Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife

General Information of Student Programs

(Veterinary Medicine Externship, Veterinary Technician Externship, Wildlife Care Externship, and Wildlife Rehab Internship Programs)

3883 Sanibel Captiva Road
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239-472-3644
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Disclaimer

The information contained in this handbook is accurate as of February 2026 but may be subject to change. CROW reserves the right to amend, modify or cancel policies and other material as published in this handbook. CROW will endeavor to inform students of any such changes with reasonable notice.

Important CROW Staff Contact Information

Name	Title	Office Number	Email	Use
	Student Program Coordinator	239-472-3644 X 234	students@crowclinic.org	Information on student programs and student housing
Dr. Jessica Comolli	Research & Medical Director	239-472-3644 X 226	jcomolli@crowclinic.org	Questions on the hospital, research, and DVM internship.
Dr. Rodney Schnellbacher	Senior Staff Veterinarian	239-472-3644 X 225	rschnellbacher@crowclinic.org	Questions on patient care, hospital procedures, and DVM internship.
Becca Brooks	Hospital Practice Manager	239-472-3644 X 234	bwehmeier@crowclinic.org	Information on scheduling, hospital operations, or staffing
Julie Toma	Rehabilitation Manager	239-472-3644 X 223	jtoma@crowclinic.org	Questions about wildlife rehabilitation
	Wildlife First Responder	239-472-3644 X 222	firstresponder@crowclinic.org	General information of CROW hospital
Randy Rainbolt	Facilities & Grounds Mgr.		randy@crowclinic.org	Building and grounds concerns or emergencies.
Alison Hussey	Executive Director	239-472-3644 X 227	ahussey@crowclinic.org	General CROW information
Michelle Menendez	Operations and HR Director	239-472-3644 X 221	mmenendez@crowclinic.org	General CROW information & HR
Pam Stoike	VEC & Gift Shop Associate & Volunteer Coordinator	239-472-3644 X 229	pstoike@crowclinic.org	General questions regarding volunteer applications.
Brittnay Laster	Education & Outreach Coordinator	239-472-3644 X 228	blaster@crowclinic.org	Information on educational programs, community events or visitor education center.
Sarah Rinne	Social Media Coordinator	239-472-3644 X 230	srinne@crowclinic.org	All media, public relations, and web site questions.

CROW Mission Statement

The Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife (CROW) is a teaching hospital and visitor center dedicated to saving wildlife through state-of-the-art veterinary care, research, education, and conservation medicine.

CROW Slogan

Saving Wildlife Through Care, Education, and Collaboration

Who We Are

CROW operates as a wildlife veterinary hospital and rehabilitation center, conducts clinical research, holds educational and outreach programs, and educates the public at our hospital and visitor education center on a 12.5-acre campus on Sanibel Island, Florida. We have several "critter cams" on-site that feed into the visitor education center to help the public see what is going on. Additionally, we have several animal ambassadors (patients that cannot be released due to injury) that we use in presentations occasionally in the visitor education center or at special events. The organization's primary mission is the rescue, care, rehabilitation, and eventual release back to the wild of sick, injured and orphaned wildlife.

Conservation medicine is a relatively new field that uses an interdisciplinary approach to study the relationship between ecological, human and animal health. As one of the world's leading wildlife rehabilitation centers, CROW has a responsibility to use the knowledge gained in its hospital to advance wildlife medicine and the "one world, one health" concept. CROW is striving to put the information gained from seeing such a large and diverse patient load by improving the health of the environment, humans, and our pets, through a better knowledge of wildlife health. CROW works cooperatively with several scientists and doctors at local, state and national institutions to reach this goal. Furthermore, our clinical research improves the medical and surgical care of wildlife here at CROW, while advancing wildlife medicine throughout the world. Our research is benevolent "clinical" research, meaning we are collecting information in the normal course of diagnosis and treatment. No animals are harmed in the name of research at CROW.

Incorporation/Operation

The organization incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 1972. A board of directors gives oversight on strategic and budgetary planning and a paid staff performs and oversees daily operations. Students, interns, fellows, and volunteers are integral in this aspect. CROW receives minimal federal, state, or local funding; if any. Most of our funds come from memberships, private donations, grants, gift shop profits, the educational programs we offer, fundraising events and foundation support.

