

Sebastian Elsenbroek
Georgia Aquarium Externship
9/30/24-10/25/24

I was fortunate to be able to spend a month with the Georgia Aquarium for one of my fourth-year externships. I had an amazing time there and really enjoyed getting to work with the team and all the different species.

While there I was able to participate in a number of different procedures. We did exams on freshwater stingrays, where I was able to practice with ultrasound and drawing blood. We had annual exams for all the sea otters, and I was actively involved in anesthesia monitoring and manual ventilation, along with assisting in the physical exam. I also assisted with anesthesia monitoring during a tumor removal for a rough-tail stingray. For box turtle annual exams, I did full physical exams. I also helped monitor anesthesia and provide manual ventilation during an Asian small-clawed otter cystotomy surgery. At the end of each day, we would also check the mortality fridge for any potential necropsies, which I would perform with the doctor on duty.

In addition to these procedures, I followed the veterinary team around for their various exams and treatments. I was able to observe in penguin bootie changes, dolphin subcutaneous fluid administration, various desensitization sessions, team meetings, journal clubs, zebra shark exams, and CT exams. I also spent half days in different departments like the environmental health and water quality teams, the clinical lab, and at the off-site holding and quarantine facility. During my last week I presented to the animal health team on the topic of cetacean transfusion medicine as well.

This activity showed me the inner workings of a large aquarium and a better idea of what an aquarium veterinarian career looks like. It increased my interest in aquatic animal medicine and my desire to work in an aquarium one day. I love the variety that comes each day between species, procedures, and responsibilities. I enjoy getting to interact with the various departments and trainers and getting to form relationships with those people. I like the educational aspect of it as well, interacting with the public and tour groups and visiting students/doctors. We also brought in multiple specialists for procedures like echocardiogram and surgery, and I enjoyed getting to collaborate with doctors from different fields of medicine. I think aquariums play an important role in ocean conservation and education, and I would love to help contribute to that role someday.

Thank you to AAFV for helping to fund this externship. Although this was an amazing opportunity, it was not cheap or easy to move across the country for one month, buy flights, find housing, and rent a car. This award really helped me a lot and I greatly appreciate AAFV in supporting me in this opportunity.



