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Save Elephant Foundation – Thailand
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**Question Set #1**

**1. What are your initial impressions of the organization and an overview and thoughts about the kind of work you've started doing; how does the work match your expectations, how does it match your goals?**

Initially I think I was overwhelmed by the magnitude of what I was about to be a part of- I was really nervous to enter the organization the first time because I didn’t feel qualified for the work I was about to embark on. I must have passed the office three or four times before I worked up enough courage to enter. Since I’ve been here barely two weeks and the first week was my volunteer work and orientation to the park I still don’t have a set idea of what I will be doing the entire time. Which is fine with me- I’m thriving in flexibility and the adaptability of the position. This week I was in the office helping file papers and designed a board to highlight the recent activism efforts globally and next week I might be headed out to the park to help train park guides. I also helped answer e-mails and speak to customers about the program (since English is my first language).

Everything has matched my expectations because I’m honestly happy to do everything that helps the park and inevitably the elephants in any way. My goal was not to come in and change things and “make a difference”, because I think making a difference is too lofty and unrealistic for a three month internship. I want to instead contribute holistically and whole heartedly to an already well-functioning organization that makes a tremendous impact and that is how I will make my little ripple of an impact. I think too often I get caught up in the big gestures, in the big actions that I lose sight of the importance of the small gestures and the change they can initiate. That is why I am going to remain patient, observe, and take on each task with excitement. I look forward to finding my niche within the organization and I do look forward to a little stability, but at the same time I understand how busy Lek is and I don’t expect her, in any, to bend over backwards for an intern who is going to be here for three short months. I respect and admire everything she is doing and am overall enjoying the work I have just started doing even though it has been a little slow, but nonetheless rewarding. For now I’m just researching, coming up with ideas and getting excited about projects and we will see where that takes me.

**2. What stood out to you the most regarding your arrival?**

The thing that stood out to me most on my arrival, initially, was the weather. Which in hindsight sounds really silly, but I couldn’t help thinking how I was going to survive this hot, sticky weather. I think the weather just reaffirmed that I was in a truly different place- it allowed my mind to register that I was going to be living 7,000 miles away from home for three months-because the climate is so different from the climate at home. That being said, once I was over the initial shock of the weather I noticed the traffic and lack of any system that revolved around “yielding to pedestrians”. I had heard that the western ideal of people walking had the right away was none existent in Thailand I just don’t think I fully comprehended what meant. There is literally no traffic enforcement here whatsoever; I spent the first few days just standing on the end of the sidewalk too fearful to cross. Now I feel that I have a better grasp of crossing the street, but I still proceed with extreme caution (which I think is wise). Also, motorbikes seem to be extremely popular especially motorbikes without helmets-which someone told me is due to the Thais belief in karma. It makes sense, but still seems risky to me!

And lastly, the thing that stood out to me the most when I entered the office and the park was the intense passion and love for all living things by everyone who works here. No life is too big or too small or unworthy of saving and I already admire their dedication and servitude. One of the first days at the park Lek, the founder, walked out into a field and started making mimic cat sounds and within minutes cats from all over just started crawling all over her and purring incessantly. It was one of the most simplistically kind things I have ever seen. You can just see the intense passion in everyone’s face about the animals and it something wonderful to witness.

**3. What was your greatest anxiety prior to departing and how do you feel about that now that you have arrived?**

My greatest anxiety prior to departure was being able to contribute positively to an already well-functioning organization. I think I was overwhelmed with the magnitude of what they are doing and as I approached my departure date and learned more about their tremendous work I questioned my own abilities and how I would be able to contribute. I was feeling extremely under qualified and wondering how I could assist in anyway. In these first weeks I’m trying to remember that I was selected for this internship and I have something valuable to contribute to the work they are doing here. I think that is also part of the American work mindset I’ve been conditioned to want to work at every moment, to be occupied with a task at all times, because that is what is seen as productive at home. Here I am trying to take a step back and revaluate busy work and appreciate what can be gained from a simple reflection, observation and asking genuine questions. I think a lot of the work requires self-motivation and being a self-advocate for the work I want to be a part of. This is the hardest part for me and I think is something that comes with confidence that is developed over time. This is only my second week and I am still learning the ins and outs of a large scale non-profit organization. I have a lot of questions I want to ask, things I am excited about learning about, but I have to remember not to rush into it. For now I plan on focusing my energy on building relationships so I have a platform to ask questions on and learn from later on. I need to come more comfortable with all the projects and the operations of the park before I find my place and feel comfortable and confident taking on a project and conducting interviews. I just have to remember it is early in the game and I will gain confidence through careful observation!

