The End of a Journey:

A Reflection
One of the classes undertaken during ECOEE is RPTA 448 Cultural Interpretation. For this class each student selected a specific topic within the broad umbrella of cultural interpretation. Then, we taught the topic to our fellow students throughout this semester of traveling. However, my situation was a little different. You see the topic I chose was to interpret ECOEE 2009 via a video podcast. Then I played this movie podcast at the final banquet for all of our friends and families to enjoy. So instead of teaching an interpretation topic, I was taking pictures of each student as they worked, lived, and played throughout the semester. As well as, photographing and documenting the locations of this trip in its entirety from start to finish.

Knowing that this would be my job on ECOEE: I knew I had to have a high quality camera, because I did not want the aesthetic beauty of these places to be lost in pixilation. I was also thinking throughout the semester about what songs I felt would best represent the different aspects of our trip. And although I lost hours and hours of work on this project due to ancient computers, and technical difficulties; I still greatly enjoyed this task.

To be honest though, my personal interpretation of ECOEE 2009 has been continually changing. From our last backcountry segment in Baja, California; through final evaluations; and up to now: my perspective on ECOEE has waxed and waned like the tides of a great sea.

For me, it is hard to be optimistic about a program you have dedicated six months of hard work to; only to find out you have failed at achieving your personal goals. It is hard to sell a program to peers, that you have doubts about in your heart. This shortcoming has left me with many questions and uncertainties.

However, I am still proud of the accomplishments I made, and the work that I put in. Even more so, I am proud of each of my fellow ECOEE brothers and sisters for giving so much of themselves to this program. Sure there are practical finals, evaluations, and all sorts of other measurements of what ECOEE is, and how well we performed; but in the end, it was each one of us coming together as a group that made ECOEE 09’. There is no evaluation or standard that can accurately measure this group and our accomplishments. To each and every one of you: I love you; and want to thank you, for being you!

Josh Boyer

Thanksgiving break was over and we all had to go back to school to finish up a last week of ECOEE. There was a lot of work that was we still needed to be done. All school tests and paper work. Since it was a brand new environment and the last week, we all decided that Christine and Kim be FOD’s for the week, since they didn’t have to do it the whole trip much. So they accepted and took on the FOD challenge. The last week seemed to turn out with its challenges. We needed as a group to do a practical test; a written test, a 10-page paper, and a trip plan to turn in for the WEA. We also knew ahead of time that we had to do final evaluations to do on one another to come up with that they would get the wilderness leader certification. This all took up a lot more time than I thought it would. But Christine and Kim did well keeping the group together by finishing up these had to do tasks. It was also tuff being that there were distractions since we were staying at school and not traveling day to day. We all came together and worked to get this done together. In spite of a few little frustrations and butting heads here and there. The week came close to an end quick. No more are we cooking out of a trailer in the beautiful lands and environment. Out in nature. Living back to our roots. Working to survive and live. It’s an experience we all need, just to get out and get one with nature. With the earth, the skies, the cosmos. There always is a bigger picture. It takes solidarity to help realize it.
Now that we are in the final stages of our expedition, the time has come to evaluate each other once more. This time we have to evaluate every person on ECOEE one by one going through the entire 18-point curriculum. The process took roughly three hours for each person and it got pretty intense. We needed to see if each person was a good enough outdoor leader to get certified through the WEA (Wilderness Education Association), so while we evaluated we not only had to keep in mind how that person did throughout the trip, but we also had to tie in to see if they were up to the standards of the WEA. The 18-point curriculum hits these categories: 1. Decision Making/Problem Solving, 2. Leadership, 3. Expedition Behavior and Group Dynamics, 4. Environmental Ethics, 5. Basic Camping Skills, 6. Nutrition and Ration Planning, 7. Equipment and Clothing Selection and Use, 8. Weather, 9. Health and Sanitation, 10. Travel Techniques, 11. Navigation, 12. Safety and Risk management, 13. Wilderness Emergency Procedure and Treatment, 14. Natural and Cultural History, 15. Specialized Travel/Adventure Activities, 16. Group Processing and Communication Skills, 17. Trip Planning, and finally 18. Teaching and Transference. Yikes, am I missing something! If you think this is a lot, try evaluating each point with 12 students, it wasn’t fun! Personally I wasn’t really going for certification; I came on this trip to grow as a person, so this process really dragged on for me! During the evaluations we had some laughs and we had some cries, just like we had during the trip. I am never going to forget the time I had on ECOEE, and the awesome experience I have been through.

