



## College News

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### The call of the wild

*Editor's Note: The Class of 2016 is 102 students strong. Equally as diverse in backgrounds and interests as those who came before them, they are also among the brightest, with this year's Class boasting a median GPA of 3.75 and the highest median GRE score to date. Please enjoy this story about DVM Candidate Sarah Cudney.*



There's something enthralling in the eyes of a raptor, a primal intensity that instills respect and makes it hard to look away. Such a spell sparked a similar spirit in Sarah Cudney '16 when she first encountered raptors at Cornell as a high-school summer student, an experience that imbued her with a keen vigor for veterinary medicine.

The wild was never far for Cudney, who grew up in Boulder, Col. in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, but it suddenly came closer when she started handling raptors in Cornell's three-week pre-veterinary high-school summer program in Exotic Avian Husbandry.

"I had such an amazing experience working with the birds that I was determined to come back to Cornell," said Cudney. "That summer course made me decide to apply here."

As a newly minted Cornell undergraduate studying animal science and biology, one of the first things Cudney did was return to the raptors. She joined the Cornell Raptor Program, getting directly involved with raptor conservation through formal classroom instruction on biology and natural history of birds of prey, captive propagation and release of selected species, rehabilitation of sick and injured raptors, and public education programs.

Rising through the volunteer ranks, Cudney became both Director of Education and Student Supervisor, organizing and presenting outreach events in Ithaca and the surrounding area and training new student volunteers. She even adopted the daily responsibility of hand-feeding and caring for an American

Kestrel and a Eurasian Eagle Owl, one of the world's largest owls. Hooked on wildlife, she also volunteered as a wildlife supervisor at the Swanson Wildlife Health Center, assisting veterinarians in examination, radiology, medication, treatment, and care of local sick and injured wildlife.

“Working with wildlife made me realize I wanted to go into wildlife medicine,” said Cudney. “I don’t know if I’d have even applied to vet school if not for the Raptor Program and the Wildlife Health Center.”

She became president of Cornell’s Pre-Veterinary Society, arranging speakers, meetings, fundraisers, field trips, and volunteer work for the group, as well as mentoring undergraduate peers throughout their own veterinary school preparation. Cudney also came up campus to the College frequently to conduct research in Dr. Ned Place’s endocrinology lab. This led to two manuscripts, including her honors thesis describing a model of how seasons cause shifts in metabolic signals to the brain that can influence obesity, which has been submitted to a peer-reviewed journal.

Cudney graduated with highest honors, a slew of awards, research publications, a strong network of supporters built through her activities, and varied hands-on animal experience: all the right ingredients for a strong veterinary school application.

“I chose Cornell for the next step too, partly because of the people and places I’d established good relationships with,” said Cudney. “But a big part of it was the opportunities Cornell gives to work with wildlife and conservation. It’s one of the few schools with a wildlife center on campus. I love working with all kinds of animals but for me there’s something special about wildlife.”

Coming full circle, Cudney served this year as a teaching assistant for the high-school Summer course in exotic avian husbandry that first brought her here. She begins veterinary school this fall and hopes to pursue wildlife and conservation medicine.