Purpose: To better understand the astonishing diversity of the tropics
Students will work together to investigate Belize ecosystems: how they were formed and how they are changing. In this interdisciplinary course, we will learn by doing! We’ll look, ask questions, discuss, reflect, and look again.

Required: An Attitude of Discovery!
Fitness needed compares to Elderhostel Program Activity Level 4 or 5

Who: Undergraduate students
     Graduate students
     Seniors

What: Two weeks in Belize, learning about
     o Natural history
     o Tropical ecology
     o Culture and ethnic groups
     o Ancient Maya culture

When: July 14th-28th, 2011

Where: Belize, Central America

Why: Learning … Fun … Excitement
     …Beautiful plants, animals and people!

How much: $2,900 all included
Tentative itinerary

July 14-18 - La Milpa Field Station in **northern Belize**. Highlights:
- Moist rainforests
- Mestizo culture

July 18-21 - **Spanish Lookout Mennonite colony** in central Belize. Highlights:
- Wet rainforest
- Caves – natural and with ancient Mayan artifacts
- Mennonite and Creole culture

July 21-24 - Maya Mt Research Farm in **southern Belize**. Highlights:
- WET rainforest (really wet!)
- Permaculture

July 24-27 – **Cayes**
- Marine / coastal ecosystems – reefs, mangroves & development
- Garifuna culture

Instructors

**Dr. Donna McCollum**
Donna has been teaching adult students of all ages in Belize for more than 10 years and has been an educator more than 30 years. She currently is the Environmental Monitoring Coordinator at Miami University’s Institute of the Environment and Sustainability (IES).

**Dr. Hays Cummins**
Hays has been leading students to tropical climes for nearly a quarter of a century. He teaches in Belize, Costa Rica, south Florida, the Bahamas and Curacao. He currently is faculty in Miami’s Western Program & the Geography Department

*Both of us enjoy teaching in the field more than any other kind of teaching!*

For more information about the course, to ask questions or set up an appointment to meet us, or to find out how to register, contact Donna at mccollds@muohio.edu / 529-9386 or Hays at haysc@muohio.edu / 529-1338.