

Cape Wildlife Center – Summer 2018

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Ohio State University Class of 2019

My name is Marissa and I am a pre-veterinary student at The Ohio State University. I interned with the Cape Wildlife Center the summer before my senior year as I was beginning to apply to veterinary school. I have always been fascinated with wildlife conservation, but interning at the Cape Wildlife Center gave me the wildlife *veterinary* experience I had been searching for. This experience gave me a very honest look into a career as a wildlife veterinarian, affirming my aspirations and further motivating me to make my dream a reality.

From the very first day of the internship, I was treated as a valued member of the CWC team. The veterinary staff took the time to walk us interns through the process of each animal's admission, treatment and release, explaining in great detail how and why we perform each task. Because of this, in just a few weeks, I felt very proficient in handling species I had never worked with in my life. Not only that, but I felt confident teaching volunteers how to perform these duties, as well as allocating responsibilities to large teams in order to complete our daily tasks in a timely manner.

What made this internship so different from others I had done in the past was the amount of hands-on veterinary experience I was able to gain. The veterinarian on staff, Dr. Priya Patel, was an incredible teacher, and used every case as an opportunity to demonstrate or explain something new. My favorite case of the summer was a snowy owl that was admitted for a wing fracture, but wound up with bumblefoot during his healing process. Through this case alone, I learned how to anesthetize a bird of prey, take radiographs, wrap a wing, treat and prevent pododermatitis, prepare owl diets, flight-test, and so much more. This is just a small sampling of the new skills we gained, as we were also responsible for providing daily care and assisting in medical examinations for baby mammals (such as squirrels, possums and bunnies), song birds, turtles, snakes, waterfowl, and rabies-vector-species (such as raccoons, skunks and fisher cats). My fellow interns and I had the opportunity to play an active role in the rehabilitation of all patients, giving us a sense of accomplishment and confidence in our newfound skills as summer came to a close.

On a day to day basis, interns were assigned to a different region of the hospital in order to ensure that the needs of that ward were tended to, some days in teams, other days individually. Our daily work could consist of anything from tube feeding baby raccoons, creating enrichment for our larger patients, life-guarding waterfowl in the pool, releasing healed patients back the wild, admitting new cases into the hospital, and much more. Our veterinary staff challenged us to think for ourselves, and assess each new case with the tools they had provided us. What is the body condition score? Are there any fractures or wounds? Does this patient have any neurological symptoms? These are questions that we grew confident in assessing and answering ourselves. While my time at the Cape Wildlife Center challenged me in different ways each day, I also felt incredibly supported. The CWC team is nothing short of family, and they welcomed us interns in with open arms. Each member of the team was rooting for me since day one, pushing me to help me grow and ensuring that I left the Cape feeling equipped and excited to dive into my veterinary education. While some days were more hectic than others, we always found ourselves laughing and lifting each other up, enjoying each day more than the one before. My time at the Cape Wildlife Center has given me skills that I will utilize well into my veterinary career, in addition to friends and mentors I will cherish for a lifetime.

