

Personal and academic motivation for the stay:

As an IFEM student with past experience in the field of wildlife conservation and veterinary care before my arrival in Germany, I was always interested in the field of nature conservation with a specific drive to learn about zoology and wildlife management and research. After 6 years of living in Germany, I've seen the semester abroad as an opportunity to engage in the field and use past knowledge and experience of the fauna of the region. As I was searching for opportunities to do so, I came across the "movement ecology and individual behaviour" lab of the Tel Aviv University's school of zoology. After speaking to the head of the lab; Dr. Orr Spiegel, I was happy to not only find a place for my internship, but also a supervisor for my further bachelor thesis. I was presented with a few of the projects that Dr. Spiegel had running or planned – considering many factors such as time period, personal interest, opportunities for field work and academic development, I've chosen to take part in a research project dealing with the Golden Jackal (*Canis aureus*) in the "Harod vally", a project that aims to assess the population size, density, and other factors using different methods of monitoring.



Figure 1 Harod valley, project's research site

Preparation application to the university/institution:

Luckily, having decided to strive for an internship in my land of birth, organization of visa, travel, and accommodation were not a major concern. Applying for Tel Aviv University, on the other hand, was quite a handful of bureaucratic processes. I had to apply as a "visiting student" in order to be insured so that I can use the different facilities, equipment, and generally, be recognized as a member of the Lab. Fortunately, the head of the Lab; Dr. Orr Spiegel, was kind and communicative throughout the long process, which I

luckily started early enough since it took me a few months to get all the required approvals and documents.

Description of work content, work days, etc.:

As I arrived to Israel, bureaucratic issues with the budget concerning the project arose and fieldwork had to be postponed due to a lack of equipment. In that time, I decided to follow the recommendation of my supervisor to take on a course in the programming language, required for the future data analysis I'd have to conduct when I start working on my thesis. During the first month, I arrived at the lab on a daily basis in order to take an academic course the university had to offer: "introduction to the R programming language". After doing that, I

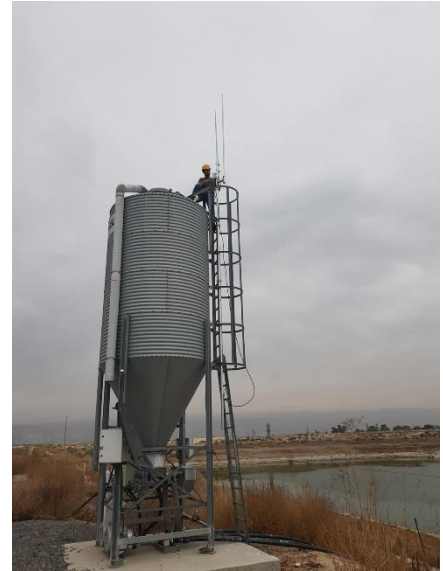


Figure 2 Assisting the Vulture project of another lab member

I started familiarizing myself with the work environment and the monitoring system we would work with – the Atlas system, which is an array of antennas spread along the Harod valley - we would not use GPS collars when tracking the jackals, but rather small tags with specific IDs that work on reverse GPS technology. At that time, I started to work on multiple exercises given to me by my supervisor, using "training data", I started learning how to connect to the system, download data, filter it according to the animal's biology, and preparing for my future data analysis. I also joined in other lab members' field work days, such as Nili Anglister's project dealing with the locally endangered Griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*), where I used my skills as a vet assistant and assisted in taking samples from Vultures in special events where Vultures are captured for research purposes. I also joined the lab manager Assaf Uzan, for multiple days in the field where we did maintenance work to ensure the functionality of the Atlas system in the field. Additionally, I was present and actively participated in the preparations made with Jonathan Tichon – the head of the project, joining him for field surveys, in order to find the right spots to set up the trapping scene for the jackals, setting up field cameras, making contact with the local

authorities (rangers of the Israeli Nature and Parks Authority – INPA) and assisting with ordering equipment.

As I write this report today (the 18th of January), I am sad to say that the actual trapping endeavors have only just begun a few days ago, due to the waiting period concerning the equipment, and so I have decided to prolong my stay for an additional 6 weeks. As of now, I have joined two days of trapping endeavors, where I and Jonathan have set up a trapping scene that included transmitting cameras.



Experiences during the internship:

Figure 3 Maintenance work of the Atlas antenas

During my internship, I have had the opportunity to join in as a guest listener in the fields of my interest, I attended two main courses – Biogeography and Birds faunistic, I was also lucky enough to join one of the field trips offered by the Bird faunistic course where I learned much about the Israeli fauna and flora. Additionally, I attended the twice a week the regular Msc. Seminar of the zoology department, as mentioned before – I also attended an online introduction to the R language course. Additionally, I attended the weekly lab meetings in which the lab's members gave their input on their projects and additional subjects were discussed.

Generally, the conditions of the university were comfortable and friendly, through the staff of my lab I always had much assistance when needed while dealing with the Atlas system and having difficulties with the R language. I was also able to use the Lab's car when doing fieldwork and had my own space in the lab's office, to work in.

Practical tips for future students abroad:

Personally, I would recommend every student to start working on the search for an internship as soon as possible – these processes can take time, and slots in different organizations or research projects are limited. I would also say that if you join in a research project, be aware of the fact that things don't always run

smoothly, so be flexible with your time management and try to make the best out of the situation you find yourself in – look ahead and don't get frustrated if things like bureaucratic processes or other unknown factors, stand in the way of what you imagined.

Personal impressions and evaluation of the stay:

During my time working on the project in Israel I was especially pleased with my interactions with my lab partners, they have all proven to be very accommodating, nice and eager to help. Furthermore, I was given the opportunity to participate in several lectures and seminar classes, as mentioned before.

In the early stages of the fieldwork, I did encounter some difficulties, some caused by weather and covid related issues, yet mostly technical ones – the beginning of our project required the use of special collars, for monitoring the jackals, which we originally intended to attain from a group of Dutch researchers, however, we were unable to do so. Instead, my colleagues and I found a solution and fashioned custom-made collars, for this particular use.

Despite any technical difficulties thus far, I can honestly say that my time here has allowed me not only to engage in this particular research project but also to enrich and expand my knowledge in both fields of ecology and zoology. Thanks to the opportunity to work on this specific project with the Tel-Aviv University and the INPA , I was able to gain new practical experience and technical skills with the potential to enhance my studies of IFEM.



Figure 4 A picture of a jackal from an unsuccessful trapping endeavor