**Question Set #2**

**1.  How are things going at work now that you have settled in for a bit? How does this align with your professional goals that you set for yourself?  What would you like to achieve in the next half of your internship?**

I have been here a little over a month now and I still wouldn’t describe my experience as settled in. I feel more comfortable with the work I am doing, but I wouldn’t venture to say I’ve settled in. This isn’t me complaining just me being honest about the experience I am having. Each week is a new surprise and I am never quite sure what I will be doing each day. Around the third week of my internship I was feeling slightly frustrated about my position and some of the work I was doing as an intern- I was tired of reintroducing myself, explaining that I didn’t know exactly what I was doing etc. After speaking with Jodi and getting some realistic advice about my experience at ENP I’m finding comfort in the instability. Once I realized that this was more of a learning experience for me rather than an opportunity for me to contribute something grand and massive I am having a much better time. This isn’t to say I’m not contributing to the park, but a different way than I initially thought. I’m being honest and realistic about what an intern can accomplish in three months and I feel proud of what I have learned and done so far. Last week I got the opportunity to travel and live with a guest family in the Karen Hill Tribe Village and that was the most profound experience I have yet to have.

I was able to see firsthand the issues facing Asian elephants and the people who own them. I saw the habitat loss from once dense jungles reduced to corn and rice fields, I saw the scars from the torture training on baby elephants and I saw villagers poverty intertwined with the lure of greed and money. It was truly a remarkable experience that was amazing, frustrating and sad all in the same breath. I also got to see some amazing countryside- which was an amazing change of pace from the hot, busy city.

That being said, I have three major goals I would like to accomplish the next half of my internship. I would like to be able to travel to Cambodia and the Surin Project for at least two weeks. Also I would like to shadow the woman who does public relations and outreach to the public- I’m quite curious about the work that goes behind promoting a non-profit organization and I find myself enjoying the writing side of things more and more as time goes on. Lastly, I would like to conduct a small (informal) research project on elephant behavior in captivity for a class back home.

**2.  How are things going relative to your personal goals? In which areas have you made progress and where do you still have some room to expand? What do you want to make sure you address before you leave?**

To be honest, I think I made some quite strange personal goals before coming here and I have sort of been reevaluating them in a more realistic and obtainable fashion. My “new” large overarching goal was to become more comfortable making people uncomfortable- which does sound a little odd. What I mean by this and what I have been trying to work on is to be able to be more comfortable speaking my mind without the constant worry that I am upsetting the status quo or making people uncomfortable. I’m working on being professional, but being honest at the same time.

I’ve been addressing this by politely telling family and friends at home who send me elephant paintings that those animals are abused and that doesn’t match up with the goals this organization has. Also talking to tourists in the office and explaining the parks concept also has helped my confidence tremendously. Obviously this isn’t something that will occur over night and something that I would like to continue on once I come back home! Moving forward with this goal I would like to speak more with park managers, film makers, trainers, vets etc. in order to grow confidence personally.

**3.  How are things going relative to your cross-cultural goals? What kinds of experiences have stood out to you so far? What do you want to ensure to experience before you leave?**

As I mentioned before the most profound cross-cultural experience I have had so far was living with the host family in Karen Hill Tribe. What I enjoyed most about this experience was I wasn’t an outsider simply observing I was living with them and it felt so much more rich and real. Before living with the family it was difficult to understand their view point and perspective when it comes to Asian Elephants- I don’t really agree with their approach, but at least now I understand it.