Patients

CROW provides treatment for sick, injured, and orphaned wildlife throughout Lee County and sometimes beyond. Animals are brought in by people who find and rescue them, through volunteers we send out to rescue them and/or they are picked up by volunteers at our drop-off facilities located throughout Lee County.

History of CROW

1968: Sanibel Island resident Shirley Walter came across a royal tern injured by a car. Finding no local services that could offer treatment, Walter carried the bird home. She shared the story with friends, and before long, a group of volunteers came together to form CROW. Five hundred distress calls came in that first year alone, many answered by the late veterinarian, Dr. Phyllis Douglass.
1972-1973: The organization incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 1972 and received its IRS exemption in 1973.
1985: A demand for services led to the start of the Volunteer Emergency Rescue & Transport (VERT) program.
Late 1980s: The late 1980s saw more exciting growth, with the launch of the student extern program, the hiring of the organizations first staff veterinarian and the installation of x-ray and surgical equipment.
1992: Building of the original Robert E. Schneider Education Pavilion. New daily educational programs were also put in place in the early part of the decade.
1996: Veterinary Internship program began accepting students
1998: CROW's Fellowship program began accepting students
2006: New 3,700-square-foot George E. Batchelor Student Housing Complex, with three fully-furnished apartments, began welcoming residents. These suite apartments can house up to twelve people at a time.
2009: CROW celebrated its 40th anniversary with the opening of a new 4,800-square-foot veterinary hospital and the Visitor Education Center. The education facility serves as a venue for innovative visitor displays, interactive exhibits, live patient videos, wildlife presentations and special events. Proceeds from an on-site gift store benefit patient care. Nearby, the state-of-the-art hospital includes diet preparation areas, a laundry room, reptile room, pediatric ward and surgery room with a viewing window.
2010: Newly renovated sea turtle facilities unveiled and a new e-newsletter and website that more fully highlight the range of educational programs and services offered were launched.
2013: CROW received recognition and first place distinction from the EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program. CROW won the award for its role in protecting and caring for wildlife native to the Gulf region and toward achieving and preserving health and resilient coasts in the states bordering the Gulf of Mexico.
2018: CROW celebrated it's 50th year of serving wildlife and the patients were numerous due to the worst Red Tide incident in decades. Efforts were recognized and celebrated by the public and media – CROW won the Chrysalis Eco-Innovation Award and was a finalist for the NewsPress Hero of the Year recognition.
2019: CROW admitted and treated over 5,000 patients. Newly built animal ambassador cages were unveiled.
2020: CROW admitted and treated over 6,000 patients.
2022: CROW weathers through Hurricane Ian in September 2022. Clinic moved off-site to the Animal Refuge Center for 6 months due to construction and debris clearing at Sanibel campus.
2023: CROW resumes operation on Sanibel campus and begins rebuilding of outdoor enclosures damaged during Hurricane Ian. CROW admits and treats 4600 patients.
2024: CROW weathers Hurricanes Helene and Milton with minimal damage and demolishes sea turtle complex damaged by Hurricane Ian and plans to break ground on a new sea turtle complex in early 2025!
2026: CROW opens the Harkey Sea Turtle Complex to begin rehabilitating sea turtles again for the first time since Hurricane Ian!

Today, CROW continues to grow by expanding research and conservations programs and participating in wildlife educational camps.

