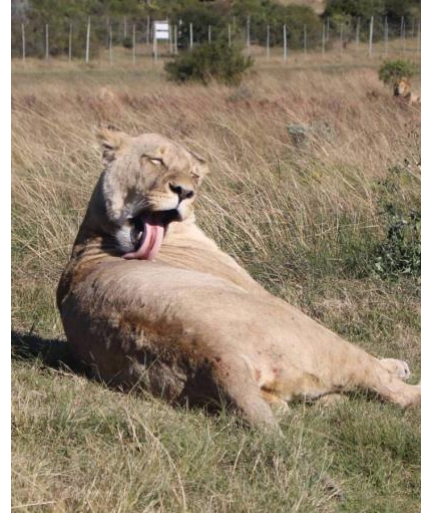


Game reserve internship

Emma Crane, *Geography & Planning*

With the help of the Faculty Travel Bursary, I was able to spend three weeks in South Africa volunteering on a private game reserve outside Port Elizabeth, called Kwantu. This meant I was involved in a lot of conservation work within the reserve. For example, road maintenance which included levelling and filling in any ruts in the road created by soil erosion due to heavy rain in the area. I also aided in removing alien species, including prickly pear cacti, with large machetes. Our group fed animals in the reserve touch farm, including macaws, ducks, geese, donkeys and an ostrich, called Oscar. We also got to feed some lions, tigers and a cheetah at the Big Cat Sanctuary on site. These animals had been rescued from circuses across the country and were being rehabilitated, in order to be released back into the wild in the future. One of my favourite morning activities was when our group travelled to a local school to give out food and play with the children. They sang and danced for us as well, which was amazing.



Our afternoon activities usually involved a game drive of some sort. This meant we would be counting the number of each species of antelope we could find to ensure numbers were maintained and they hadn't all been hunted by predators. We also made sure to regularly find the white rhinos present in the reserve as they are a critically endangered species and are prized by hunters for their horns. We also did regular perimeter checks to ensure there were no gaps or holes in the fence, and also that there was no rubbish around as this could be detrimental to the health of the animals present in the reserve.

I booked this whole experience through the company Real Gap Experience, which can be found through the following link: <https://www.realgap.co.uk/>

The experience helped me with my personal, academic and career development by improving my adaptability, resilience and problem solving through travelling to a country I had never been before on my own. My communication skills were further improved through meeting new people from all over the world, and I developed a cultural awareness through experiencing a completely different culture halfway across the world. This amazing experience has allowed me to have a taster of what conservation could be like and so helps me in considering conservation work as a career later in life.

