

JULIA MARTINEZ



If you have a problem when visiting the La Flor Wildlife Refuge in Nicaragua, then call on biologist and educator Julia Martinez. Julia works for the conservation NGO Paso Pacifico and leads an environmental education program based in the areas surrounding the Refuge.

Spending her weeks teaching in rural classrooms and living in local communities, Julia is admired by the children and adults alike. She has led the program for five years, and has seen many of her students become ambassadors for the conservation of the most important sea turtle nesting beaches and coastal tropical dry forests in Nicaragua.

“Three of the older children who were in my classes are now training to become tour guides in eco-tourism,” she says. This is a big change from the days when the children fired slingshots at wildlife. Indeed, Julia even convinced a company to donate binoculars to students who hand in their slingshots and complete a five-week course on natural history. Already, over four hundred binoculars have been given to children.

Sometimes the travelling and living is hard, but Julia doesn't complain. “This is a good experience because we build friendships and trust,” she says. “It is alright because it is part of being a conservationist.”