What I want to ensure before I leave is a trip to see the floating lanterns released. I know that is slightly superficial and an environmental issue, but I have always wanted to see the lights float into the sky and make a hopeful wish. People at the office have said that the festival is coming up so I hope I don’t miss it! Also, I would like to have a monk chat and properly visit some more temples.

**Question Set #3**

**1. Describe a day in your life – what is your work schedule like, what do you do after work, how do you balance your time between work and exploring life outside of work?**

This is an extremely difficult question to answer, because I do not have a typical work schedule or at least times where I am doing the same thing. Each day can sometimes be a complete surprise when the office informs me that I am needed to conduct a few interviews or I need to run home and pack a bag because they want me to see what the journey to freedom project is like. I am not complaining- I love the flexible position and I love learning about the many facets of the park. These sentiments in itself help describe more accurately what my work schedule is like. Some weeks I am interviewing new tour guides, others I am visiting customers at the hospital, or travelling to new projects or helping at the dog shelter- I just go where I am needed and try to absorb and learn from every experience, because each experience lends itself to new knowledge and provides a glimpse into the realm of non-profit organizations.

So usually after work, if I am at the park, I go for a shower and relax for an hour or so before dinner. Sometimes I will take a book and watch the sunset or get to see the last elephants head to bed for the evening. After dinner I will usually sit and talk with staff, dog and elephant volunteers for a while. I have also been able to listen to a few talks by the Elephant Trainer, Christy and long term volunteer Jodi. I have learned tremendous amounts by asking questions and attempting to critically think about all the information I hear from different people.

If I am at the office I usually have a bit more freedom to explore after work. Usually I go to dinner somewhere in Chiang Mai and explore a new place- I love to eat! I have been able to eat out with coworkers and friends from the park- which is great, because it is always a little more comforting to check out a new place with someone who has already been there. I sometimes go check out the night market or just the other night I saw my first movie in Thailand.

Balancing time between work and exploring has been challenging (especially at the beginning), because I felt my sole purpose for being here was to contribute on a professional level and it wasn’t appreciate to spend time travelling. Now that I am over halfway into my internship I realize that is not necessarily the case and coworkers and Patty have encouraged me to see lots of sights on my days off- like this week is the Loy Krathong Festival (which I was really excited about). Also this weekend will be the first weekend I have had off in three weeks so I am looking forward to doing some much needed exploring and adventuring.

**2. Housing:  What is your living situation like?  Knowing what you know now, are there other options you would have chosen instead?  If you can provide some resources for future interns, that would be most helpful.**

My living situation is quite basic and it works out perfectly for the job I have. Some weeks I stay there the whole week and others I just stay one evening. That being said, I don’t need any “fancier” accommodations and I am grateful that ENP takes care of the rent each month. Given the fact the ENP helps with the rent and the apartment is only two-ish blocks from the office I think it would be silly to recommend any other accommodation- it would just introduce unnecessary stress and hassle for interns.

**3. Finances:  How is your budget working out for you?  Are you spending more or less that what you expected?  How much do you typically spend on food, recreation, travel, etc?  What would you do differently knowing what you know now?**

Everything in Thailand is much cheaper than I expected it be. I can get a meal for a dollar and go see a movie for three dollars. That being said, it can be easy to over spend because everything is so cheap. I found myself buying and spending unnecessarily just for the sake of it being cheap. Considering the fact I have a limited amount of space to take items home in so I have really tried to reign in my spending and start spending more money on experiences rather than just gifts for family and friends back home. That being said, I have spent a combined amount of around 300 dollars on food, travel, and recreation and I feel comfortable with this amount. I have been enjoying eating out and getting some foot massages at the park! I think the next month and half I will spend considerably less, because I have bought everyone gifts and I have a better idea about what I should be paying for cabs, tuk tuks, and food.

