



# The Student Chronicles

Newsletter from the SDWG

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

About this Issue 1

Your Experiences 1

Conference Registration 1

ARTICLE: Staying Wild  
About Wildlife 2-4

TIP BOX: What are the  
Best Ways to Search for  
Jobs? 4

Highlighting Learned  
Skills on Your Resume 5

TIP BOX: Can I Get Col-  
lege Credit for my Summer  
Internship? 5

What Are We Up To? 6

As the spring semester comes to a close, students filter off their university campuses. For many of us, summer break is a chance to break away from the day-to-day stresses of the regular semester and gain experiences at internships and new jobs. Whether you're busy with fieldwork this summer, spending the break at home, or taking on an entirely different adventure, the May edition of the Student Chronicles highlights how to get the most out of your break.

## Your Experiences



I was a biological science aid for USFWS at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. I learned how to ID grassland songbirds, herps, and marsh vegetation, drive and trailer a boat, use RTK GPS equipment, write reports on various surveys, and conduct point counts. I also helped band pelicans and further developed my ArcGIS skills. It was an awesome summer internship! -Mariah Simmons

In 2012 I started as a bat technician for my undergrad advisor. She was working on a collaborative project with Radford, VDGIF, VDCR, and VT doing hibernacula surveys in the winter and mistnetting in the spring/summer to document WNS on Myotis bats in our region. That opportunity led me to the gray bat project I ended up working on and getting published as an undergrad as well as leading me to the current masters position I have in Wisconsin! -Brenna Hyzy



## Conference Registration is Now Open!

Register by June 30 to save \$50!

Student four-day, full access badge: \$300

Student one-day badge (no evening events): \$175

Don't miss out on this great opportunity to learn, network, and engage in Albuquerque, New Mexico!

## Staying Wild About Wildlife

By: Jonathan Trudeau

Were you unable to get a wildlife technician position or internship this summer? Are you feeling that you are falling behind others in your cohort? This is a perfectly normal feeling, but do not worry, you are not alone! There are many people within the wildlife community that are in the same shoes as you. Though you may not be working with wildlife, there are still plenty of things you can do to have a wildlife-filled summer and help improve your skills for the next field technician or internship position you apply to.

One of the most important things is to always remember that no matter what you are doing this summer, you can always strive to improve a skill that can make you a better biologist. Believe it or not, even if you are working at a retail store, ice-cream stand, or the grocery store, you are still helping your chances of getting a wildlife job. How is that you might ask? Well, any job that involves interacting with the public only stands to improve your interaction skills. We go into the wildlife field thinking that we will be working with animals, but the reality is public relations are a huge part of any wildlife biologist job. Being able to interact with multiple stakeholders with a wide variety of opinions can help you excel to the next level.

Now, some of you may be thinking, “Well, I’m mowing lawns and spreading mulch, how does that help me?” Whether you realize it or not, learning how to use tractors, mowers, or even simple hand tools are all great skills that many future employers are looking for. I spent three summers cleaning horse stalls, cutting grass, spreading asphalt, and running various pieces of farm equipment. At the time, I thought it was just a job that was simply paying the bills, but looking back at it now, I realize that it was so much more. It helped to instill a good work ethic, hone my problem-solving skills, and improve my understanding of how different tools can be used to manage a piece of property. Even though that

job had little to do with wildlife, I have used knowledge obtained during that time almost every day since.

Even if you are not working any jobs this summer, there are still things you can do to help yourself to becoming a better wildlife biologist. How are your wildlife identification skills? Even if you think you are an expert, it can never hurt to keep up on your identification skills. Take it from me, when you stop practicing, you forget how to identify wildlife quickly. It does not take much to keep these skills sharp though. If you like going for walks, take your binoculars and a field guide with you. Any time you see something that you are unable to identify, look it up and pick out small characteristics that you can use to identify the species next time. If you keep this habit up, eventually you will learn new species, and remember how to identify species you learned long ago. Keep a record of all the species you could identify when you first started your walks and then compare it to your notes at the end of the summer. I’m sure you will be surprised at how many new species you found.

