Experience-Based Education’s Latest

Interview with an Intern

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Where is/was your internship (Company and City)?
My internship was with Kevin Richardson, at the Welgedacht Private Game Reserve, in South Africa.

Tell us about your internship?
Interning in South Africa was a once in a lifetime experience! I had the opportunity to get up close and personal with some of Africa’s most deadly predators and learned a great deal about and from them. I met amazing people that share my passion for animals and have become lifelong friends. I learned what it takes to take care of captive wild animals like lions, hyenas and leopards.

How did you find your internship?
I read Kevin’s book “Part of the Pride: My Life Among the Big Cats of Africa” and was fascinated by it. I found a contact email of Kevin’s web site and decided to email him. I knew he had a volunteer program but I also knew I couldn’t afford to do something like that. I asked his wife, Mandy (who is in charge of returning emails) if they had an internship program as well. They did not. After I found EBE I emailed Mandy again and asked her if they would let me come as an intern through SUNY Oswego. After talking more and making plans she finally said yes.

What is your major and did it influence your decision to become an intern?
I will graduate with a B.S. in Zoology. In the sciences, experience is key to standing out to employers and I wanted to do something different. I also wanted to find out more about my career options.

What were your main responsibilities as an intern?
Because I was working as both an intern and a volunteer, I had all of the responsibilities of the other volunteers. Together we cleaned enclosures, fed the animals, did maintenance on the farm and the roads. As an intern, I also worked with the farm rangers when they were tracking the wild animals. I then did research using the data we collected.

What is the most exciting part of your internship?
The most exciting part of my internship was when I got to work hands on with the animals. I got to watch two wild female lions get darted and GPS collars were updated. I took a Black Leopard for a walk on a leash outside the enclosures. I also got to play with and pet two Stripped Hyenas every week.

Do you have any suggestions for students who would like to do something similar?
Just be ready to work! Working with animals takes a lot of time and effort. Also, have patience! Sometimes taking care of animals means doing the dirty jobs and jobs that do not seem important at the moment (they are!).

Do you think your internships will play an important role in your education and career?
I believe I learned more in three months during my internship than in all of the four years I have been in college and it is not for lack of trying.

Do you have any internship advice you would like to pass on to other students?
Just because the internship of your dreams is not on a list somewhere, if you want to do it, work for it, and be the reason it gets added to that list!