What I would do differently is look up or talk to someone who has experience bartering, because I found it extremely difficult and I was definitely ripped off a few times. I am not saying this because I want to bicker over 50 cents, it just would have been nice to get a better idea of what bartering was like. That being said, I think it was useful to discover through trial and error and being ripped off helped me learn what not to do next time!

**4. Travel and Transportation:  How do you typically get around town and to work?  Are you satisfied with that choice?  Would you recommend other options?  Do you have time to explore the surrounding area on time off?  How do you manage that?  What do you recommend for travel options?  Where do you recommend exploring?**

Since I live so close to work I just walk every day and at the park I walk every day because there is no other option really. I live in the city center so everything is so close I can walk or take a tuk-tuk across the city for fairly cheap. Something I haven’t done which I would like to is rent a bicycle for a day or get a guided tour of the city by bicycle. They are fairly cheap to rent and there are some many nooks you could spend years exploring. I would like to travel to more area outside of Chiang Mai, but it is difficult with the internship- I did get a chance to go to the National Park which I would definitely recommend doing. There are so many beautiful waterfalls and views to see that are truly remarkable. I have plans to travel to Pi the next weekend I have off and I hear that is beautiful and worth seeing as well. As I have mentioned before, Patty has spoken of there being an opportunity to travel both to the Surin Project and the Cambodia Project which I look forward to doing!

**Question Set #4**

**1. Professional:  How well did your coursework prepare you for your internship?  What knowledge of your field has been most important so far?**

I think my coursework has prepared me quite well for this internship. Obviously, my degree is still in progress and hasn’t covered every obstacle I have encountered, but it has given me the tools to overcome the obstacles rather than present each obstacle individually. What I am trying to say is, living and working abroad, I have appreciated not only the scientific coursework I have gained, but also the ability to think critically and creativity about the entire stimulus I am constantly taking it in. I also appreciate the ability to synthesize and summarize information and the ability to write up reports. Which sounds really simple, but is a skill I have really appreciated. More advanced though, I was really glad I took courses in multicultural perspectives in natural resources and endangered species and conservation- these courses taught me not only the science behind conservation but the different perspectives that are affected by conservation plans.

This is important because often, as I have observed here at ENP, people are too quick to blame the locals for the abuse of the elephants without seeing it from their point of view. I’m not saying that poverty and circumstances are an excuse for outright abuse, but what people do not understand is Thai people (not all Thai people) do not consciously abuse elephants because they are maliciously evil, they continue these western deemed abusive practices, because that is the experience that western tourists demand and support without understanding the abuse behind it. Again, this isn’t an excuse, but I don’t think it is proactive to use locals as a constant scapegoat and place westerners on a hierarchy above the people that live and work here. That is why I was thankful for those courses because they prepared me to think critically about why locals continue to use these abusive practices and the many issues (and many sides) these conflicts have.

**2. Cross Cultural:  Describe an event where you misunderstood something due to cultural differences.  What did you do?  What would you do next time?**

To be honest, the biggest misunderstanding and problems I have had in a cross-cultural situation are dealing with westerners that visit the park. Dealing with conflicting mindsets, with the different tourists, I have found is a real test of my patience. It is hard when you are so passionate about something and living a dream you have imagined for yourself since before you can remember and having to deal with people who are more interested in playing drinking games, fulfilling egos, or just telling friends back home they “volunteered” somewhere. I have found that dealing with tourists can be rewarding, but is also quite challenging and at times frustrating. Frustrating because I have worked really hard not to come in and offer unnecessary suggestions without considering that the organization and the people who started it had already thought of that idea. If you would have told me that the greatest struggle I would ever face would be dealing with people from my own “culture”, I would have seriously doubted it.

I am continuously working on being able to politely correct people and speak my mind in a way that is not only professional, but educational as well. Elephant Nature Park has taught me that education paired with inspiration to do action is the most powerful tool a non-profit organization can have. It doesn’t do any good to have volunteers feeling like they are being talked down too- it just doesn’t create an environment for change.