If you are not able to go for long walks in the woods with your binoculars, then there are always fun online quizzes you can use to practice. Birdquiz.net is a great resource that can be used by those just learning to identify a cardinal, or for the more advanced ornithologist who is looking to learn birds from a new region of the world. What about if you are looking to learn bird calls? Well, you are in luck because there are just as many websites out there with useful recordings of thousands of birds. Of course, Cornell Ornithology Lab has an extensive selection of useful tools, but other sites such as Bird Certification Online offers extensive identification tips and recordings for use. No matter the resource you choose, set a specific goal for the end of the summer for the number of new species you want to learn. Each day, try to learn one or two new birds, mammals, trees, etc.

*(continued on page 3)*



Author Jonathan Trudeau is a graduate student at Ball State University.

Make sure to test yourself on all the species you have already learned each day. Repetition is the key to success in properly identifying any species. If any of you are like me, it may take multiple times of looking at a species or listening to the vocalization to remember it well enough to identify it. If you are having trouble, do not let it get you down. When feeling overwhelmed, take a review day where you just go over the species you have already learned. If you have a species that is giving you trouble, try and look at it from a different point of view. Find something it may remind you of and use that to your advantage. I find comical references work best for me. Once you can identify a species in and out, try using new photos, drawings, and recordings each time. Do not let yourself fall into the trap of thinking you know a species because the individual in the picture you are looking at always has a blue band on its left leg. By switching up images and recordings, it helps to confirm that you have learned the fundamentals to identify that species. Take advantage of the resources available to you whether you are going online or outside.

What about once you have the identification skills down? How are you at remembering scientific names? A fun way for me to learn scientific names was to make a game out of it. I would get a friend or two together and we would go for a walk and quiz each other on species we saw, or on flashcards we had brought along. If we could identify the species by common name,

we would get a point, but if we could say the scientific name, that was 2 points, and if we spelled the scientific name correctly, that was 3 points. You see the trend? Well, at the end of each walk, who ever got the most points chose where we would grab a bite to eat. Now you do not need anybody else to play a fun little game like this. Simply challenging yourself is great motivation. Maybe you play and say to yourself, "Well, if I get 30 points (10 species all correct), I can treat myself to a small milkshake, but if I get 60 (20 species all correct), then I can get the large!" Any little thing you can do to motivate yourself to be better today than you were yesterday can make all the difference. When it comes to scientific names, repetition is key. Noticing any trends from earlier? Practice, practice, practice is my biggest advice. Don't let it run your life, but have fun with it. The more you practice and the more species you can identify and name, the more fun you will have.

Identification and scientific names are an excellent skillset, but what about GIS and statistics programs? Can you even practice that stuff outside of school? Of course, you can! There are plenty of chances for you to practice your ArcGIS or Program R skills. ArcGIS offers a 60-day free trial that not only gives you access to the program, but also grants you access to some amazing teaching tools. If you are new to ArcGIS, this is a great chance to get some exposure to how GIS works and learn some of the basic tools that are used regularly in wildlife research. Tutorials and exercises are amazing resources that show you step-by-step how to merge datasets, how to properly label features, or display material in a map. Once you get a feel for how ArcGIS works, let your imagination run wild and start playing with the tools on your own. Many state agencies have free datasets available to the public that you can download and look at in any way you feel fit. Have you always wondered how much of the area around you is agriculture or urban? Well, after taking advantage of some of the free tutorials and lessons available to you, you can now answer that!

*(continued on page 4)*

Now what about seeing if that is statistically significant? Program R is a great program that you can download for free. Like ArcGIS, there are countless tutorial and exercises available to you. Statistics has its own language, and like any language, it needs to be practiced. Even if you are unable to run any data, looking over the codes is beneficial. Understanding when to perform each test, or how to code for it only makes you a better biologist. Employers are always looking for those who cannot only collect data, but also understand how the data is going to be analyzed. Picking up a statistics text book can help you get a leg up on some of the tougher aspects of being a wildlife biologist.

The moral of the story is to never stop trying your best to improve your skills. Just because you are not working with wildlife, does not mean you cannot improve your skills. There is always something you can do. It can be as simple as a walk through the woods or volunteering with Audubon, or as complex as taking on your own ArcGIS project. Taking initiative to stay involved is a valuable skill that can take you further than you can imagine. Do not be afraid to try something new and learn as much as you can.

