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Unbelizable Adventures
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This summer was one of the best summers of my life, thanks to my experience studying medicine in Belize. While studying in Belize, I learned about examination techniques for assessing wild animals, and was able to practice blow darting an animal for anesthesia purposes. Who would of guessed but I was a great shot! We spent time learning about proper husbandry for reptiles and the many diseases that affect reptilian pets and then got to handle, medically examine and bath iguanas that were being rereleased into the wild for conservation purposes. Other topics included beginner suturing on dead chickens, bird wing wrapping, necropsying birds (including an ornate hawk eagle that had been shot), x-ray analysis, piecing together bone puzzles to practice anatomy and feeding animals at the zoo such as tapirs, pacas, toucans, scarlet macaws and jaguars. I also experienced Belizean food, sense of time, unique blended language and extremely happy attitudes!

Of the many lessons I took away from Belize, the most important one was the significance of conservation in areas like Belize. I was able to see the positive effect wildlife veterinarians have on educating the public on the importance of taking care of wildlife that may seem bothersome or a nuisance. Wildlife medicine is often stressful, complex and exploratory, but can be extremely rewarding when you remember you are saving a species from extinction.

What most surprised me about this experience was the amount of public interaction needed to do medicine with wildlife; often you are fixing human behavior so that wildlife does not need to be rescued in the first place. I learned that I can be calm, collected and intellectual in stressful situations, and that I really do want to continue down this path of veterinary medicine. I will always treasure the friendships and contacts I made with my peers and mentors, and of course the animal friends I made in Belize. To aspiring vets I say do experiences in other countries because it will allow you to do things not available in the states and expand your thinking processes so that you will be able to practice better medicine.