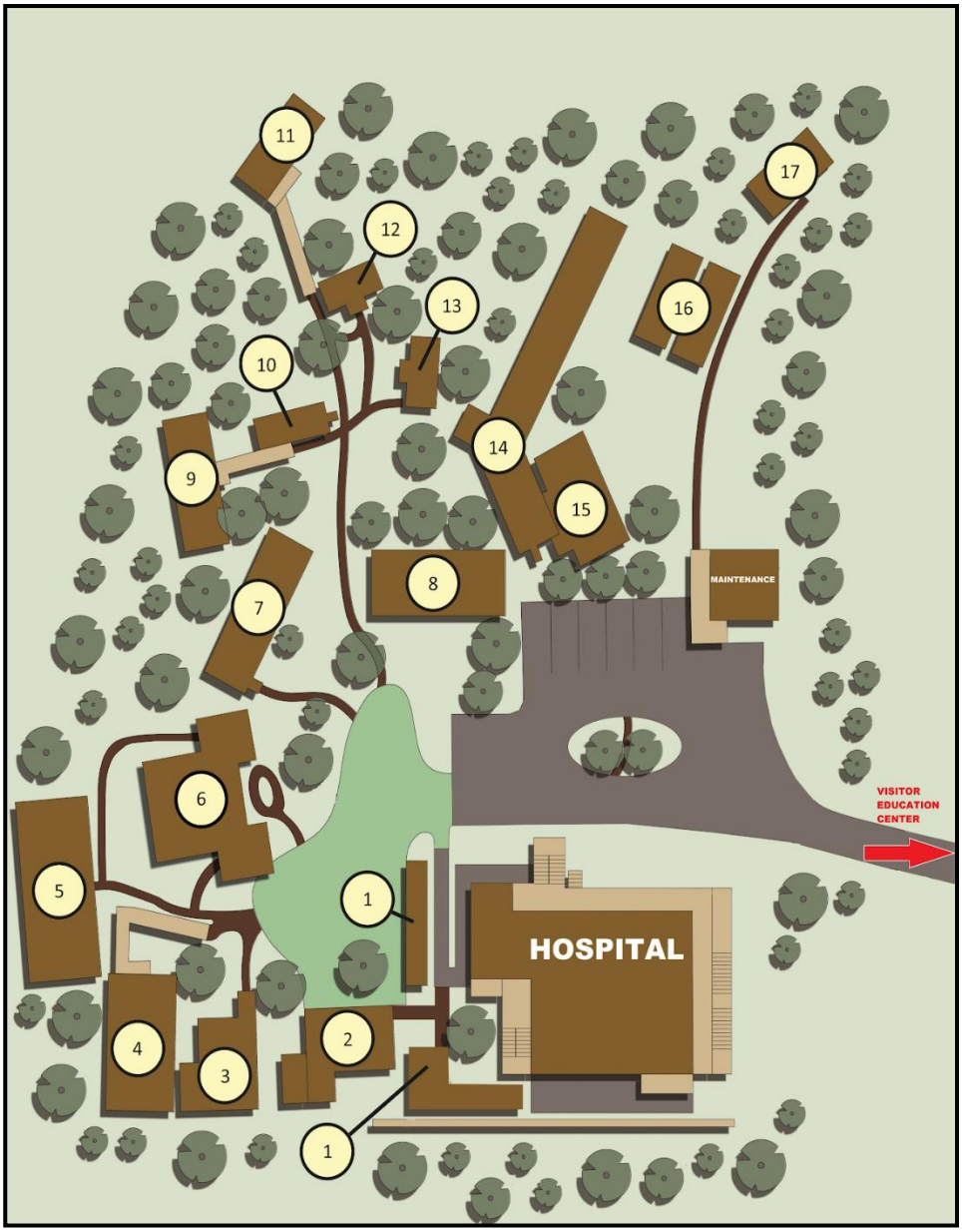
CROW Facilities & Campus Map

Visitor Education Center

CROW's Visitor Education Center is designed to connect audiences with wildlife in our care while maintaining their privacy. Approximately 15,000 people go through the center a year. The 2,400 square foot building is a self-guided tour that centers around the process for our patients from admittance to release. Exhibits include a timeline of CROW's history, patient rescue stories, diagnostic testing and treatment methods, and games and quizzes – some with touch screen profiles. Live feed cameras into the patient intake/exam room, raccoon enclosure, pelican enclosure and surgery suite are featured on one wall. Presentations are offered daily on a variety of topics and each week one of our animal ambassadors is featured.

Hospital

CROW's wildlife hospital features state-of-the-art facilities allowing for the efficient and effective care of its wildlife patients. The 4,800 sq. ft. hospital opened in 2009 and features two examination rooms, 3 ICU rooms, surgery suite, radiography and laboratory area, 72 multifunctional indoor cages, 4 oxygen chambers, 12 incubators for infant patients, 7 bathtubs each with a privacy curtain, a reptile room with its own temperature and humidity control, 3 sea turtle pools, isolation room, laundry room, and 2 kitchens.