I have had some trouble with adjusting to and navigating the workforce, but having spoken to all my advisors, previous interns, and maybe the nature of my personality I haven’t struggled with it nearly as much as I thought it would. Initially, I wished I told myself it was alright to relax and observe rather than trying to look busy constantly-but I think that is a trait I have inherited from my culture. Next time I will find more comfort in not pretending to look busy, but rather just ask questions or observe how things are run.

**3. Personal:  What are the most important things you have learned about yourself thus far through this experience? What has been the greatest personal challenge? What has been the greatest reward?**

This is a question on I have been reflecting on a lot this week. I think the most important thing I have learned thus far about myself is my ability to adapt and remain flexible. I think the biggest challenge I have had is remaining true to myself and the goals I have set for myself. What I mean by this is sometimes I feel pressure from home and volunteers who I speak to at the park to conform to this generic version of successful. I have felt pressure, whether it was in my mind or not, to become this loud, boisterous person who constantly jokes with the guides and has no problem offering suggestions for sake of simply changing to change. I am not criticizing this personality, but just pointing it out that it is not the only personality that can be successful doing meaningful non-profit work. I want to create change that is progressive and meaningful and I have learned here at ENP that change is not always necessary or progressive.

In the same token, I have trouble coming out of my comfort zone and not necessarily confronting people, but talking about issues that need discussing no matter how uncomfortable they make other people feel- which is important for activism and conservation work. My comfort zone and personality tend to want to please people and make them comfortable even though my mind wants to say something- so it has been a struggle to balance between my comfort zone and professionally speaking to someone that I do not necessarily agree with. In other words, convincing people to join the cause rather than just solely speaking to people who are already on board and agree with your mission.

The greatest reward is being able to work with so many passionate, inspiring people that have dedicated their life to the most worthwhile and meaningful cause I have ever come across. And of course it is beyond rewarding to even be a little part of an elephants simple happiness- it is difficult to describe in words the gratitude I feel for being able to take part in such a life-changing opportunity and be able to take so much and give so little back (relatively). I was also really proud of how I am consciously growing and learning about myself and what I can accomplish. I am glad I am critically thinking about the many facets of the organization and while I admire Lek and all the incredible work she is doing I don’t always agree with every decision she makes- which I think is a healthy approach to a professional internship. Admiring Lek as much as I do I think it would be too easy to follow everything she does and agree with everything she says, but is not necessarily the most productive approach. It is isn’t as if I am correcting her or offering constant suggestions, but just making mental notes of different points of view and ideas.

**Question Set #5**

**1. Have you learned about any new possibilities for career paths?  Have you done any informational interviews (formal or informal) to learn about the field?**

I think this internship has opened a realm of possibilities for career paths and I have been able to informally explore so many different facets that I never thought were an option before. I think the real problem is my indecisiveness and not being able to choose I path I want to pursue- it is not like something doesn’t interest me I just have a hard time deciding to do one thing. I am so grateful for this experience and the amazing time I have had, but I am still finding graduating and finding a job a really daunting experience. This experience has taught me that I can bounce around between aspects that inspire me until I find something that fits me just right. I am really interested in educational outreach, especially after working here, and developing conservation plans from an ecological prospective rather than something that is just specie specific. The foundation has taught me just how interconnected different issues are and you can do a lot of work that benefits more than just one thing. For example, at ENP the foundation not only supports elephants, but the community as well.

This internship has given me a firsthand look at human-animal conflicts and how it is not a simple process untangling the conservation aspects to save a species. In a classroom it is easy to offer suggestions on how locals can improve things and it is easy to assume that it would be easy to save an imperiled species, but it is a completely different prospective when you actually live in and see the conflicts they are dealing with. You see that it is not as simple as banning circuses altogether or elephant riding, because people need to make a living. What good would it do to benefit one species while harming another? This experience has most importantly taught me the importance of patience and education that leads to meaningful change and action within this career. That has been indispensable knowledge.

