

Sarah Smith
Summer 2006

Internship Site: **The Cape Leopard Trust**
Location: **Cederberg Mountains, South Africa**

As a pre-veterinary student I had an interest in animal population health and was lucky enough to find an organization in South Africa where an Environmental Health intern could be of use.

For part of the internship I was given my own project which allowed me to gain experience writing proposals and designing a research project. I performed research on Rock Hyrax in the area to determine if their population decline was due to a disease. I was able to apply things learned in Epidemiology and laboratory classes to discover very interesting health problems in their populations.



The general work with the project was also great since it was something I am interested in. I helped in the capture, darting, and data collection from three leopards. I did a lot of hiking as part of the job and created a field notebook in which I recorded movements of animals in the area. I was also able to get involved in many aspects of the project and learn more about research while wearing out hiking boots and discovering less glamorous parts than working with leopards.

Part of the experience was learning to work with people in a different work environment than I am used to. I was able to work with a veterinarian that assists in wildlife problems while running a mixed animal practice and some very experienced researchers that also worked as guides all over

Africa. I worked closely with a field assistant that had very different experience from what I am used to. Although he had little formal education and had never touched a computer before, he knew the area well and together we made a great team. I was able to help out in areas where I had much experience from CSU such as using computers and how to conduct lab work while he helped teach me about the area and field work.

From this internship I now have more options open to me for the future such as the possibility of obtaining a Masters degree to research diseases in the area further. The experience of going to a new location and meeting new people in a different work environment was incredible and a good practical experience that has meant much more than just seven credits of course work.

