Allysa Swilley—Wild Life Survival Sanctuary, Florida

Tell us about your Internship?
I worked directly with the animals, owners, and other volunteers to make a safe and stimulating environment for everyone at the sanctuary.

What is your major and did it influence your decision to become an intern?
I have always had a passion for animals, so zoology was the perfect major for me. Almost all of the jobs in the zoology field are hands on and experience is necessary. This also provided me the opportunity to ensure that this is what I really want to do with my life. Being that I was only a freshman when I acquired this internship, I thought that this was the best time to find that out and to get a jump on my future.

What are your main responsibilities?
I was responsible for cleaning cages, maintaining the property, feeding the animals and doing anything else that I was instructed to do. The sanctuary’s job is to keep all of the animals happy and healthy and we do absolutely everything we can to do so. On paper it doesn’t seem hard, but in the hot, humid Florida weather the work is exhausting.

What type of experience have you gained so far that you wouldn’t have learned in a classroom?
In the classroom you learn facts and how to work in a lab setting. Being at the sanctuary taught me how to be hands on with the animals in a safe way. It also showed me what kind of relationships can be built between animals and humans. More than anything, this experience has made me more determined to do well in the classroom so I can go on to make a difference in the world.

What was the most exciting part of your internship?
I think the most exciting part of my internship was the connections that I made. I worked alongside two volunteers from Holland and another from France. We got to know about each other’s culture, language, and personalities. I also made connections with all of the cats. Working with them every day allows you to get to know them individually. Each has their own unique personality with their own definitive quirks that have all found a special place in my heart.

Do you have any internship advice you would like to pass on to other students?
My advice would be just to enjoy your internship, no matter what you are doing. Internships give us a brief look into our future and we should take every moment of it in.