

The Student Chronicles

Newsletter from the SDWG

March 2018

Note from the Editor

Hi everyone! In this issue of the newsletter, we wanted to highlight some great opportunities that you can tap into during your undergraduate career. Keep reading for some great articles on studying abroad, internship searching, and taking risks to find that perfect job.

Have you been involved in any fun fieldwork, lab work, international experiences, or attended a state chapter meeting? Don't forget to send in photos and article ideas for a chance to be featured in the newsletter.

Enjoy!

Summer Higdon, SDWG Newsletter Committee Chair

sdh5zf@mail.missouri.edu

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Note from the Editor 1

ARTICLE: Internship Advice 2

International Student Highlight 3

ARTICLE: Leaving the Comfort Zone 4

Studying Abroad 5

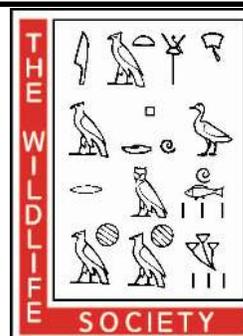
ARTICLE: Studying Abroad 6-7



University of Missouri master's students Alisha Mosloff and Summer Higdon were each awarded the Graduate Fellowship Award at the annual Missouri Chapter of The Wildlife Society meeting in Osage Beach, Missouri.



The Student Development Working Group wants to hear from YOU! Connect with us on Facebook and Google Groups!



Internship Advice

By: Laken Ganoë, SDWG Secretary

Finding an opportunity and preparing for the interview. When it comes to finding an internship or seasonal job opportunity, there are many ways you can approach this task. First, you should talk to your advisor. Whether they are your academic advisor or your Student Chapter advisor, they are sure to have many connections that may lead you to your future employer. Your second best bet is to search online using job boards such as Texas A&M, or the SCA. Several TWS Working Groups will post job opportunities, so keep an eye out for those as well. Once you find a potential internship or job, you must put together all of your materials to submit to the employer. A tip I once learned was to create a CV with everything you have ever done (volunteer hours, skills, certifications, etc.) and keep it up to date. When an opportunity to apply to a position arises, you can use the information on your CV to create a concise and directed résumé that highlights all your qualities that would apply to that specific position. If you get offered an interview, practice! Find a friend, family member, or professor and run a mock interview (especially if this is your first one). If it is a phone, or Skype interview, make sure you have a notepad and pencil as well as your résumé on hand to reference. I always prepare for an interview by writing down a list of questions that I would like to ask the interviewer. This shows that not only are you interested in the position, but that you have thought critically about the opportunity. Lastly, just relax and be yourself. The person who is interviewing you sees that you have some of the qualifications they require by looking at your resume, now they want to get to know who you are as a person.



Taking the next steps and making the most of your opportunity. You just got the call...and you have been offered the position! It's okay to get excited and celebrate a little, that's a big accomplishment. There are hundreds of people who might have applied for that position, and the employer chose you. Now, make the most of it. Many internships or jobs require you to move across the state, or across the nation. This can be a huge test for you. Here are three tips to help you on your journey:

1. Embrace it! You get a chance to meet some awesome people who share the same interests as you. They may come from many different walks of life that might seem foreign to you, so be patient and try to get to know them. After all, you will be working with that person for weeks, or even months.
2. Take advantage of being in a new place! If your crew members take trips to town to get groceries, or take a weekend camping trip at a nearby National Park, ask to tag along. This is a chance for you to get to know your peers better, and to expose yourself to new and exciting places and things.
3. Keep in mind, work is not always the best of times. You will get frustrated, tired, and tested emotionally. Don't dwell on the negative things that happen and focus on something else. Be thankful that you get the chance to be living where you are and that you get to work where you do.

It can be scary starting a new job, in a new place, with people you have never met before, but in the end it could be some of the best memories you will ever have. Trust your gut, be open-minded, and enjoy the ride.

International Student Highlight

My name is Steph Higgins, I'm a Canadian member of the Wildlife Society from Ontario, Canada. I did my undergraduate degree in the UK at the University of Reading, where I had the opportunity to go on a tropical field course to Madagascar, and then did my thesis in South Africa on the habitat associations of leopards and their prey species. I worked in the UK for two seasons in environmental consultancy, first in freshwater ecology working mostly with salmonids, then in terrestrial ecology surveying for EU protected species such as badgers, bats, and great crested newts. I am now in northern Sweden doing my MSc in fish and wildlife management at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. I am grateful to have had this international experience and have learned a lot about conservation, management and conflicts beyond my own backyard. After completing my MSc, I plan to move home to Canada to continue my career, and I am excited to use the skills and experience that I've gained abroad to benefit my local wildlife. I've met some awesome biologists along the way and I think it would be great to encourage connections on an international scale.



