

Dominee Cagle
Internship Final Report
Danau Girang Field Centre, Borneo
Summer 2018

Overall, this was an incredibly valuable experience. It was valuable for teaching me about what kind of future work I would like to pursue as well as what I can rule out. It was valuable for helping me understand about myself and how I operate under certain conditions and how I can improve. I didn't find it difficult to adjust to the culture, but this is probably reflective of being at a field station that is operated by a UK university. I am appreciative of the opportunity to work with



and learn more about Muslim individuals, especially considering that much of the United States tends to have a negative perception of Muslims. I experienced nothing but absolute kindness and welcoming from all individuals I encountered and the people that I enjoyed working with the most during my internship were the Muslim Research Assistants (RA's) at Danau Girang.

I don't feel that I've changed necessarily, but I have solidified some of my "ideas" about myself. For example, I thought that I would like to work in a tropical setting but had never put that to the test. I now know that this is something that I will pursue. I felt surprisingly comfortable being uncomfortable, which sounds strange, but is the best way to describe it. The heat, humidity, bugs, cold showers, etc. were all a fun challenge that I acclimated (surprisingly) well to. The beauty of the natural environment and unique species of wildlife and plants made the discomfort totally worthwhile. More related to the actual field work, I'm less comfortable with research that requires any invasive procedures or interference with wildlife. Watching a crocodile being restrained and then pierced sub-dermally without anesthetic to affix a radio collar was not within the realm of any research that I would be comfortable conducting. I had suspected this about myself, but again hadn't been put to the test. If provided the luxury of designing my own research it would involve camera traps, point count surveys, or bio-acoustic monitoring, which I feel are less invasive ways to collect data.

I've always known that I want to travel and experience other cultures and environments. This experience was a huge affirmation of this and the importance of finding a way to incorporate this into a profession. I now have the desire to travel more than ever, as well as the confidence to know that if I want it to happen, it will.

I believe that the work situation at the field centre is wholly dependent on what the intern is hoping to gain and what the schedule of Danau Girang includes for the time that will be spent there. For me, the workload was sporadic and completely based on what researchers were there and for how long. They seemed to come and go, so you may think you'll be working on a project for a bit, but then suddenly that researcher is gone for two weeks. I also think that so many visitors, such as volunteers and students come and go that researchers don't bother to invest in any one person. It also felt that more importance was placed on equity of those visitors being able to experience different projects rather than seeing any particular one through. This made it challenging to fully learn from the researchers and see if the work that was put in on any given day yielded results and then how those results were managed. To this point, I think it would be valuable for any future interns to work on an independent research project or have a commitment from a researcher to assist them for the duration of the visit.



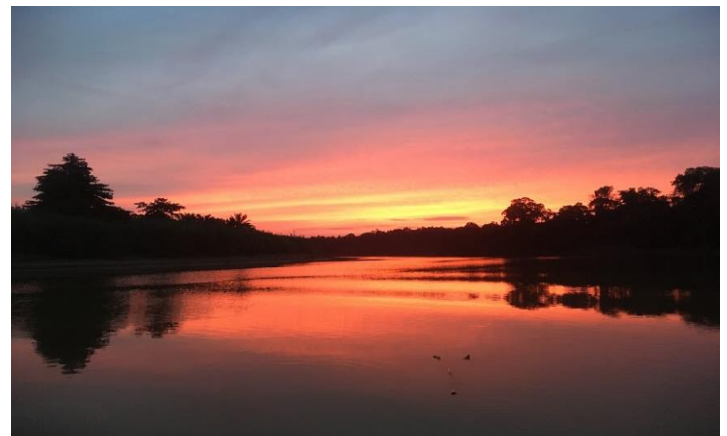
I learned a lot about myself and many wildlife species at DGFC, but there were definitely challenges. Some of the aspects that I struggled with were the sporadic nature of the workload, the hierarchy of visitors, the transition of leadership, and the fact that despite being in a remote location, I was constantly surrounded by people- some of which I couldn't understand why they were there (due to lack of experience, unprofessionalism, etc.). I think that someone else's experience could be completely different depending on their expectations and personality. Once I adjusted my expectations to be less about gaining important research experience and more about learning the environment and guiding field courses, I could enjoy it more. I have a lot of professional experience managing people and it was hard for me to not see all the opportunities for improvement regarding communication and overall organization and not act. However, I did feedback as I felt truly necessary. Ultimately, I was underutilized and had way more to offer than what I think I was given the

chance to contribute- but after having a couple conversations or maybe it was just by observation- I was taken a little more seriously. Also feeling so invested in some of the research projects and knowing that I don't get to be involved any longer is a strange feeling. It was such a significant experience for me, but I'm ultimately replaceable. I would still absolutely recommend an internship at Danau Girang, but obviously the value is completely variable depending on the expectations of the student as well as what happens to be going on there while they visit. I also feel tremendously lucky that my fellow intern from OSU and I had a great relationship and were able to commiserate freely with each other. For me, I think that this could have been a completely different and potentially less successful internship without having that camaraderie.



Some traits of a successful future intern would be someone that is outgoing, patient, able to deal with serious fluctuations in levels of activity, and be relatively fearless. This is not an internship for anyone needing the comforts of home or privacy. Again, I would recommend having a true focus, whether it be independent research or consistent participation in someone else's. Also, at times as different field courses visit, interns will be expected to act as guides on different activities, such as walks, birding boats, and "canopy", so comfort with this is essential. If possible, trying to determine what kind of research, activities, and visitors will be happening at DGFC for the duration of the internship would be useful in determining if this would be a good placement or not. I think much of my experience could also be attributed to a transitional period as the leadership was changing over and new long-term students from the UK university were leaving and arriving. There were challenges with having everyone trained properly and at times it felt that less experienced visitors were leading the more experienced. I hate to sound like I'm complaining because I'm truly not- it's just much easier to recount the challenges than the successes and while this experience was incredible for me, it could be completely amazing or totally devastating for someone else.

This internship affirmed that I am on the right academic and professional path and I am so happy



about that. I loved working with the tropical biodiversity and in the climate of Southeast Asia. I now have many amazing memories and greater confidence. Additionally, I have skills to add to my CV that will help me be competitive as I pursue other opportunities, which was an outcome I was seeking. If you're a die-hard wildlife nerd like me, it's hard to beat seeing elephants in the wild, sleeping to the sound of arguing Proboscis monkeys, telemetry tracking the sleeping sites of tarsiers, or having to brake for monitor lizards while going for a jog.