



MY PASSION: ANTHROPOLOGY
Ellison Goodrich (Melissa Seaboch)
Department of Anthropology

I was in my third year of college when I decided to switch my major. I was a declared Biology major with the intention of going to medical school and becoming a physician. That didn't quite work out. It was the spring semester of 2017, I had enrolled in an Anthropology class that semester, "Human Origins and Evolution", because it filled a general requirement. Through this course I found out about a primatology field school in Costa Rica. Completely out of my comfort zone and unlike anything I had done before, I made the decision to go to Costa Rica. I completed my first semester of undergraduate research, immediately falling in love with field work, from data collection to inputting and analyzing data. For the field school we had to design our own research project. Because it was a primatology field school, it had to be a project related to the primates at the La Selva Biological Station, where the most common primate is *Alouatta palliata* (mantled howler monkey). For my project I chose to conduct a behavioral study of the mantled howler monkeys. I remember the hardest part was figuring out how to organize my field notes. After completing my field school, I made the decision to go back to Costa Rica as an independent researcher in the summer of 2018 to continue my project. The field season of 2018 was one of the best experiences of my life and I made some of my favorite memories with some of my favorite people.

We landed in San Jose, Costa Rica and caught a taxi to the La Selva Biological Station. We arrived at the biological station and the field season began. I chose to study the Howler Monkey population at La Selva, collecting behavioral data. We spent everyday hiking through the rainforest and looking for howler monkeys, which can be difficult considering they sleep most of the day and blend in very well with the trees. Once we found a troop of howler monkeys, we would sit and watch them for hours collecting behavioral data. Some days we would be successful, and we would find troops to collect data from. Other days weren't as successful and sometimes left a feeling of discouragement. While at the station, we were also able to make friends with many of the guides and had the opportunity to go river rafting four times while. It was the most incredible summer, but it came with its hardships. Through these hardships I discovered a lot about myself. Through the trials I realized I valued my time in the field, growing a passion for research. It was this summer that I made a huge decision to change my major and career to anthropology. Through undergraduate research I had discovered where I belong. I made the switch to Anthropology and haven't looked back.