**2. Looking back at your pre-departure journal or notes, how have your impressions of the host culture changed?  What is the most frustrating aspect of your host culture?  What is the most rewarding aspect?**

I think one aspect of Thai culture that I wasn’t expecting was their overall acceptance and non-prejudice against people in the LBGTQ community- something that I wish was more prevalent in western culture especially in the work force. Of course this is making a sweeping generalization of all Thai people, but I was surprised to learn how comfortable people were with their sexuality and how the sexuality of other people, no matter how it presented itself, was not judged or treated as a big deal. I found it really refreshing and admirable. Overall the people were so warm and friendly and would go to extraordinary lengths to make sure you were alright. So overall that has been the most rewarding aspect of the culture- meeting so many kind, open-minded people that are truly dedicated to a worthwhile cause.

To be honest, I haven’t found anything in the culture that has been outright frustrating. That being said, and I am sure I am echoing other interns when I say this, this most frustrating aspect would have to be the lack of direction within the workplace and the lack of rigid organization that I have grown accustom to back home. I go back and forth- sometimes I really crave an organized workplace and would appreciate having a set project to work on from time to time, but I have also found that I thrive in this sort of environment and enjoy having the freedom to explore my own interests and ideas-within reason of course.

**3. What has been the greatest challenge personally thus far on this internship?  What has been the greatest reward?**

The greatest challenge so far has been overcoming my anxiety and the paranoia I have been having in regards to foreign illness and bugs. I have been on the verge of panic attacks when I have convinced myself that my heat rash is something more sinister or that I had gotten malaria. I know it is better to error on the side of caution, but there were points when I convinced myself of really irrational and impractical things that only caused me stress and worry. It seems like such a futile thing to have as your greatest personal challenge, but it was honestly something I consistently struggled with. I am proud to say, at this point in my internship, that I am monitoring my health in safe way that isn’t causing unnecessary loads of stress and unwarranted panic attacks.

With that aside, the greatest reward is the sense of accomplishment I have and how proud I am of myself for stepping out of my comfort zone and doing what I thought was impossible. There is something inherently satisfying about completing something that you have always talked about doing. I am so proud that I have been able to remain true to myself and my goals while growing and learning as a person. I have learned so much about overcoming challenges and the patience of observation and silently reflecting. I am glad I allowed myself to have this experience to grow and learn not only professionally, but personally as well.

**Question Set #6 (Final)**

**1. Now is the time to begin thinking about how to articulate all your experiences you have been gaining for your next endeavors (job search, graduate school applications, etc). Identify 3-4 accomplishments or successes in your internship of which you are most proud. These can be professional, personal or cross-cultural.  Explain them briefly below.**

Three successes I am most proud are firstly be able to travel to all the different projects and writing reports that were used for updating the foundations website and informing volunteers about the experiences they are about to embark on. Secondly, I am proud of the blog and research project I conducted and the education I was able to spread in my own little slice of the world. Lastly, I am proud of the interviews I conducted for the park and my ability to remain flexible and adaptable.

**2. After identifying 3-4, pick two of these and expand on them with the following:**

**Outline the context of the situation**

1. I was blown away by the responses to my blog by people I met while traveling, coworkers, family/friends, and even professors back home. I would have never imagined anyone would actually really read it- let alone enjoy it! So many people reached out to me requesting that I should write about certain things, expressing how much they enjoyed my writing, or sharing to their own social media sites. It is difficult to describe how I feel, because I wasn’t expecting any response or respond to positively to my blog and research project. I think this opened up another outlet for me professionally and has given me more confidence to pursue educational writing more seriously!
2. Basically, when I was working in the office and occasionally at the park the foundation would ask me to conduct interviews for new booking staff, tour guides, and e-mail correspondents. I was humbled that they would trust me to conduct interviews and value my opinion when it came to hiring new staff, but it was also a lot of pressure. I was usually told the day of I would be interviewing potential staff members without being told what positions they would be applying for or without any sample questions to draw from. I am proud of the reports I produced and was happy to help the foundation in any way. This new experience allowed me to gain precious insight for the interviewing process (which will be very helpful once I graduate)!