Outdoor Enclosures

1: Songbird Aviary
2: Shorebird
3: Osprey
4: Roberts
5: Pelican
6: Animal Ambassador Enclosure
7: Small Flight
8: Sea Turtle Complex
9: Mammal Complex
10: Woods Mammal
11: Otter *(under construction)*
12: Squirrel
13: Burrowing Owl
14: Large Flight
15: Cannon
16: DIVI Stilts
17: Carnivore *(under construction)*

Philosophy of the Student Program

- The general purposes of the student program are:
    - To educate students in the proper techniques of wildlife rescue, recovery and release.
    - To inform students of conservation medicine and the importance of wildlife medicine in the One World, One Health concept.
    - To assist the staff in the everyday operation of CROW and with its public outreach and education programs.

What to expect of CROW

- A positive experience:
- Support and effort of CROW to make your experience educational, satisfying and rewarding.
    - Opportunities to expand your knowledge and skills in a variety of wildlife care and rehabilitation areas.
    - A fair and safe work environment.
- Non-discrimination in recruitment, selection, training, rewards or duties assigned, regardless of race, religion, national origin, age (over 18 required), gender, marital status, or handicap, providing it does not prevent performance of the assigned work.
- Orientation and training for the safe and successful performance of duties.
- Support from the Hospital Practice Manager and Student Program Coordinator to resolve conflicts between you and a staff member, volunteer, or other student.
- Courteous treatment by CROW employees.

Expectations of Students

- We expect our students to honor their commitment in full and have a serious and professional commitment which views the position as valid and important. **The work of any wildlife hospital and rehabilitation center is labor intensive.**
- Honesty and openness with staff regarding individual intent, goals, needs and skills is essential, so that a good rapport is possible, and student gets the best educational opportunity.
- ***Student will work at least 5 days out of the week starting no later than 7 AM daily and ending when all patients are cared for and the hospital is cleaned.*** ***Students routinely work 40 to 60+ hours per week.***
- *The same level of attention and effort to routine husbandry, such as cleaning and feeding, as the student gives to medical/surgical care.*
- Initiative and proactively helping staff provide patients with needed care and facilities with necessary maintenance.
- Awareness and abidance of the policies and procedures of CROW.
- Promptness and reliability in reporting for work.
- Dress in an appropriate and professional manner for the position assigned.
- Give accurate information to the public and respect the confidentially of CROW.
- Respect the wild nature of our patients and ensure to give them privacy and a calm, quiet environment in which to heal.
- All students work in the neonatal room as those patients require constant care and attention.

Who are our Students?

- **Veterinary Medicine Externs, Veterinary Technician Externs, & Wildlife Care Externs**: (Approx 40-45 students total per year). Anyone with an interest in wildlife and conservation medicine and rehabilitation, especially students that are in or applying to vet school or vet tech school. Also, undergraduates with an interest in natural or biological sciences.
- **Clinical Year Veterinary Medicine Externs:** Veterinary students in their clinical year (4th or 5th year) with a strong interest in wildlife. Minimum 6 weeks commitment to CROW with preference given to students who are able to stay longer. After initial training, students will work closely with veterinary staff, assisting in surgeries and assuming primary case responsibility.
- **Wildlife Rehab Interns**: 6-month term. Students are pursuing a career in wildlife rehabilitation or applying to vet school
- **Veterinary Medical Interns**: 1-year term for fully qualified veterinarians. Once graduated, DVMs may pursue specialized training in wildlife and conservation medicine. The first step on the path to board certification is to complete a year-long internship. All DVM Internship applications are conducted through the VIRMP.
- **Wildlife Rehab and Practice Management Interns**: 1-year term. Students are pursuing a career in wildlife rehabilitation, practice management, education, or applying to vet school.
    - *For more information on this program, please contact students@crowclinic.org*
- **Conservation Education and Marketing Interns**: 6-month term. Students are pursuing a career in wildlife rehabilitation, marketing, public relations, natural or biological sciences, or education.
    - *For more information on this program, please contact blaster@crowclinic.org*

