

Summer Internship Report 2017

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Hometown: Easton, PA



**Possumwood Acres Wildlife Sanctuary
Hubert, NC**

Provide an overview of the organization/research project and a summary of your responsibilities, tasks, and/or projects.

Possumwood Acres Wildlife Sanctuary is a rehabilitation center for injured and sick animals. Their main goal is to release animals back into their natural habitat once the animal is healthy again. In the unfortunate case such as a blind owl or crows with shattered wings, they find themselves a permanent home at the sanctuary. Along with saving animals, Possumwood strives to educate the public on the importance of wildlife conservation by hosting summer camps and bringing animals to a variety of events. As an intern I had hands on work with the animals. Some of the responsibilities I had were feeding, cleaning, medicating, release and transporting animals at the sanctuary.

During your internship, what did you accomplish or how did you make a difference? In what ways did you grow in your professional and technical skills?

During my internship I learned a multitude of new skills in learning how to care for an injured animal. One of the most important things I learned to do was when an animal was brought in after being injured, for example being hit by a car, was to think fast and assess the injuries of the animal. The initial assessment required knowing the correct medication to administer to the animal because, just like in humans, the strength and dosage of the medication must be based on the weight of the animal.

Describe a problem that you helped to solve at your internship. What skills or knowledge from your education at Sewanee helped you address the problem?

One of constant struggles with a place such as Possumwood is that it is run entirely on donations. Whether it is five dollars or a bag of cat food, every little penny and thing helps this place keep its doors open and running. One of the many things Sewanee has taught me is the importance of presentation and putting your best self out there. In no way did I personally solve this problem of having a steady flow of donations, but I did get to contribute in spreading the word to the community about our mission and keeping the social media pages updated, so that more people would know about the sanctuary and know more about the needs of the place.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

In this field, I have learned it is all about teamwork. There is no way one person can go around feeding over 100+ baby birds every 30 minutes. It really comes down to communication and knowing that the other person on shift with you had your back. We would divide and conquer, each taking one side of the animal care room and working together to make sure we used the proper amount of food to never run out. It is no surprise that ducks do not like to have medication tubed down their throat. This was also a two-person job with one of us catching the duck and then the other one getting the bill open to make sure the medication went down the right side of the throat.

How did your internship affect your career plans?

Thinking of career plans, I will definitely look back at this experience to know that I want to be hands-on with the animals that I would work with. With that being said, it has given me insight into how desperately the animals need someone to stand up for them. By having this experience, I feel as though I have a better insight into the struggles that a nonprofit organization deals with. They do some amazing work that is making a difference, yet have such a small voice when it comes to making any policy decisions when they are the ones who are actually in the field and doing the work. I am now looking into more of the policies and how to make change at a higher level for organizations such as Possumwood.

In what ways did your internship cause you to encounter people of different backgrounds from your own? What steps did you take to communicate effectively with such persons? What did you learn from such persons' perspectives?

Possumwood Acres is located in Hubert, NC, which is only about 15 minutes from the military base, Camp Lejeune. What I found to be a common theme with the interns who lived in Jacksonville were that they were either from military families or were married to someone who was in the service. Some of them had worked at different wildlife rehabilitation centers in different states. Their take on animal care was that it is up to the people who care to make sure the animals had a voice and are being taken care of.

Words of advice for future interns (housing, transportation, etc.)?

At your internship don't be afraid to speak up and ask questions! I had to ask a million before I even felt remotely comfortable with what I was doing. Even our boss stressed to us how important it was to ask questions and they loved being able to teach to us.

Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to better understand what I want to do as a career. Before this internship I was extremely lost and did not really have a good grasp on what direction I wanted to move in. Now that I have been involved with the wildlife sanctuary I definitely know that I

would love to be in this line of work. Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to know this is what I want to pursue as a career.