

Zoo Medicine Resident Brings Unique Background

The diversity of species in zoological medicine keeps resident Dr. Matt Marinkovich on his toes. His morning at the Sacramento Zoo starts with a health check on a pair of newly acquired sifaka lemurs that the zoo hopes to breed. It moves on to a yearly wellness examination (which all zoo animals receive) on a California tiger salamander, and a check-up on a spiny tailed iguana that has been a bit under the weather. Marinkovich administers antibiotics and subcutaneous fluids to the iguana and is encouraged that it has gained four grams in the last four days.

His duties continue with monitoring the recovery of a bale of western pond turtles from shell infections that, according to Marinkovich, exemplify the important role a zoo veterinarian plays. It will take long-term care and continual treatment and monitoring to achieve a renewed level of wellness in the turtles. With expert care from Marinkovich and the team, all of the zoo's animals will maintain a high quality of health.



First-year zoo medicine resident Dr. Matt Marinkovich holds a six-banded armadillo at the Sacramento Zoo.

Like all first-year residents in the Zoological Medicine Service, Marinkovich spends much of his time at the zoo. As part of the UC Davis team, which also includes faculty members and students, he cares for more than 500 animals that reside at the zoo. No two days are the same, and Marinkovich prefers it that way. The variety of animals at the zoo was one of the main reasons why UC Davis was his first choice for a residency.

"While this large number of animals has its challenges, it's also part of the excitement," Marinkovich said. "Plus, the opportunity to follow in George Kollias' (Cornell professor and UC Davis' first ever zoo medicine resident) footsteps made UC Davis the right residency for me."

Growing up in San Diego, Marinkovich frequented Sea World and the San Diego Zoo as much as possible. There isn't a time he can remember when he didn't aspire to a career with animals. While working with the Santa Barbara Marine Mammal Center as an undergraduate at Westmont College, those aspirations focused on becoming a veterinarian.

To prepare for his eventual acceptance into the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, Marinkovich spent a year in South America (Bolivia, Chile and Peru) working with wildlife agencies, and two years as a veterinary assistant at an emergency clinic in San Diego. Then, for a summer during veterinary school, he worked with Gorilla Doctors in Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These experiences influenced his decision to work with exotic animals and to help save them. Now as a resident, he is honing his skills to achieve his ultimate career goal of being a zoo veterinarian at a facility where he can participate in animal conservation and international field work.