Student Program Descriptions

- ***For program descriptions, please visit our 'Student Programs and Internships' page on our website at www.crowclinic.org***

Student Fees & Stipends

- Non-refundable $125 Program Fee for all students
- Non-refundable $75 per week on-site Housing Fee
    - *Housing fees will be reimbursed if CROW cancels your program prior to your accepted start date.*
- Wildlife Rehab Internship students receive a bi-weekly $300 stipend and do not pay for on-site housing. They also receive 3 PTO days during their 6-month term.
- Wildlife Rehab and Practice Management Internship students receive a bi-weekly $500 stipend and do not pay for on-site housing. They also receive 5 PTO days during their 1-year term.
- Conservation Education and Marketing Internship students receive a bi-weekly $300 stipend and do not pay for on-site housing. They also receive 3 PTO days during their 6-month term.
- Veterinary Medicine Internship students receive a bi-weekly stipend and do not pay for on-site housing. They also receive 5 PTO days, 5 continuing education days, and an optional healthcare benefits package during their 1-year term.

Student Training Schedule

- The first week will be working in ICU and with our veterinarians, technicians, and hospital staff. Your weekend 'off' days may be different your first 1-2 weeks to get you onto our hospital schedule rotation, but will then be set to your normal 2 weekly off days weekly *(vet students may be different if your program is less than 4 weeks*).
- After training in the ICU you will then rotate to train through our three baby rooms. Based on the program, it will depend how often a student is scheduled in the various baby rooms weekly. Baby room schedules and species seen will be dependent on the time of year.
- Wildlife Rehab Internship students will additionally train outside with our rehab staff and will then have assigned one scheduled outside day each week.

Learning Opportunities

- CROW's hospital facility operates as a teaching hospital where students learn all aspects of conservation and wildlife medicine and rehabilitation. The hospital is open for patient admissions every day of the year from 8:00am – 5:00pm.
- Evidence-based medicine is used and taught to treat a variety of illnesses and injuries.
- Students cycle through all areas of the hospital. They will work with our veterinarians (2 staff, 2 DVM interns), certified veterinary technicians, wildlife rehabilitators, and several other staff, students, and volunteers.
- Case-based rounds are held throughout the week for all staff and students. Didactic/journal club rounds are monthly for our veterinary interns. Impromptu teaching rounds may occur when ICU treatments are not occurring.
- Student's programs are tailored to their individual interests and capabilities. For example, a senior veterinary student may be given more responsibility in examining patients, interpreting diagnostic tests, and coming up with treatment regimes. They may also be invited to perform surgery under the direct supervision of the veterinarians.
- ***Please notify hospital staff what you are most looking forward to learning or specific skills you would like to practice (within reason). We cannot guarantee what patients we may have during your program nor specific treatments.***

Educational Requirements

- **Presentations in the Visitor Education Center**
    - Wildlife Care Externs and Wildlife Rehabilitation Internship students are required to present at least one lecture on a conservation medicine or wildlife rehabilitation issue in CROW's Visitor Education Center. Prior attendance at a presentation and coaching from our Education and Outreach Coordinator is required. Copies of the schedule of presenters for the month are posted in housing and in the hospital. Wildlife Rehabilitation Interns will be giving weekly presentations.
- **Topic of Your Choice Presentation at the Hospital:**
    - Veterinary Medical Externship, Clinical Year Externs, and Veterinary Technician Extern students will be required to present a topic of their choice presentation to veterinary staff (+/- hospital staff and students) prior to their program ending.

Events and Educational Programming

- Students are invited to participate in events and programs that that promote awareness of CROW and/or help us with raising funds. Events vary and occur throughout the year.
- Participation is usually not mandatory, but students often feel it is a "fun" way to help CROW if their work schedule allows.

CROW On-Site Student Housing Overview

- CROW shared on-site housing is provided at a $75 weekly fee. Breaking of the housing rules listed below may directly result in termination from the program with no housing refund. If terminated from the CROW student program, students must be fully moved out of on-site housing and off CROW property within 2 days of termination.
- The housing fee payment will only be reimbursed if CROW cancels my program prior to a student's accepted start date.