Peace,
Love, and
Happiness!

Cassi Lundeen
Seven Aspects of Love

Throughout the trip many things were holding our group together. There was humor, and interest in simply getting to know everybody better. During a lesson early in the semester Jeff brought up the 7 Aspects of Love. These include honestly, humility, forgiveness, generosity, patience, kindness, and courtesy. All of these are important in holding a group together and keeping ones individual level of compassion for a group real. I didn’t notice how important these were until one night we gave examples on each individual in the group and times where they displayed these behaviors. We all had on the trip without realizing it. There isn’t room for hiding to many feelings or frustrations toward the group or any individuals in the group. We all have had our times where it was just easier not to talk about it at the time, but it always seemed to come back to smack us in the face at later date. ECOEE makes you hate to lover certain things about individuals and really learn what people are about. We all had one thing in common that we were out on a semester long trip to become and learn about being an outdoor leader and wanting to meet new people along the way. We did just that we have all left this trip friends and will have 7 aspects of love to apply to everything else’s we do in our lives. We love each other for who they are and have gone through every step with each individual I can comfortably say.
Cassi Lundeen  
Formation of the Grand Canyon

Many changes have occurred in the Grand Canyon due to pre-dam and post-dam impacts. Many of the big cities in the area couldn’t survive without the Colorado River. The Colorado River is a power source to the area and also a source of life. Before the dam was installed there was a reddish tint to the water making it look like a brownish red color, this was from the sediment in the water. After the dam was built the sediment is being caught causing the brownish red color to change to a bluish green color like we see today. The dam is a provider of electricity, flood control, and many water uses. The dam has dramatically changed the amount of native fish in the area. There are 4 species almost near extinction because the dam was built. John Wesley Powell first navigated the river in 1869, and his discovery adventure down the Colorado River was with only 9 men and 4 boats. The Grand Canyon has been used for many years and this is a dramatic change in time with the physical features of the land. The wildlife is becoming a huge concern with the disappearance of many of these fish because of the man made dams used to power this life we live today. The difference in the water is dramatic many people used to say that the water was too thick to drink, and to thin to plow from the amount of natural sediment from the canyon area. Now, it’s bluish green and a dramatic amount of less sediment causing the wildlife to disappear. Nicole Koelinger gave us this river talk and really made me think about the impacts humans are having on the environment in order to make life easier, and the life we are talking away from nature. 

Shane Johnson  
The Need for Adventure Recreation

Throughout the Environmental Conservation Outdoor Education Expedition we had the opportunity to visit quite a few organizations. Included in the everyday operations of these organizations was the ability for its members to participate in recreational activities. Taking part in the ECOEE program is a means to get a foot in the door of a career as a recreational leader so visiting these organizations and seeing why this career field is important and not just about fun is a valuable experience.

At 29 Palms we learned about how the opportunity to participate in adventure recreation boosted the morale and overall life experience of the marines which in turn keeps them motivated in their defense of our country. At San Diego State University they have the Aztec Recreation Center. The programs offered through ARC introduce students into the outdoors and develop an appreciation of the environment and wilderness by getting them out there and introducing it to them first hand motivating them to do so with the opportunity for college credit.

In turn as students trying to learn the real value of education and recreation in the out of doors we have now seen the benefits first hand of the getting people outside and away from "electrical outlets." And by seeing how recreation in the outdoors helps us we can develop an even deeper appreciation for it and hopefully begin to help the environment outdoors in return.