Meredith Hoggatt is the current Chair of our International Committee. We look forward to highlighting international students in our newsletter. If you are an international student or have studied abroad and would like to be featured, please contact Meredith at meredithhoggatt@gmail.com.

Leaving the Comfort Zone

By: Megan Baker, USDA Wildlife Services Airport Wildlife Biologist

Looking through job boards as an undergraduate can be intimidating. There are so many different types of jobs, levels of experience needed, and locations all over the world. So where do you start?

College is the best time to explore the wildlife field and involve yourself in as many career options as possible. In the four years that I was at Michigan Technological University obtaining my bachelor's degree, I had nine jobs! I dabbled in lab work, field work, rehabilitation, government jobs, and education. I was able to learn more about a specific job before making it my career choice, while still building basic experience.



Networking is the most effective practice in the wildlife field. I attended the annual TWS conference for three years during my undergrad. My senior year I listened to a talk by the Michigan State Director for USDA Wildlife Services about wildlife management on airports. Who knew there was a whole wildlife career in airports? I was intrigued and came up with a question or two to ask the speaker. It was a quick chat and he gave me his card to visit his office. I took the initiative and set up an appointment. The day I visited, he happened to get an email from Alaska asking for seasonal workers. He gave me the contact information, I took it with a smile but in my head I thought, "There is NO WAY I would ever move to Alaska!" Fast forward a few months, getting frustrated with the job search, I decided to call Alaska. Long story short, I moved to Alaska the day after graduation and lived in a remote village above the Arctic Circle for six months doing wildlife surveys at an airport. I'd like to say I had confidence when I took the job, but honestly, I had never lived outside of Michigan. I was scared to death! That first night I realized how remote the village was, I cried. Unbeknownst to me, I was starting the biggest adventure of my life.

Taking that first step out of my comfort zone opened up a world of opportunities. Most jobs out of college are seasonal so take advantage of the off-time. I searched the internet and found various opportunities to see the world by volunteering. My life dream was to visit Africa, so I volunteered to do radio-telemetry on reserves in South Africa. A "vacation" and resume boost all in one shot. I returned to Alaska, to work as a technician at Anchorage International Airport. A few months in, I learned of an internal call for volunteers to work with the military at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia. I had only worked for the agency for one year, but I applied anyway. Even though I only had a year of field experience, the ability to work outside my comfort zone was the plus they were looking for. My application was accepted and I worked overseas for eight months. The day after I landed on US soil, I was offered a full-time position as an Airport Wildlife Biologist at an Air National Guard Base in Michigan.

Reach for your goals. Try out as many jobs as you'd like in college to test the waters. Talk to professionals in a field that interests you. Volunteer to build your resume when it's the off season. Don't be afraid to travel to where there is a job rather than waiting for something to come to you. The wildlife field is a career of adventure if you take the opportunity to step out of your comfort zone.

Studying Abroad

TWS students are taking amazing opportunities to enhance their learning through study abroad experiences. Read about two students who traveled abroad during their studies.



“Over the summer of 2017, I spent 2 weeks in Costa Rica traveling through a variety of different environments ranging from standard rainforests to cloud and dry forests in order to study their conservation efforts and compare these techniques to those practiced here in the United States.”

Kyrsten Simmons

California University of Pennsylvania

Traveled to: Costa Rica

“This past summer, I spent over three weeks in South Africa collecting and analyzing data on the major groups of flora and fauna in the region, while also learning about different strategies for wildlife conservation, habitat preservation and habitat restoration.”

Sara Keddie

California University of Pennsylvania

Traveled to: South Africa



Studying Abroad

By: Colleen Hartel, MS and MPA student at Ohio State, and Drew Mallinak, MS student at Mizzou

Studying abroad can be an amazing, but intimidating experience to take on during your education. Naturally, there are a lot of important considerations to think about when choosing a program: How much will it cost? Will it impact my graduation? Where should I go?