On-Site Housing Suites

- Suite A contains one bedroom, one bathroom, and a shared common area which can house up to 2 students. There is a shared doorway into Suite B.
- Suite B contains three bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a shared common area which can house up to 5 students. If a veterinary intern is living on-site, they will have their own single bedroom in the suite. There is a shared doorway into Suite A.
- Suite C contains three bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a shared common area which can house up to 6 students. If a veterinary intern is living on-site, they will have their own single bedroom in the suite.

Housing Information

- Students are provided with most furnishings, cooking/eating utensils and general cleaning supplies. The Pre-Arrival section on the next page lists personal items that students should bring, but please keep in mind that shared housing means there is limited space for personal belongings.
- Internet access is provided campus–wide, however students should bring their own laptops for personal usage at CROW housing. CROW's computers are NOT for personal use.
- All bedrooms are supplied with bunk beds, storage dressers, and a closet. Housing may be co-ed in the common areas, however bedrooms will be separate.
- CROW's housing facility is for students only. **Friends and family are not allowed to stay over.**
- The common area in each suite is the kitchen which contains an oven, stove, microwave, toaster, coffee maker, refrigerator, sink and cabinets, table and chairs, and a stackable washer and dryer.
- Paper goods (toilet paper, paper towels) and laundry detergent are supplied.
- Bathrooms have one shower stall, toilet, sink, and cabinets. There is limited space for toiletries.
- Since CROW is a non-profit, we rely on private funding for most of our budget. Some of our donors request tours on short notice. Therefore, we require that you keep the housing tidy-looking and refrain from placing/leaving anything on the porch and railings outside.

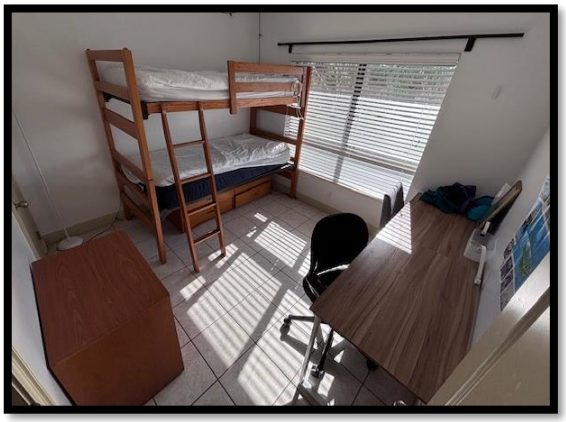
Rules & Standards:

- **No possession of or use of alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs on CROW property, or, reporting to CROW while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol.** Violation of this rule will result in immediate dismissal and removal from the CROW property, loss of credit for the student program and immediate notice of such violation to the sponsoring school or organization.
- **Notify the Student Program Coordinator and Facilities Manager, about any damaged, broken, or items needing maintenance within the housing units as soon as possible.**
- Students are required to clean up after themselves at all times and work together in the upkeep of the common areas. This means clean counters, floors, tables, dishes, refrigerators, bedrooms, closets, bathrooms, etc. Common area and bedroom inspections will be done routinely with 12-24 hours notice.
- No overnight guests allowed at any time. Any guests entering housing must be pre-approved by the Student Program Coordinator. Guests are only allowed in housing between the hours of 8 AM to 9 PM daily. No guests are allowed to be under the age of 18 years old.
- Be sensitive to electricity and water usage. The thermostat for the AC should never be set below 78 degrees when no one will be in housing. All lights are to be turned OFF when no student is in the room. Keep doors and windows closed at ALL times.
- **Quiet hours are from 10 PM to 6:30 AM daily.** Be courteous of others in housing at all times (no slamming doors, yelling, playing loud music, etc.)
- No dangerous or unauthorized materials onto CROW property. These include firearms, explosives, other weapons or similar, potentially dangerous items. No hot plates, open coils, incense, candles, lighters, open flames, etc. due to fire danger.
- All students are to stay in their assigned suite and room throughout the entirety of their program. If a student is requesting to change their assigned housing room, they must speak with the Student Program Coordinator.
- Pets, of any kind, are NOT allowed within CROW housing at any time.
- Smoking, e-cigarettes, vaping, and other similar items are **NOT** allowed on CROW property at any time.
- Refrain from placing anything on the porch or railing outside of housing. Only shoes and umbrellas are allowed on the porch.
- All garbage and recycling should be taken to the dumpster on a daily basis or as needed.
- If students are to be away from housing overnight, notify the Student Program Coordinator 12-24 hours in advance.

