



Nurture the Extraordinary: Student Stories



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Since my internship at the Duke Lemur Center, I've had opportunities to conduct sea turtle research, assist on a shark research expedition, and gain exposure to a variety of unique species while working alongside veterinarians in the small animal, marine mammal, and zoo fields. These experiences have further solidified my passion for exotic animal care.

I am now a first year veterinary student at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine with the goal of ultimately becoming a zoological veterinarian.

My experience at the DLC has given me valuable insight into how the close partnership and communication between husbandry technicians and veterinary staff is essential to maintaining animal health and wellbeing.

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Kate Alexy

DLC Husbandry Intern, Summer 2019

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Because of my time at DLC, as a volunteer in my teens and as a intern while I was in my undergraduate studies, I have an entire career in animal welfare. I was able to use my experience to get a job as an education keeper at an AZA zoo, get into veterinary school at Midwestern University, and do a veterinary externship at another AZA zoo. I am currently a veterinarian who has been out of vet school for one year and have a focus on exotic animal care. Because of the DLC I have had so many doors open for me and continue to have more open for me.

While at the DLC not only did I learn about the wonderful lemurs, but I also learned how to become a wildlife advocate. I learned how to help be a promoter of finding solutions for humans and wildlife to live in harmony. The DLC is the best!

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Benjamin Berriman, DVM

DLC Field Research Intern, Summer 2015



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I am thankful for my time as an intern at the DLC because it gave me the opportunity to learn all about the incredible and diverse "eighth continent" that is Madagascar, develop research skills and methods, and open doors for me to continue conservation efforts. After interning, I worked with Duke Engineers for International Development (DEID) on a water pipeline system for Manantenina, a rural village in tropical northeastern Madagascar, and even had the chance to use my lemur-spotting knowledge to spot silky sifakas in Marojejy National Park!

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David Betancourt

DLC Field Research Intern, Summer 2016



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While I was an Animal Husbandry Intern at the DLC, I learned about animal behavior research, types of research and research methods, and all of the amazing ways people can work with animals. I had only really considered veterinary medicine before, and loved talking with many different people at the DLC with interesting careers. After my internship, I had internships at various other zoos, and then went to Madagascar for three months to learn about research with wild lemurs! Without the DLC, I don't think I would have learned about how interesting research is and probably wouldn't be doing research today!

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Claire Burdick

DLC Husbandry Intern, Summer 2016



While at the DLC, I learned the husbandry skills that I now use every day at my job as an Animal Keeper at the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago, like how to prepare diets, clean enclosures, and provide enrichment. But more importantly, I learned the positive impact that world-class institutions like the Duke Lemur Center can have on endangered species, both in the wild and in human care. My time at the DLC inspired me to dedicate my life to animal welfare and conservation, and I am so grateful for the connections I made there, both human and animal.



Christina Burt

DLC Student Volunteer, 2013-2017



Because of the DLC, I am able to continue my life long passion of working with primates. The summer I spent as an intern at the DLC was my first opportunity to work in close proximity with non-human primates. My experience that summer confirmed for me that I wanted to pursue a career working with animals. Today, I am working in animal husbandry at UNC Chapel Hill in charge of their macaque colony all because of the experience I was able to get at the DLC.



Isaiah Byrd

DLC Field Research Intern, Summer 2019



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The DLC taught me to be curious, to ask questions and to embrace the unfamiliar. I'm now putting these skills to use as a student researcher in Ecuador!

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Regan Collins

DLC Fossil Collection Intern, Summer 2022



“ In working with the Duke Lemur Center in the SAVA, I have been trained on good agricultural practices for organic vanilla farming, market gardening, and agroforestry. The new skills I have acquired are good for me because I am interested in environmental conservation. ”



Marie Chantal

DLC SAVA Conservation Intern

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I graduated from Centre Universitaire Régional de la SAVA (CURSA) in applied English study. I found the two years working with DLC very useful as I learnt a great deal about the conservation of the environment and interpersonal competencies which help me interact and communicate with the community effectively. The experiences I gained will shape my personal and professional life. I hope to be part of the DLC team for many years.

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Candidier Dimbiarijaonina

DLC SAVA Conservation Intern



While a different career path led me to my first opportunity as a Husbandry Intern at the Duke Lemur Center in summer 2017, this time was serendipitous in igniting my life's passion for lemur research and Madagascar. I readily absorbed my technician mentor's passion and knowledge of lemurs, Madagascar, and conservation like a sponge. I returned to Duke to work during my gap years as a research associate and Technician Assistant. DLC mentors guided me throughout the graduate school search and application process, and even as I submitted my first-ever grant. This supportive community of lemur researchers led me to my current advisor, Dr. Mitch Irwin, who supervises my energetics research on wild diademed sifaka. Patience and persistence have always rewarded me in my academic career and finally making it to Madagascar to work in Tsinjoarivo in summer 2022 is no exception. After years of studying Madagascar's fauna and culture, my arrival was a thrill. Tsinjoarivo challenged me to my limits and pushed me towards resilience in field work and being a team-player. "It takes a village" is the sentiment I came out of this experience with, as Sadabe's expert team as well as our University of Antananarivo counterparts ensured our field work operated smoothly. Chasing diademed sifaka all over the mountain with my team was a dream-come-true, I'd never felt so sure in myself and my trajectory. Before we even left, I was already dreaming of the time I can return to work here.