**Describe any challenges you faced**

1. It was difficult for me to open up about the experiences I was having while describing the work I was doing. In other words, in the begging it was difficult to find a balance between what is entertaining, educational, and what accurately depicts what I am doing. In addition to this, some things were really difficult to write about. I saw some really unethical things and it was difficult to describe, because it was so difficult to watch them. I also had to be careful that I didn’t portray one group in too much of a bad light, because that wasn’t my intention. I wanted to educate without shaming or pointlessly blaming one group of individuals.
2. I mentioned a few of the challenges I faced already above, but the biggest challenged I faced was when Patty asked me which, of two candidates I had interviewed the week before, would be the best for the job. Initially I was panicked about being asked such an important question and stumbled to find the right answer. I wasn’t really expecting to provide an opinion about the people I interviewed- I was really only comfortable writing an unbiased report about the information they provided during their interview rather than deciding who would work best in the office.

**Describe the actions you took to overcome the challenges**

1. I just tried to be as honest as I could about my own experiences and tried to critically think about all the images, good or bad, I was seeing in Thailand without jumping to conclusions and hastily writing about something I would later regret. Especially considering my blog was being shared with my academic professors at home and supervisors here I was especially careful about the content I was portraying as my personal opinion and the information I was sharing about Elephant Nature Park and on behalf of Elephant Nature Park.
2. After my initial panic was over and I composed myself I ask for a moment to review the reports I created and then get back to them about who I thought would be the best candidate for the position. I was really nervous, but made the best decision I could with the information and experience I had and then recommended a candidate who is now working in the office and seems to be doing fine! I might have fumbled little bit and was not very confident with the information I was relaying, but in the end I stuck to my decision and it turned out to be the right one.

**3. Describe the workplace culture at your host organization.  How does your personal cultural lens work within the culture of your host organization?**

To say the workplace culture is much more relaxed than at home is a major understatement. This is isn’t to say that they don’t work as hard or get things accomplished less they just work much differently than a typical work day at home. Work at home is definitely more structured and it is rare that I am not sure what I am supposed to be doing; were as here I rarely know what work I will be engaging in on a daily basis. I think I worked well within this setting, because I consider myself quite a flexible person and I have no problem just going with the flow and taking on projects as they come to me.

That being said, I have found that there is a difficult balance between taking imitative and being willing to take any work that you are given. From what I have observed so far I think there is an inherent respect from taking interest in projects and presenting ideas just at the right and appropriate moment. It was crucial to understand that the foundation is a well-functioning organization that benefits from ideas, but it success is not contingent upon a person who is staying for only three months.

**4. What words of advice do you have for future interns as they prepare for this internship and living in your host country/culture?**

My words of advice for future interns would be to remain open and flexible about the work you will be doing at Elephant Nature Park. It is crucial to understand that Thais do not operate under a strict, organized working regiment as we do in western culture, but that does not mean the work any less than western cultures do. Navigating the workplace can be quite difficult in Thai Culture and initially it was quite difficult to figure out who I should approach about certain ideas I had or certain projects I would like to do. If you just remain observant and patient you will find your answer soon enough. I found the best approach was to write an email and attach a report with an idea, the reasons why it would benefit the project and forward it to Patty. Then Patty would usual say she would forward to Lek for her approval to see it was something we could do. If the idea or whatever was approved then I would usually hear back straightway from Patty and if I did not hear back straightway I would enquire again. Usually they would not just come out and say no, but if you see that they are hesitant or avoiding the answer than you can assume that the answer is no and move on.

All in all, I had an amazing time interning at Save the Elephant Foundation and learned a tremendous amount about conservation work and elephants. The people who work at the foundation are so kind and work extremely hard so you can have a meaningful three months’ work. If you remain flexible, patient, and excited about learning new things about the organization and the culture there is no limit to the amount of amazing experiences and projects you will be able to do.

In closing, I would say ask a lot of questions, seem interested in the work they are doing, but stay educated and informed. If you observe and critically think about all the information you are seeing and hearing you will have an amazing time!