Cavalo Lusitano
Filho do Vento
Lusitano Horse | Son of the Wind

Panamá
Destino Privilegiado
Panama | Privileged Destination

Puy Du Fou
Regresso ao Passado
Puy Du Fou | Return to the Past

Turismo  História  Arqueologia  Antropologia  Saúde  Gastronomia  Economia  Geografia
Tourism  History  Archeology  Anthropology  Health  Gastronomy  Economy  Geography
On a typical weekday afternoon, commercial banker Julie Ranger sits at a desk in her Montreal office doing financial analyses and talking on the phone with customers. But a recent Thursday afternoon in April was anything but typical. Ranger, a sales associate for HSBC Bank Canada, had not only traded her usual business suit and heels for a pair of khakis and hiking boots, she was standing in the middle of a forest examining the trunk of a pine tree. Under the guidance of forest ecologist Nancy Khan of the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC), Ranger was about to attach to the trunk a device called a dendrometer: a spring-loaded metal band that stretches as the tree grows, allowing scientists to precisely measure changes in its size over time.

Ranger, along with 11 bank colleagues from across North America, was on day three of a two-week stint as a volunteer at SERC's 2,800-acre campus of forests, farmland, and wetlands on Maryland's Chesapeake Bay. The intensive, hands-on experience was the highlight of her recent Bank of the Environment Challenge for the bank, which has partnered with the international nonprofit Earthwatch Institute, WWF, The Climate Group, and Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI). Together with the bank, these organizations have formed the HSBC Climate Partnership to conduct research on global warming and seek solutions to the problem. During the course of the five-year partnership, HSBC plans to send more than 2,000 employees to climate research centers established by Earthwatch in China, India, Brazil England, and the US. (SERC hosts the US center.) After returning to their jobs, Champions are expected to promote green business practices among their coworkers - a responsibility that Ranger embraces enthusiastically. "I truly believe I can make a difference," she says, calling her experience at SERC "both enlightening and inspirational."

Aided by HSBC volunteers, researchers at SERC are establishing one of the newest study plots in an international scientific network that has begun to reveal how forests will respond to climate change. The first plot on Panama's Barro Colorado Island was set up by STRI in 1980. Since then, the network, known as the Center for Tropical forests of different ages and abodes of human disturbance-specifically logging-will respond to warming and be able to soak up CO2 over time.

At least as important as the funding itself, the contribution of HSBC employees is critical to this temperate forest work. The new plots are adding to the CTFS network tens of thousands of trees that must be all marked, mapped, identified, and measured. According to Earthwatch Field Director Dan Stover, more than 30 teams of volunteers coming to SERC, alone will complete 21,000 hours of work by the end of the five-year program. "That's about what one scientist would get done working by himself or herself over their career in a ... forest," he says.

But the bankers are providing more than labor. "Financial people come from a culture of numbers, which is very compatible with the precision of science," says Stover. Geoffrey "Joss" Parker, head scientist for SERC's Forest Ecology Lab, agrees: "They are not only good with numbers, some volunteers have suggested better ways for us to collect, enter, or manipulate data."

"Type A" personalities also help. "If I tell a group that the last team measured a thousand trees, they'll want to double the number," says Stover.

But in the end, the Champions. Greatest contributions may come after they return home. Before leaving their field assignments, each volunteer must complete an action plan detailing how he or she will educate others in the workplace about global warming and promote environmentally friendly practices. So far, change instigated by Champions include turning off lights in conference rooms, switching from paper to online forms and statements, and recycling or composting office waste. Such transmogrifications are potentially very powerful, says Stover and not just because HSBC has some 300,000 employees around the world. Unlike most corporate green programs, he says, "this one is bottom up, rather than top down. The employees themselves are driving the change."