**KARATU, TANZANIA**

**ALEXIS RIVERA**

**Program:** SFS Wildlife Management and Conservation, Summer

**Alexis’ Majors:** Zoology; Environmental Studies; Conservation Biology

**Academic Life:** The classes were focused on wildlife management policies, wildlife ecology, and wildlife-livestock interactions. The academic setting was much different than any I’d had at UW-Madison. Most lectures were field trips to different towns around Karatu so we could see real wildlife management at work and practice field techniques ourselves. Game drives were the most fascinating, since we got to learn behavioral scanning, predator-prey relationships, and bird identification in the greatest national park in the world: the Serengeti. The students were from different universities/colleges in the U.S. and brought with them many different perspectives. The faculty had spent much of their lives working on wildlife projects in Tanzania.

**Skills Gained:** I gained a lot of useful conservation knowledge and skills like management planning, community based natural resource conservation, integrating wildlife conservation and human development, as well as behavioral scanning techniques that will help me stand out as I seek a career in environmental and conservation fields.

**Future Aspirations:** As I learned more about how animals and humans interact with each other and with their environment, I realized you can’t help animals and the environment without helping people. My study abroad experience put me on track to seek a career that puts me as close to nature as possible. I learned that my ideal workspace would be in the field learning from and with local communities about how we can all live sustainably.

**New Perspectives:** Unplugged, I was able to be completely present. I made lasting friendships with the most unique souls, opened my eyes to indescribable landscapes, and felt deep connections with every creature that crossed our trucks. Four weeks was enough to change my life. I now have a greater appreciation for every relationship in my life with people, animals, and the environment and I try to be more present every day.

**Advice for Someone Considering SFS Tanzania:** You will be forced to step out of your comfort zone and be exposed to all sorts of challenges, but it will be the greatest opportunity for adventure and growth. You will be amazed by the beauty in the country’s landscape, animals, and their people. I am forever grateful for my experience in Tanzania. Keep an open mind at all times and don’t be afraid to try anything.

“**I now know my passion is not just for the conservation of animals, but for conservation of all life on earth.”**