Casey Farmer

Former DLC Husbandry Intern, Volunteer, and Researcher



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After being a husbandry intern at the DLC in the fall of 2021, I knew I wanted to continue furthering my knowledge of prosimian care in a zoological setting. I completed a primate husbandry internship at the Lemur Conservation Foundation in the spring of 2022. After my internship, I was granted the incredible opportunity to work as a full time primate keeper at LCF. Now, I take great care of 52 lemurs daily, and I contribute most of my success to my time interning at the DLC.

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Shannon Frank

DLC Husbandry Intern, Fall 2021



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Because of the DLC, my passion for working with animals was reignited. From a young age, I knew I wanted to work with animals. But after four years of college, between the long lectures, piling assignments, and late nights studying, I started to lose sight of why I wanted to enter the field in the first place. However, when I started my internship at the DLC, I immediately remembered why I was drawn to this kind of work. The feeling of working so closely with such amazing creatures and being able to build a connection with the animals you work with - there's not a word that would do it justice. The DLC gave me a small taste of the fulfilling and rewarding work I've been seeking in animal care and has opened new doors of opportunity for me, and I couldn't be more grateful.

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Marwa Hassan

DLC Husbandry Intern, Summer 2022

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My name is Joelda and I've been a part of the DLC project for a while. Since I have been there, I have gained valuable experience in both work and social life. In addition, it allowed me to broaden my knowledge and share what I know with others.

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Joeldavatsy Iadivine
DLC SAVA Conservation Intern



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Because of DLC, I was exposed to many aspects of conservation and managed care for the first time, one of which (animal welfare) has become a major part of my career goals! I also gained research experience that helped me get an internship and then eventually a job as a research assistant at Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago. I work with apes and Japanese macaques at the moment but hope to broaden my experience and maybe get back to lemurs, too!

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Priyanka Joshi

DLC Research Intern, Spring 2018

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I have been a member of the agroecology and agroforestry project with DLC SAVA since July 2021. I am a student at Centre Universitaire Régional de la SAVA (CURSA), in the department of natural and environmental science. Thanks, to the DLC, I have obtained experience in composting, planting techniques, and the organic cultivation of vanilla. Today I am working on my thesis, after that I would like to continue to work with DLC SAVA.

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Sergio Laimanaja
DLC SAVA Conservation Intern

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My name is Rauchilla and I have been working with the DLC since 2019. During my work with the DLC, I have gained experience with several cultivation techniques. I also learned to effectively communicate with the local people. I like this work and I have the goal of deepening my knowledge.

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Rauchilla Mahavanona

DLC SAVA Conservation Intern



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The relationships I forged at the DLC as an intern were what made me want to do field research in Madagascar, and the skills I learned there were what made it possible!

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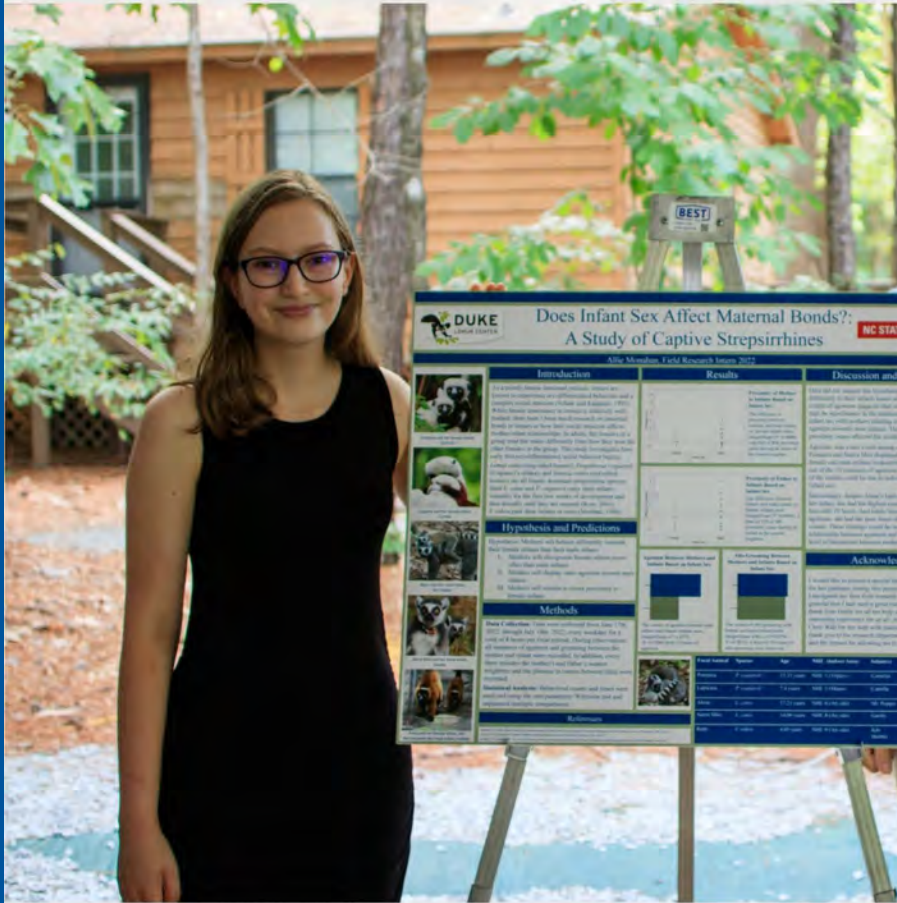
Lisa McCullough

