



University of Missouri

College of Veterinary Medicine

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## NEWS & EVENTS

### Preceptorship Program Takes Flight

As the student services coordinator at the University of Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine, Angela Tennison, DVM '01, works with veterinarians to develop preceptorship programs for veterinary students. A transplanted Southerner who dislikes winter weather, Tennison recently found her own horizons expanded when her search for opportunities for students to broaden their hands-on learning experiences took her to Alaska.

"It's truly one of the most beautiful places I've ever seen, and I have traveled fairly extensively," she said.

Tennison's journey into America's last frontier began when she became aware that the [American Bald Eagle Foundation](#) offers preceptorships to veterinary students and internships to undergraduates. She contacted Dan Hart, OD, a retired optometrist who is the



College of Veterinary Medicine Student Services Coordinator Angela Tennison, DVM, recently visited Alaska's American Bald Eagle Foundation, which offers preceptorships to veterinary students. She took a break from lectures and workshops to build a snowman with her daughter.

raptor curator for the foundation, and began working with him to develop a program that would give MU's veterinary students the chance to spend time studying bald eagles and other birds and working an avian medical specialist in Alaska.

"We have a lot of students interested in avian medicine. I wanted to find some more opportunities for them," Tennison said.

Haines, Ala., where the American Bald Eagle Foundation is based, is located in the Chilkat River Valley. From September through early December, thousands of bald eagles converge at the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve attracted by the salmon run. Between 3,000 and 4,000 bald eagles join the migration making it the largest gathering of the birds in the world.

The foundation and the community celebrate the event with an annual Alaska Bald Eagle Festival, which this year was held Nov. 14-18. The festival features guest speakers and photography workshops. Hart and the foundation invited Tennison as their guest to speak about "Effects of Lead in Nature." Tennison discussed how sick birds, especially raptors, can be treated, and the most common causes of lead ingestion in eagles. While most festival attendees were simply there because of an interest in raptors, there were also a number of hunters in the audience, Tennison said. She talked to them about the danger of birds scavenging on the remains of animals killed with lead shot and fragmented bullets. She also noted that hunters are often the most likely individuals to encounter an ailing bird because they are out in the wild with them. She explained how to recognize the symptoms of lead poisoning and how to identify and help a sick bird. Tennison also presented information about Mizzou's own Raptor Rehabilitation Project, in particular the project's efforts to heal eagles and other raptors that have lead poisoning.

Since she initiated the CVM's partnership with the foundation, one Mizzou undergraduate with an interest in veterinary medicine has traveled to Haines to complete an internship. However, Tennison said the Alaska Bald Eagle Festival is an experience that has much wider appeal. "I would recommend attending the festival to anyone with an interest in birds or nature," Tennison said. Although travel to Haines is not direct — Tennison flew from Missouri to Juneau and then took a ferry up the river to Haines — the festival attracts people from around the world. She said the community was welcoming and she met a number of fascinating and adventurous people, including a local resident who scaled Mount McKinley in the 1950s, and astronaut Edgar



Thousands

of bald eagles are attracted to Haines, Ala., each year when the salmon run takes place in the Chilkat River.



With the

Chilkat Mountains in the background, a bald eagle takes flight.

Mitchell, who served as the festival's keynote speaker.

The highlight, however, was seeing thousands of eagles, Tennison said.

"I was able to go watch the eagles every day I was there. Seeing the birds against the backdrop of the mountains, it was just beautiful."

*(Photos by Josh Tennison)*

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