



Emily Beam »

BIOLOGY

LIKE A LOT OF STUDENTS, EMILY BEAM KNEW THAT she wanted to major in biology even before coming to the College. Working in wildlife biology has been her passion since before high school. Now, she's gaining a solid background and unique study abroad experiences that will help her turn that dream into reality.

"I knew that I wanted to get research experience," Emily explains. "And I had heard that undergraduate research was strongly emphasized in a lot of the departments here. It didn't take long, and by my sophomore year, I was working with a herpetologist, studying how changes in salinity impact young and adult toads."

In the future, Emily wants to conduct research with large mammals. She took a big step in that direction by spending a semester studying abroad in East Africa. "I was in Kenya and Tanzania doing research with elephants," she says. "It was amazing because I was in the field every day, assessing their body condition. We were working with wild African elephants in pretty close proximity."

Emily is now using that experience as the basis of her bachelor's essay, and she's complementing that project by taking a capstone course on molecular biology.

"This course is incredibly engaging," she offers. "There are just six of us in the class and we're in the field nearly every day, looking at vertebrate and invertebrate DNA and then sequencing it. That's a lot like being a postdoctoral student at a big research institution. What's cool is that our work will eventually become part of the genetic data bank. In general, that archive is pretty patchy for most species, so our work could be helpful for researchers in the future."

Along with her classes and research, Emily stays busy giving campus tours and volunteering at a pet outreach clinic. After graduating, she plans to take a year off and then continue her studies at the graduate level. She knows she'll be well prepared – and well supported – by the experiences she's had in the biology department. 📍



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