DLC Field Research Intern, Summer 2018

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While at the DLC I really found my path. I always had a feeling that I wanted to pursue research and had always had a love of lemurs, but getting to be a field research intern at the DLC solidified that path for me. After my time here I can't imagine myself anywhere else and can't wait to make my way back to the lemurs.

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Allie Monahan

DLC Field Research Intern, Summer 2022

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My name is Edgar Rabevao. Since December 2020, I have been leading the lemur survey project in the COMATSA-Sud protected area-SAVA and sensitization of villagers with DLC. In addition, that project provided me many skills especially on the identification methods of lemurs and their distribution zones, as well as the writing of project and the search funds. Finally, because of that work my Ph.D. is proceeding now.

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Edgar Rabevao
DLC SAVA Conservation Intern



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My name is Jeremia and I am a student at the University of Antananarivo, studying Biology of Animal Conservation. I was with the DLC team in the field and my work concerned "capture of the *Cheirogaleidae* family" including *microcebus*, *allocebus trichotis*, and *cheirogaleus*. Teamwork was really great and well distributed. The objective of this study is to protect the forest of this protected area and also to conserve and protect the lemurs who live there.

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Jeremia Ravelojaona
DLC SAVA Conservation Intern

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My name is Rostella and I have been with the DLC since 2020. Since I have always been very interested in environmental conservation, being here is like a dream come true for me. Thanks to all the training I have received and my work here, especially in the field of agroecology, my vision and my passion on this point is improving more and more. Now I can share my skills with many people (villagers, communities, my family,...). I am very happy because it will allow me to go even further in my career. Thanks!

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Christine Rostella
DLC SAVA Conservation Intern

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First of all, I thank our Ancestors, our Gods, and all of you that the DLC is working in the SAVA region. Otherwise, I would not have had the opportunity to learn how to inventory lemurs or learn so much about the conservation of animal and plant diversity in Madagascar. The DLC has also played a role in the continuation of my studies on the Master's level here at the University of Antananarivo. My studies focus on how to protect Madagascar from the effects of climate change. I am thankful for all you have done for me and proud of what we will do together in the future.

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Theudy Solofoniaina
DLC SAVA Conservation Intern



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I am so grateful for the summer I spent following lemurs through the NHEs at the DLC, as this experience taught me not only about primate behavioral observation and research design, but also served as a vital stepping stone in my career in primate studies. I hope to focus my graduate studies on human-primate interactions and conservation education!

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Kylie Sorenson

DLC Husbandry Intern, Summer 2015

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My name is Velo Sovelin and I studied English at Centre Universitaire Régional de la SAVA (CURSA) in 2017 to 2020. I wanted to keep on my study, but stopped when my father died. I worked as a translator with the DLC and I am planning to continue my study soon!

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Velo Sovelin
DLC SAVA Conservation Intern



While at the DLC, my intern cohort and I learned about different ways that the DLC meets an animal's individual needs in order to ensure every animal has a healthy body and spirit. Right now, I am starting my third-year at Clemson for Animal & Veterinary Sciences. I am so glad that I got to work at the DLC for a summer, and it has already shown helpful to my animal behavior class, where we learn about the biology behind many animal behaviors and instincts. Working at the DLC has given me a perspective on how animals should be trained, learned from, and respected.



Christina Vogel

DLC Animal Welfare Intern, Summer 2022



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After being a husbandry intern at the DLC in 2017, I have continued to pursue my love of lemurs and caring for animals and started a career in zookeeping. Back at home in the UK I am a Primate & Small Mammal keeper working with a wide variety of animals but most importantly four different lemur species! The internship at the DLC was really valuable in gaining the knowledge and skills I needed for my work and it very much influenced my passion for lemurs! Through work and the charities we support, I'm also hoping to go out to Madagascar and contribute to the conservation work out there, something which has been a dream of mine for a long time. It's definitely not an exaggeration to say that for me, the DLC internship has changed my life.

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Kara Watson

DLC Husbandry Intern, Summer 2017



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I don't think I would have had the same opportunities if I had not had my internship at the Division of Fossil Primates and the DLC. These internships make people highly competitive in the STEM field and I'm so thankful for my time there every day. The DLC really changes the lives of students who want to work in STEM fields and prepares them for the real world outside of the program.

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Ashley Wilson

DLC Fossil Collection Intern, Summer 2019