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Study by Christopher Lile ('17) Published in Alpha Chi Journal

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—The summer before Christopher Lile graduated from Gardner-Webb University, he spent five weeks studying small mammals on the Broad River Greenway and the surrounding area.

The research experience helped him secure internships in Indiana and Madagascar. Recently, the Waynesville, N.C., native received another honor for his work. The paper from his project has been published in “Aletheia,” the Alpha Chi Journal of Undergraduate Scholarship.

Christopher Lile checks one of his traps on the Broad River Greenway for research he conducted at Gardner-Webb in the summer of 2016.

“This journal operates on the same principles as peer-reviewed journals in academic disciplines,” noted Dr. June Hobbs, GWU Professor of English, Alpha Chi sponsor and director of Undergraduate Research. “The articles must be vetted and recommended by (outside) readers, and then they go through a rigorous editing process. The finished product is very impressive.”

Lile received funding for his study through the GWU Summer Undergraduate Research Scholars program. He worked on the project with his faculty mentor, Dr. Joseph Oyugi, associate professor of biology. His work represented the first small mammal survey in Boiling Springs, establishing a baseline for future studies. He and Oyugi presented the results at North Carolina Central University’s Undergraduate Research and Creativity Symposium in November 2016. In addition, Lile shared research findings at GWU’s Life of the Scholar Multidisciplinary Conference in March 2017 and received a presentation award.

Chris Lile recently completed an internship at Wolf Park in Indiana.

After graduating in 2017, Lile completed an internship at Wolf Park in Battle Ground, Ind., where he trained grey wolves and worked in husbandry and public education. His love for animals, research, and conservation have now led him to the island of Madagascar, where he is spending three months studying lemurs as a volunteer for the Omaha Zoo’s Department of Conservation Genetics.

“The fieldwork I am currently involved with in Madagascar is unlike anything I have experienced before,” Lile shared. “We follow and observe lemurs throughout the day, while recording social interactions, feeding habits, and individual behaviors. We work directly with local Malagasy guides who can easily navigate the forests to find the lemurs.”

The GWU faculty, particularly Oyugi and Dr. Tom Jones, professor of biology, helped Lile prepare for the future. “These professors were both especially helpful in advising me during the application process of many internships I had during my undergraduate career as well as for opportunities I’ve had since graduation,” Lile stated.

After finishing his work in Madagascar, he plans to complete a more advanced internship with Wolf Park to research the cognition of the red and grey fox. He will also seek out other opportunities with organizations such as The Defenders of Wildlife. Eventually, Lile would like to pursue a doctorate in primatology, behavioral ecology, or a similar field.

[Click here to read Lile’s research article in Aletheia.](#)

[Read Lile’s latest blog post here.](#)

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