

The Research Ambassador Program

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National Science Foundation
<http://www.nsf.gov>
Informal Science Education Program: NSF
0322214



National Geographic Society
Conservation Trust program
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/conservation/index.html>



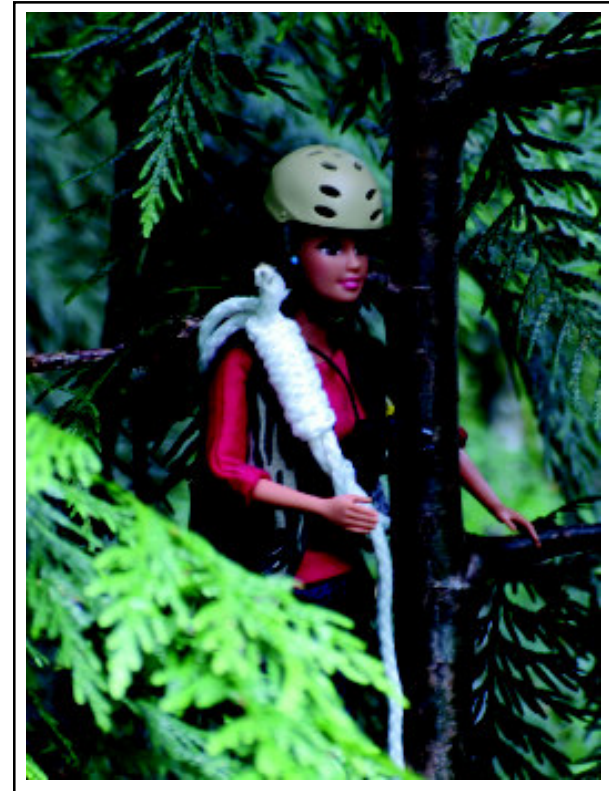
The International Canopy Network
<http://www.evergreen.edu/ican>



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**THE
RESEARCH AMBASSADOR
PROGRAM**

TREETOP BARBIE



An outreach project by researchers to
communicate science to public audiences.

RESEARCH SCENARIO No. 1

SEPTEMBER 2005

RESEARCH AMBASSADOR



What is the TreeTop Barbie project?

TreeTop Barbie was designed to inspire youth - especially young girls - to become aware of the field of the forest canopy. She is a real Barbie doll, but wears hand-tailored clothes that are modeled on real field clothes and climbing gear, including a field guide to canopy plants and animals (both Barbie- and human-sized). The TreeTop Barbie package includes the doll and a personal letter from Barbie about forests and their importance to people.

What issues does this project address?

Treetop Barbie can serve as a role model to encourage young girls in directions that are alternatives to the mainstream Barbie doll and what she represents in our society. Treetop Barbie and her accompanying educational materials also provide a link between youth and an exciting part of the natural world in tropical and temperate ecosystems.

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH AMBASSADOR PROGRAM?

A major problem facing our society is the widening gap between humans and nature, exacerbated by the lack of connections among science, scientists and society. The Research Ambassador Program helps bridge those gaps by providing academic scientists with rewards and incentives to do direct outreach to the public.

TREETOP BARBIE

What were the outcomes?

The Treetop Barbie Project has received positive attention from professionals in ecological disciplines. She is popular among non-scientists such as children and doll collectors. TreeTop Barbie was described in the Science Times of the New York Times and has been highlighted by other regional, national and international papers. The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) supports the TreeTop Barbie Project and promotes her on their website (www.aaas.org). This project is a model for other scientists to link their research to a popular cultural icon and thus heighten awareness of non-scientific audiences.

How can I get a TreeTop Barbie?

TreeTop Barbie is distributed by The International Canopy Network (ICAN), a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting forest canopy conservation through research and education. Funds generated will support this and other outreach activities.



The Research Ambassador Program, established in 2003, has recruited scientists from many disciplines in academia and trained them to do outreach, especially in non-traditional venues such as churches, prisons, skateboard parks and hospitals. Researchers link their research to the interest of an existing profession, trade or interest group, and give talks or write popular articles about their research as it relates to that public audience. Rewards for scientists include a financial honorarium, a letter of thanks from a high-ranking academic, outreach training, and contacts to communicate in the local community.