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Daina graduated RVC 2013 and became an emergency and critical care nurse at the Queen Mother Hospital for Animals.

While studying, I worked with a wildlife vet in South Africa, enjoying the thrill of the fast pace environment of the African bush.

After a year working in Australia, in referral hospitals, I am now heading to Sri Lanka to aid in the training of veterinary technicians in first opinion practice. Email: theglobalvetnurse@gmail.com

The global vet nurse

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ABSTRACT: Travelling – something some people only dream of one day doing. Work commitments being one of the major hold backs for most, it is easy to forget that this industry we work in has a worldwide need and our skills are completely transferable in almost every country. This short article aims to inspire and advise other veterinary nurses and student veterinary nurses on the options available to work, or volunteer abroad and how and where to do it.

Keywords: Travel; volunteer; veterinary nursing abroad

Africa is a great place to start, the wildlife is unrivalled and there are many causes that require help, for me, working alongside a wildlife vet gives the best overall experience. The vet will often have only 1 or 2 students providing much more one to one time and an ideal learning environment. As a volunteer and not an employee the roles and responsibilities are obviously limited; however, when the vet is called and the animal becomes their responsibility and as the vet's assistant you are on the front line of the action. This is particularly exciting when dealing with unusual situations such as escaped or trapped animals and large projects requiring helicopters and animal transport trucks.

But do not be fooled, nothing is simple when it comes to dealing with large wildlife. The most routine and organised operation can “go south” very quickly, common sense and quick reactions are essential when working in the African bush.

During my trips to South Africa, we have been dealing increasingly with the rhinos, in the fight against rhino poaching. The barbaric act of poaching threatens the very existence of the rhino, and vets play a huge part in the conservation effort, ensuring the survival of our remaining rhino.

Anti-poaching work includes microchipping the horns; meaning that if a poached horn is seized, the government can identify where it came from and prosecute the poachers.

More extreme deterrents such as humanely de-horning rhino, in order to make them less attractive to poachers,

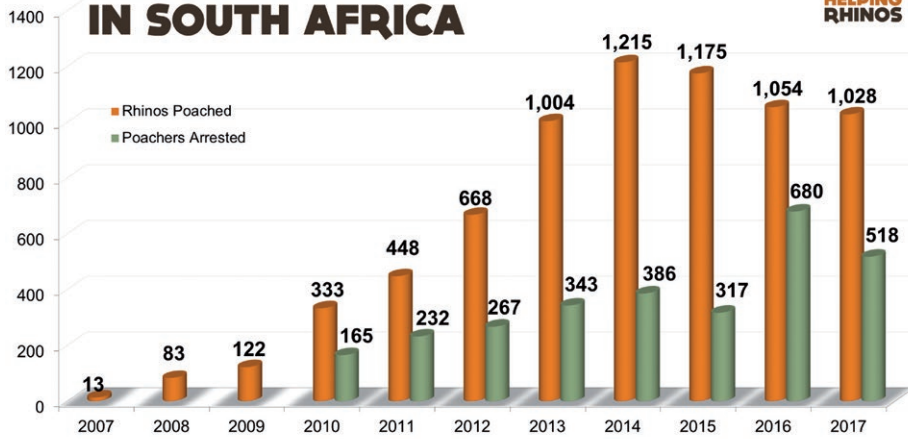


have become more popular. Some reserves are even moving their rhino to other African countries where more protection can be provided.

During my time volunteering, we received many calls for injured rhinos found by rangers; sometimes the poacher's shots were not fatal resulting in terrible gunshot wounds. Often calves will be found next to the carcass of their mother, scared, malnourished and vulnerable to predators, without veterinary intervention, the poachers will have succeeded in killing 2 rhinos.

This type of work took up much of my time on each visit, the recent dip in poaching fatalities may show that the continued and combined efforts may be paying off in some areas.

RHINOS POACHED IN SOUTH AFRICA



Department of Environmental Affairs, 2018.

However, not all the work revolves around the rhino. Lions need tracking collars, cheetahs escape, elephants get into fights, giraffe need relocating and leopards require dentals. Not to mention the herds of buffalo which need TB and pregnancy testing. All in a day's work in Africa.



My African travels were booked through African Conservation Experience who offer many projects (including my favourite the Shimongwe Veterinary Project) in different areas and can organise everything from flights, meet and greet in country, transfers and accommodation and food. I found them to be excellent support while on my project and very helpful for tips and advice.

So my love for animals and the sun soon turned the Africa bug into the full-blown Travel bug! Australia seemed like the best next destination with a variety of different

(African Conservation Experience, 2018)



wildlife and excellent veterinary hospital standards.

With the 1 year Australian working visa I began by locuming in private and university referral hospitals on both the east and west coast. As a British nurse, our world class training puts us in high demand for our skills and knowledge, making this an excellent opportunity to travel and work in such a beautiful country.





(WECare Worldwide, 2018).

By working in the Intensive Care Unit I was able to compare the care provided with that of the UK and expand my knowledge on conditions I have never come across before; such as tick paralysis and snake bites.

The high work demand allowed for me to save money and take trips and holidays during my year away, ticking off both the Philippines and New Zealand before returning home.

I found that by focusing a few months on work allowed for a couple of months off to travel, this was actually very affordable if you don't mind hostel life and pasta most nights. I was able to repeat this process a

few times and really make the most of my time away.

Since returning home I have been asked to travel to Sri Lanka to train veterinary technicians in practice and improve nursing standards. This 3 month position will be a very different challenge for me. I hope that my varied experiences, from referral practice to the African bush, will allow me to improve nursing care and overall patient welfare.

Whilst researching the country I came across a charity called **WECare Worldwide** based in the south of the country. The charity is run by Janey, an English vet, who when visiting Sri Lanka was exposed to the poor condition of the street dogs and the absence of veterinary care. Janey founded the charity in 2014 and since contacting her has invited me to come and see the amazing work they are doing.

How do you get started: The veterinary world is small, everyone knows someone. All it takes is a name, an email or someone to put in a good word and it can open many doors. Volunteering is a great way to meet likeminded people, in fun and exotic locations. This networking helps to gain contacts which you can use later to secure a job when you are ready for a more long-term or permanent move.

Top tips

1. Don't be afraid to ask

Professional people are helpful, if you have worked with someone and made a good impression, they will happily help you with your next move.

2. Get out of your comfort zone

I know everyone says this- but it is so easy to get comfortable and not push yourself. Put yourself in an environment that challenges you.

3. Experience as much as possible

Who says 'once in a lifetime experiences' can only happen once? Squeeze in as many as possible.

4. Enjoy the moment

It's great to have goals, but don't get tunnel vision. Be flexible and open to opportunities that come along.

So with no cure for the travel bug, I have resorted to this life of roaming around from place to place exploring, working with animals from all over the world and sharing my experiences on my Instagram blog.

Follow @theglobalvetnurse



With Sri Lanka confirmed and a few other destinations in the pipeline, it's about to get really interesting!

Keep up to date with all my adventures... who knows where I'll end up next, I certainly don't!

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