



Vet Helps Marine Animal Center in Ecuador

Boca Raton, Fla. (Oct. 3, 2018) – Dogs and cats scurry about. The ocean breeze whistles as enchanting marine life dawdle by. This could be a serene Floridian setting. Instead, it's the site of a dimly lit, bare bones marine life rehabilitation center with little in the way of resources it takes to get the job done.



Located off the coast of northwest Ecuador, the Centro de Rehabilitacion de Fauna Marina del Parque Nacional Machalilla, needed help with case assessment, capacity building, facilities planning and much more.

A google search by the center's staff led them to Annie Page-Karjian, D.V.M., Ph.D., assistant research professor and clinical veterinarian at FAU Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute.

Two years of email exchanges and a \$3,000 travel grant from the South Carolina Aquarium later, Page-Karjian found herself training the center's local staff, doing surgeries and more.

As Page-Karjian's reflects on her one week stint as a consulting vet this summer, where x-rays were read by holding them up to light bulbs, she realizes the enormous challenges of conservation and treating marine life in low resource environments. "Without any real facilities, caring for marine life is extraordinarily difficult in highly impoverished areas where basic human needs aren't met, Page-Karjian said." "It's more of a luxury."

While Page-Karjian's visit to Ecuador helped fulfill the outreach required of HBOI faculty, she's continuing to help the center with facilities planning, improving education and outreach, fundraising and grant eligibility. She's teaming up with her newfound collaborators to submit a grant to the Ecuadorian government to pay for the infrastructure and capacity building they so desperately need. The grant also requests support for a long-term sampling of turtles and a health assessment.

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