

## **Award provides student the opportunity to work with rescued animals**

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Future veterinarian and Tulane senior Kimberly Micotto expected that she would spend her first day at a Guatemalan wildlife rescue center getting acclimated. However, she was pressed into service almost immediately, helping a veterinarian do surgery on the leg of a potoo bird.



In Guatemala, Tulane senior Kimberly Micotto handles a procedure on an animal at the ARCAS animal protection center. (Photo provided by Kimberly Micotto)

It was the first of many hands-on opportunities to practice veterinary medicine afforded Micotto during her two-week internship this summer at the [ARCAS](#) animal protection center. ARCAS heals and rehabilitates poached or illegally trafficked wild animals and returns them to nature.

A total of four members of Tulane's Pre-Veterinary Society participated in the program.

Micotto received the 2015 [Timothy Sykes Daytrading Award for the Talented](#), which funded her experience in Guatemala. Sykes, a 2003 graduate, established the award to recognize exceptional individuals whose achievements and abilities exist outside traditional areas of academia.

The ARCAS conservation area is in the middle of the jungle outside the city of Flores, where the piercing calls of howler monkeys woke Micotto at 5 every morning. While Guatemala's rainy season puts New Orleans' summer rainstorms to shame, Micotto says, "It did make cleaning cages easier."

Some of what Micotto saw was heartbreaking, such as a dozen baby parrots that had been poached so young they hadn't developed flight feathers. But she found that rehabilitating animals was a moving and rewarding experience.

Micotto accompanied veterinarians to a home near the rescue center where animals had been illegally kept as pets: three crocodiles, more than 20 turtles, four monkeys and a kinkajou. Back at the conservation site, she drew blood from one of the crocodiles, an opportunity she never would have had in the United States.

"It was incredible being in that atmosphere and feeling like we were making a difference for an organization that re-releases hundreds of animals into the wild every year," she says. "It was incredible being a part of something that's able to make such an impact."

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