A good starting point is to think about the different “types” of programs that are available. The experiences run the spectrum from the traditional “exchange” opportunities to attend classes at a university in another country, subject-driven programs where coursework and learning opportunities are driven by in-depth case studies of a given subject abroad, or fully independent opportunities such as working an internship abroad. Your university may already have resources on some of the programs that are available to students, but we hope our experience can be helpful in framing some of the different options you may have!

Colleen’s experience:

I studied abroad with the School for Field Studies, an organization that had an agreement with my undergrad institution, Purdue, to transfer credits. I used these credits to fill other requirements of my degree and graduated on time. In this program, I was part of a 30-person cohort that travelled, lived, and learned together for the entirety of the semester-long program, splitting our time between Southern Kenya and Northern Tanzania.

My program was very structured. The structure may not appeal to everyone, but I found myself able to focus on learning the language and appreciating the natural and cultural beauty of a place without worrying about coordinating travel or lodging. Our schedule was never the same. Some days we attended lectures taught by faculty while others were filled with trips to national parks and field exercises. The two keystone experiences were camping trips to Lake Nakuru and Serengeti.

During our designated off days, our student affairs manager would help coordinate transportation to other activities such as the local market or a nearby hike. Evening free time was spent painting, playing volleyball with students and staff, and (unsuccessfully) trying to baboon-proof our garden.

I was able to explore the area more independently when conducting my directed research project and sharpened my Swahili by interviewing farmers about human-wildlife conflict. Even with the structure I learned to roll with the punches (it’s difficult to run statistical analysis when the power’s out!), and I took the opportunity to travel independently afterwards.

Drew’s experience:

Admittedly, my first path to studying abroad was unorthodox. I wanted a summer international experience but without the burdening costs that can be associated with one. Enter the idea of working abroad. Through a contact in The Nature Conservancy, I was able to get in touch with a local non-profit in Belize, called Friends for Conservation and Development (FCD).

They agreed to take me on for a summer (or as long as I wanted) provided I could finance myself there and provide my own supplies.



Participating in a tree planting effort in Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania

(continued on page 7)

Studying Abroad (cont...)

In exchange, they would house me at their Las Cuevas Research Station when I wasn't camping in the Chiquibul National Park while protecting Scarlet Macaws from poachers and assisting with FCD's research efforts. Though I possessed enough Spanish to get by, I usually could get around and communicate with my co-workers with English, Belize's national language. I took no courses while there, though my time abroad did later count for internship credit via my alma mater, the University of Tennessee.

All in all, I spent far less simply traveling to a country on my own and volunteering with a local organization for two months than I would have with a traditional summer study abroad program. Solo traveling to a foreign country with limited knowledge of the culture is not for the faint of heart. However, I can promise that by the end of your experience, you'll discover a new sense of resourcefulness and aplomb under the harshest conditions, which one readily encounters in the wildlife field. Take it from me when I say that employers take notice.



Taking stream measurements in the Chiquibul National Park, Belize

My second study abroad experience was far more typical. I participated in a semester exchange program through my undergraduate institution with the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). The irony of this kind of program lies in its cost. A semester or year exchange program will most likely be cheaper than most if not all other types of study abroad programs (minus whatever you spend traveling once there), despite its length. This is due to continuing to pay your home university's tuition while abroad. So even though I attended

CUHK for a semester, I paid my normal tuition at The University of Tennessee. Furthermore, if your university uses school large school fees such as "technology", "maintenance", and "course" fees to compensate for rising costs without increasing tuition, you probably won't have to pay those fees once abroad. As an example, I paid several thousand dollars LESS to attend CUHK because even though I still had to pay University of Tennessee tuition, there were no fees tacked on. Crazy, right?

In an exchange program, you enroll in courses with locals just as if you were at your home institution. Although CUHK had no wildlife courses in English that I could take, there are options at various other universities (such as Australia) where one could gain credit for their wildlife degree. Some caveats to exchange programs are the limited availability, since usually one student from the other university must attend your home institution for you to study at theirs. Additionally, you will probably be limited to attending universities where English is the main language of instruction or there is a large number of English courses offered, since you will be attending class with local students. That being said, an exchange program is an excellent way to study abroad and requires no extra time (such as during the summer) to complete. I spent a total of five months in Hong Kong, which gave me ample time to assimilate into the culture, interact with local students, and forge lasting friendships that I still maintain today, all while being easy on my budget.