**Introduction**

Summer is upon us – which means relatively cold weather in Cuenca while in Quito it is unseasonably hot! Of course the variation is minimal compared to northern climes – 5 degrees or so - but locals complain of both “extremes.”

Every year is different for the Spanish schools in terms of its seasonal cycles, but this year things are noticeably quieter, as in Ecuador in general. There seem to be fewer tourists about, which also means fewer students. The school in Cuenca remains full however, while Quito has been quieter.

Ecuador has enjoyed a number of years of popularity as the first South American destination, but perhaps that is changing as countries like Peru and Colombia develop their tourism offerings. But the quality of Spanish tuition remains equally high at Yanapuma!

Our volunteer department has been very busy over the last two months, with a large number of individual volunteers as well as volunteers in groups. And these summer months will be even busier as we host a number of groups from all over the world.

At the same time we have begun to develop our own travel agency – True Ecuador Travel. This enterprise has really grown out of the combination packages that we have begun to offer in increasing numbers over the previous years – Spanish classes, volunteering, transport and other services, Galapagos and Amazon tours.

So we finally felt it was time to not just be a Spanish school or an NGO that offers these additional services, but to become a fully-fledged Ecuadorian travel agency with all the guarantees and reliability that implies. You can check out our new secure travel agency website: [www.true-ecuador-travel.org](http://www.true-ecuador-travel.org)

Yanapuma Foundation has continued to work on the co-financed project with the Inter American Foundation. Our 4 Tsa’chila and local field staff have grown tremendously in their abilities over the past nearly three years and we are pleased to know that by the end of the project they will be well placed to carry on their work with minimal input from Yanapuma, making the project truly sustainable. You can learn more about our work on the following pages.

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**Demonstrations in Quito**

Recently we were reminded just how fragile democracy can be in Latin American countries when a week of demonstrations were fomented by opposition leaders in Ecuador. When our executive director arrived in Ecuador around 10 years ago he was told by various people, as a joke, that there are two sports in Ecuador – football and ousting governments! With 7 governments in a ten year period that claim didn’t seem too far fetched! What this shows is that distrust of politicians is a widespread uncercurrent in Latin America, making it easy to get people riled up and ready to demonstrate at the drop of a hat.

Fortunately the demonstrations achieved nothing, with equal counter-demonstrations from the supporters of the democratic process, and the noisy marches that passed by our offices in the historic center every day just provided a bit more “cultural color” for our Spanish students!
Since we opened the school in Cuenca in 2013 it has become a popular destination for our students, many of whom choose to spend time studying in both schools – a week or two in Quito followed by a week or two in Cuenca. Our “Quito Cultural” and “Cuenca Cultural” programs are popular, combining regular Spanish classes with visits to places of cultural and historic interest with a teacher. That way students get to combine their Spanish tuition with more touristic pursuits in a real immersion experience.

A major project for the Spanish school over the past couple of months has been to create a new electronic syllabus, taking full advantage of available technology to blend together class planning, tuition materials, electronic and other exercises and electronic media such as audio and video. All these materials our teachers will have to hand to be able to seamlessly conduct their small group classes. Once completed we will introduce these same materials into our online Spanish classes.

Yanapuma has been offering online Spanish classes for a good few years now. In addition to offering classes to our former students and the general public from all over the world, we have begun to work with agencies from various countries that offer Spanish classes under their own brand.

This is a good relationship from our perspective as we would rather focus on the teaching and methods than on marketing and publicity. Students typically take between one to four hours per week of classes, some for work or leisure purposes, while others are studying for particular exams.

We offer a free trial class to students so they can see how it works before committing themselves to a course of study. Check out our webpages for a link to the free trial class!

Our volunteer coordinators/counsellors have been very busy over the last two months with a large number of groups and individual volunteers arriving to carry out different programs here in Ecuador.

A group from the Leap (UK) who arrived in April finished their program in mid June after carrying out projects in the sierra community of Chilcapamba followed by nearly 3 weeks in the Galapagos Islands working on a conservation project, as well as having time for exciting excursions to explore the unique environment of the archipelago.

