

Internship Report: Mongabay.com

Mongabay.com is an environmental science and news website with a heavy emphasis on rainforest conservation. Founded in 1999 by Rhett Butler, mongabay.com now receives more than one million unique visitors per month and has been featured in Time Magazine, The Wall Street Journal, and the San Francisco Chronicle among other national and international publications. Mongabay.com also publishes Tropical Conservation Science, a peer-edited journal featuring the research of scientists in developing countries. In April 2008, Time.com selected mongabay.com as one of its top fifteen environmental websites.

As an intern with mongabay.com, I contributed stories to the site's environmental news section. I either presented article ideas for approval, or Rhett or my editor, Jeremy Hance, assigned me a story to cover. I read press releases, contacted relevant sources, conducted background research, and translated Portuguese documents and news. Of the twenty-eight articles I have written thus far, almost half have been related to the Amazon Rainforest. I also wrote about poaching in Africa, the illegal wildlife trade, new and interesting species, climate change, and aquaculture. For many of these stories, I read scientists' reports and communicated with researchers. I conducted one full-length interview with the author of a new study about forest carbon conservation in Africa, and am currently working on another feature article and interview concerning toxic e-waste in Africa. My articles can be found using the following link:

<http://news.mongabay.com/news-index/karimeh%20moukaddem1.html>.

Interning with mongabay.com greatly improved my writing skills. My editor took the time to work with me on my articles, and provided comments, feedback, and instruction that enabled me to improve my writing. The consistency of his editing allowed me to take specific notes and greatly improve my journalistic style. In addition, I learned

to use HTML to format articles.

Because I speak Portuguese, I was able to bring more obscure sources of information to light in English. In addition to translating reports, interviews, and news stories from the Brazilian press, I was able to research in-language. While researching a story about deforestation in the Amazon in Portuguese, I discovered that the Brazilian division of Bunge Fertilizers, a multinational company based out of the U.S., had made a generous donation to the Brazilian senator advancing the repeal of one of Brazil's foremost environmental protection laws. After the article was published, Bunge's American division posted a link to the story on their internal website, showing the corporation took note.

While I thoroughly enjoy writing for mongabay.com, I discovered I do not enjoy working from home. Working from home requires a level of discipline I find difficult to sustain. Not interacting with co-workers or having the physical separation of work and leisure also has been challenging. However, working remotely did permit me to take this internship, and allowed for a flexible schedule.

Being a journalism intern for mongabay.com has enabled me to gain experience in my field while improving my writing. While I do not want to work as a journalist in the future, I have no doubt writing will feature prominently in my job responsibilities in the future. While interning at mongabay.com, I continued to learn about environmental issues around the world while being introduced to the individuals and organizations working to protect vulnerable habitats, species, and people.

Sewanee students considering applying for an internship with mongabay.com will need a background in either environmental policy or ecology and biology. Strong writing skills are also necessary, as is a good sense of time management and ability to self-motivate.