



**Let's Run Away with  
the Zoo!**



# What can you do to become a zoo vet?



# In High School

- VOLUNTEER
  - At a zoo, aquarium, wildlife rehabilitation center, wildlife sanctuary
- Get involved!
  - FFA/4H
  - School clubs related to animals
- Ask a vet to shadow them
  - Small animal, large animal or zoo vet
- Become familiar with a wide variety of species of animals



# Study Break! Can you guess the animal?



Bonus: Do you also know the species name?

# Study Break! Can you guess the animal?



African Lion  
*Panthera leo*



Red Panda  
*Ailurus fulgens*

# In College

- Pick a degree that gives you the best education and hands-on experience with animals
  - Animal science, biology, zoology, etc.
- Keep in mind the qualifications needed to apply to your vet schools of choice
  - Volunteer hours, class prerequisites, GPA requirements, time spent shadowing a veterinarian
- Work at a veterinary clinic!
  - Not required to get into vet school, but recommended
- Join or start pre-vet/animal clubs
- Apply for zoo internships
  - Contact your local zoo or check out listings at <https://www.aza.org/jobs>

\*Many students are accepted into veterinary school with degrees of all kinds. So if you realize well into your degree or even after you've received it, this does not mean you cannot still become a zoo vet.\*



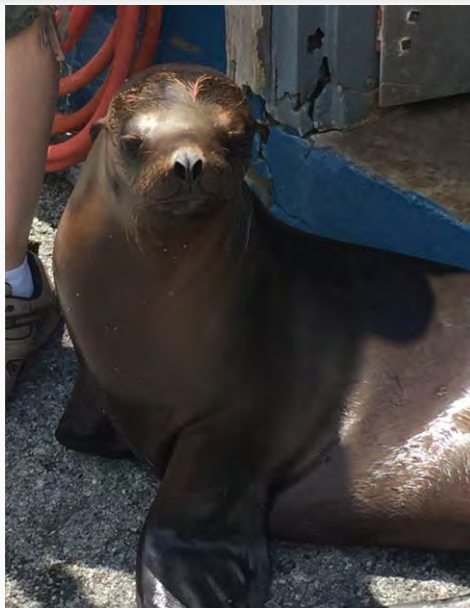
# Study Break! Who's that Zoo Animal?



# Study Break! Who's that Zoo Animal?



Barn Owl  
*Tyto alba*



California Sea Lion  
*Zalophus californianus*



Spotted Salamander  
*Ambystoma maculatum*



# In Vet School



- Join clubs to learn more about working with zoo animals
  - Behind the scenes tours of zoos
  - Networking opportunities with zoo vets
  - Lectures and labs
- Get involved in research opportunities!
  - Becoming a boarded zoo vet involves lots of research and writing papers!
- Find a mentor in the zoo medicine field
- Try to take leadership roles when available
- U of I vet med specifically: Join the wildlife medical clinic, Non-traditional Species Club, take zoo med related electives, take the ZCAMS rotation

# Study Break! Who's that Zoo Animal?



**Bonus: Do you know the species name?**

Photo by Noemi Hernandez

# Study Break! Who's that Zoo animal?



**Morelet's Crocodile**

**Crocodylus Moreletti**

Photo by Noemi Hernandez



# After Vet School

- 2 main routes to becoming an ACZM board-certified zoo veterinarian
  - Residency route
    - 1 year small animal rotating internship
    - 1 year zoo medicine internship
    - 3 years zoo medicine residency
  - Experiential route
    - 6+ years working full time with zoo animals
- Lots and lots of peer-reviewed research!
- 3 letters of recommendation
- Take the board exam
  - 2-day exam
  - Held only once a year

# Study Break! Who's that Zoo Animal?



Bonus: Do you know the species name?

Photos by Mel Buettner

# Study Break! Who's that Zoo animal?



Common Zebra  
*Equus quagga*



Giraffe  
*Cervus camelopardalis*

Photos by Mel Buettner



# Now you're a zoo vet! What do you do?

- As a zoo vet you essentially have to be every type of doctor rolled into one sometimes:
  - General practitioner, surgeon, radiologist, dentist, anesthetist, nutritionist, endoscopist, ophthalmologist, etc.
- Being a zoo vet includes more than just the medical side
  - They also are involved in exhibit design, policy making, fundraising, USDA liaison, and even monitoring the health of fellow employees due to the risk of zoonotic diseases
- One of the most important roles: conservation advocate!

# Doctor to All



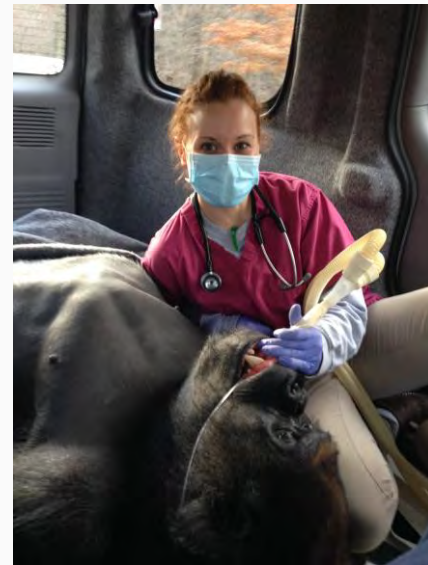
- Zoo vets need to be flexible - patients can range from the size of a golf ball (frogs & birds) to the size of a school bus (elephants)
  - Also, equipment doesn't always "fit" or wasn't made specifically for wild and exotic patients



Photos courtesy of: Dr. Samantha Sander, Seth Harrison, Kylie Ayers

# Varied Responsibilities

- Surgery
- Dentistry
- Anesthesia
- Taking x-rays



Photos courtesy of: Dr. Samantha Sander, Selena Harrison, Kylie Ayers



# Study Break! What's the Zoo Animal?



Bonus: Do you know the species name?

Photo by Mel Buettner

# Study Break! Who's that Zoo animal?



African Elephant  
*Loxodonta africana*

Photo by Mel Buettner

# Thank you for helping provide info and images for this presentation!

Dr. Sam Sander

Brookfield Zoo

Buffalo Zoo

Houston Zoo

Miller Park Zoo

Utica Zoo