CROW On-Site Student Housing Photos

Suite A (2-person unit):

Suite B (5-person unit):



Student C (6-person unit):

Parking & Driving on Campus

- Students may park their vehicles next to student housing, behind the Visitor Education Center. Spaces underneath the Visitor Education Center are reserved for guests.
- Please drive slowly on CROW campus. Be mindful of people and wildlife on the campus grounds.

Meals

- Students are responsible for their own meals. There is a supermarket and various restaurants within 2 – 3 miles of CROW, which tend to be a little more expensive than off-island.
- Students often go grocery shopping together off-island, if someone has a car. Otherwise, students can have food delivery services delivered to student housing for the duration of their program.

Mail

- Students may receive mail/packages during their stay at CROW. Mail is delivered to the administrative office and students are notified upon its arrival, or it is placed in their suite.
    - Standard envelopes can be sent to PO Box 150, Sanibel Florida, 33957
    - Packages (other than US Mail) can be sent to 3883 Sanibel Captiva Road, Sanibel, FL 33957.

Flying

- It is recommended to fly into Southwest Florida International Airport in Fort Myers.
- If using Island Taxi, you are required to make a reservation ahead of time to pick you up. Please call (239-472-4888) to arrange your ride prior to your travel. Island Taxi provides a discounted rate of $35 on-way transportation (arrival OR departure only) and $70 round trip transportation (arrival and departure). ***Please ensure to tip your driver a minimum of $10 as they provide the ride at half-price for CROW students!*** Taxi fees must be paid BEFORE scheduling your ride. For payment information, please email students@crowclinic.org

Driving

- CROW address is 3883 Sanibel Captiva Road, Sanibel, FL 33957. You will have to pay a toll to get on the Sanibel causeway. We advise stopping at a grocery store before you come across the causeway as it is cheaper off-island than on-island.

When to Arrive

- Your arrival date must be one day prior to your accepted start date. If you need to arrive more than 1 day prior to your start date, contact students@crowclinic.org to ensure there is housing available. This allows time to move into housing and purchase your groceries.

Items to Pack

The following list is to be used as a guideline as to what to bring with you. You may not need everything on the list, and there may be things not mentioned that you would like to bring. If you are unsure about an item, please contact us.

- Identification, Insurance Cards
- Prescription Drugs/Over the Counter Medications
- Money or credit cards for food, spending
- Cell Phone and Computer (laptop)
- Alarm clock/clock radio
- Sheets (Twin XLong)
- Pillow(s) and pillowcases
- Blanket(s)
- Towels – shower and beach
- Flashlight
- Small personal fan for bedroom
- Refillable Water Bottle
- Toiletries & Sunblock

Items you MAY NOT Bring:

- Candles/incense
- Air conditioners or space heaters
- Halogen lights or High intensity light bulbs
- Alcohol & Alcohol Containers
- Hookah/Pipes/Inflammables (any open flame devices)
- Illegal drugs/drug paraphernalia
- Expensive Jewelry
- Guns, Weapons (of any sort), or Ammunition

Clothing to Pack

- Standard working attire is CROW scrub tops and khaki or navy knee-length shorts, khaki or navy pants (no jeans), or any color scrub bottoms, along with closed-toe shoes.
- We recommend bringing at least two pairs of shoes and plenty of socks and work bottoms.
- A bathrobe, slippers, or shower shoes. Light jackets or sweatshirts for cool evenings in the winter.
- Raincoat, rain boots, and umbrella are encouraged.
- Hiking or sturdy work boots are encouraged for wildlife rehab internship students when working outside.
- Swimsuit, flip flops, and towel for the beach on your days off