Goal 3.5 Reflection

 The most valuable experience I had at Longwood was my internship. It allowed me to perform competently in a professional setting. Below is the paper I wrote recapping my internship experience, the professional skills I gained, and how I was able to respond in a professional setting. I truly believe that because of this experience I will be able to perform professionally in future careers.

My Experience and Gained Knowledge at my Internship

 On September 4th, 2019 I started my internship at Noah’s Last Stop located in Prospect, Virginia. I worked roughly every Wednesday until I reached the required 40 hours of work, which were finished on October 18th. I learned many duties and responsibilities that came with the internship as well as new knowledge that I can use for the future. I also learned knew techniques to use along with my animal behavioral skills.

 Firstly, every morning from 10pm to 12pm I worked outside one on one with the animals. I would feed and water over 45 different species of animals as well as monitor their behavior. The species ranged from pigs to emus. I watched each species separately and charted every response that was shown. Once I was done feeding and watering the animals outside, I moved inside to take care of the reptiles, amphibians, rats, mice, fish, birds, etc. I monitored over 56 different species inside as well. I worked with the animals inside from 12pm to roughly 4pm. I also made a chart for the species that I monitored inside.

 Secondly, I compiled a large data sheet of every species reactions to different stresses and compared how their reactions changed with time. The animals typically all showed an initial sign of stress when I began watering and feeding them. Once I neared the end of my internship, they began to grow accustomed to my presence, and showed less signs of stress. These signs of stress can vary from running away, hiding, grouping, or signs of aggression such as charging. I also monitored the animals when I entered their habitats as well. They showed similar signs of stress as when feeding and watering took place.

 Thirdly, I was faced with many different challenges and learned how to face them. Some of the animals would barricade their entrances to their habitats or charge/strike at me when I tried to enter. With the animals that tried to barricade their entrances, I had to pretend that I was not trying to enter and distract them with food scattered away from the doors. With the animals in smaller habitats such as the lizards and snakes, I had to quickly place their food inside, and once they were eating, I was able to clean their habitats. I also had to learn how to effectively and quickly capture the animals. In order to capture them I had to place a trap (makeshift container) and chase them or trick them into going in. Once inside I was able to administer shots, check for worms/diseases, and clean the animals.

 Fourth, I was able to learn different reactions that the animals had when presented with excitable things. Emus are obsessed with water. They enjoy being sprayed all over and when I made puddles present for them to lay in. The kangaroo liked to be chased around and played with once it was done eating. He also liked when you fed him from your hand. The pigs were very kind in a strange way; they only defecated in the corner of their pins, they cuddled your legs when you entered the pins, and they played gently with you when you gave them toys.

 Lastly, I learned most importantly that time is a valuable thing. The more time spent with the animals the more I was able to desensitize them. If I spent mass amounts of time handling the animals directly, then I was able to get closer and closer to them every time I worked. As long as I stayed calm and slowly handled the more cautious animals than I was able to pick them up with my hands by the end of the internship.

 In conclusion, the internship I did at Noah’s Last Stop will forever be a memorable and resourceful experience. I gained new knowledge and valuable skills that I will be able to possess for the rest of my life as well as utilize in my future studies. If I plan to further my career as an animal behavioralist, then I already have a ton of experience that I can use to my benefit. I do plan on watching more animals closely and charting their behaviors as well. This helped me immensely with comparing data and understanding the progress that I made with the animals directly. This experience is one that I can only thank Longwood for giving me the opportunity to have.