A group of 10 students from Vanderbilt University spent May and part of June volunteering in Quito at various projects as part of their Global Service Program.

We were also pleased to welcome a group of 10 students from the University of Missouri languages department along with two teachers (below). They spent three weeks in Ecuador, volunteering in Chilcapamba, and visiting Otavalo and Mindo cloud forest.

Another group from Pacific Discovery spent a month in Ecuador volunteering on various projects in the sierra and the Amazon region before spending two weeks volunteering and touring the Galapagos Islands.

UK Ph.D. candidate Steve Owen arrived in June to begin research for his doctorate on how local communities view volunteers and their activities, and what the effects are on both sides. He has shadowed groups in Chilcapamba and will do the same in Bua.

In addition to these study abroad and volunteer groups we have received a number of individual volunteers, either with or without Spanish classes, to be placed in many of the varied grass-roots and community projects that we support in Quito and Cuenca and all around the country, including on the Galapagos Islands.

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Donation News . . .

We are always happy to receive small donations for Project work. We can commit 100% of such donations directly to the project. Such funds can be very useful in bridging other projects and in fulfilling specific needs of the moment. Visit our website here for details: http://www.yanapuma.org/en/support.php
Yanapuma Foundation . . .

**Tsa’chila culture**

We are now just about to complete our 3rd year of the project co-funded by the Inter American Foundation.

We are working with around 70 Tsa’chila farmers on improving and making more sustainable their cacao production. In addition we are working with around 60 families on vegetable growing and nutrition and health education. These are lessons that only gradually begin to work their way into the daily routines of a culture like the Tsa’chila. We have previously noted that in their transition from semi-nomadic hunter-gatherer forest-dwellers to small scale farmers they have adopted the very worst practices of their mestizo neighbors. This has led to severe degradation of the land that was once pristine rainforest as well as creating health problems for the Tsa’chila through the misuse and overuse of fertilizers and pesticides.

As the understanding of the importance of protecting the environment grows, so too the desire to farm more sustainably increases. Our work directly relates to this process. Another important development that we are just in the process of embarking upon is the development of the concept of the “edible forest.” We will be working with 14 farmers to create test plots of around one hectare each where we can plant a mixed forest environment with a wide variety of fruiting and productive trees with other edible products on the forest floor.

The Tsa’chila have reacted surprisingly positively to the first mention of this concept, which has spurred us into including this in our projects. We will be sowing the first plots in October this year, followed by more transplanting in January of next year with the help of various volunteer groups.

The saplings for the “edible forest” are being grown by the members of the cultural center Shinopi Bolon of the comuna Bua. They are preparing 6000 plants of local species for volunteers to transplant in October. A further number will be prepared for sowing in January of next year with other volunteer groups.

We are encouraging the members of the cultural center to develop their nursery as a commercial enterprise as a way of generating income in the future from an activity which sits well with their culture and history.

As part of this project we recently sent them to visit an existing nursery in Pedro Vinicio Maldonado near the Pacific coast where they have been producing saplings for sale for a good number of years. The Tsa’chila were able to learn much about how such a business is run in preparation for being able to develop their own nursery business.

In addition to these activities Janeth Llanos and Cristina Calazacón have continued visiting families in four comunas to support their efforts to grow vegetables and to improve the nutrition and health of their families. As we come to the last 6 months of this project we are focused on the sustainability of the program once we are not there to continue supporting the families. At the same time we will begin the search for additional funding that will help the current field team to carry on with their important work.

**Estero de Plátano**

In the coastal village of Estero de Plátano our scholarship recipients have now started a new academic year. The interns from Union College who work with the youth there left the community in April, and two new interns will start there in August. Although we look for an intern or volunteer to cover the period from May to July, it is not always possible, and this year was no exception. We have new scholarship recipients starting high school this year as we had 5 graduate at the end of the last academic year.