### **TIP BOX: What are the Best Ways to Search for Jobs?**

\*Always sign up for email notifications where possible\*

#### **Wildlife Job Boards**

Texas A&M Job Board  
The Wildlife Society  
Conservation Job Board  
Student Conservation Association

#### **State Websites**

New York State  
statejobsny.com  
Delaware  
delawarestatejobs.com  
California  
jobs.ca.gov  
Connecticut  
portal.ct.gov  
Massachusetts  
mass.gov  
Pennsylvania  
scsc.pa.gov  
Florida  
jobs.myflorida.com

#### **Facebook Pages**

Wildlife Job Search  
Conservation Job Board

#### **Federal Websites**

USA Jobs  
usda.usajobs.gov  
US Army Corps  
usace.army.mil, usace.usajobs.gov

#### **Summer Research Internship Opportunities**

SULI Program -Department of Energy  
science.energy.gov/wdts/suli/  
REU - National Science Foundation  
nsf.gov/crssprgm/reu

#### **University Websites**

Colorado State - Warner College of Natural Resources  
Texas A&M- Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences

#### **Listservs**

ECOLOG-L listserv (University of Maryland)  
WS-Google Groups (The Wildlife Society)

Tips submitted by Amanda Vescovi

## Highlighting Learned Skills on Your Resume

After working a summer job, figuring out the best way to highlight tasks and new skills from that job can be a challenge. Wildlife professionals weigh in with some of their best tips...

Tim Carter, Associate Professor, Ball State University

- List items newest to oldest
- Use categories that fit your credentials
- Use good formatting and heading; information should be easy to find
- Keep bulleted lists between 3 and 10 bullets
- Get a friend to proof read
- Ask yourself what message you want to convey when you enter data
- Include the level of effort so time spent in the position is clear

Bob Lanka, Statewide Wildlife and Habitat Management Supervisor, Wyoming Game and Fish

- List pertinent experience for the specific job you are applying
- Be honest, accurate, and concise
- Proof your application!

Lara Pacifici, Teaching Assistant Professor & Undergraduate Program Coordinator, NC State

- Always include short-term positions
- If the experience offered a wide range of skills, list them in short bullets
- If the experience offered a greater depth with a small range of skills, go into more detail in each bullet

Darren Miller, Weyerhaeuser Company & Vice President, The Wildlife Society

- List duties as they are relevant to the position for which you are applying
- List minor skills such as proficiency with computer programs, field equipment, leadership, and team experiences

Gary E. Potts, Immediate Past President, The Wildlife Society & Retired, Illinois DNR

- Be honest and accurate
- State that you are willing to learn skills you don't already have
- Discuss ability to get along with co-workers
- Mention your involvement with TWS and other professional development
- Get a mentor in your field of interest and ask for a review of your resume
- Keep records of every job duty and skill, even if it seems insignificant

### TIP BOX: Can I Get College Credit for my Summer Internship?

Consult with your academic advisor and college registrar office  
Find out the following:

- 1.) How many college credits will the internship amount to?  
*This is usually calculated by the total number of hours worked and will allow you to estimate how many credits you'll have to pay for*
- 2.) Is the internship paid or non-paid and does your university allow you to receive payment in addition to college credit?
- 3.) Are there any other requirements your academic program may have prior to applying?  
*Ex: Pre-requisites, grade-level, paperwork to be signed, etc.*

Tips submitted by Amanda Vescovi

## What Are We Up To?



**Kristi Confortin, Chair**

This summer I will be continuing my passion with bats as a bat biologist for Ecological Solutions. During this position, I will be traveling between the states of Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina conducting presence and absence surveys for federally listed endangered and threatened bats. These surveys will consist of mist netting, acoustics and telemetry.



**Krysten Zummo-Strong, Past-Chair**

This summer will be my first in my new position as a Wildlife Biologist with Pheasants Forever in Colorado. I started my new position back in January, and spend my time assisting landowners in managing their lands for wildlife species and overall conservation. My primary focus is creating nesting and brood rearing habitat for game birds such as pheasants, quail, turkey, and prairie chickens, on a landscape where this habitat is very limited. The best part of what I do is getting to watch projects that start as cropland or ill-suited grasses where there are no game birds present, turn into landscapes with lush grasses and forbs that are filled with birds!



**Phillip Stephenson, Chair-Elect**

I will be working at Pea Ridge National Military Park as a Park Guide this summer as I transition from graduate school back into the work force. Just like many other recent graduates, I will be looking for a permanent position to start my career. I am excited to start my summer job because it is the first job that pays me to talk.



**Ashley Wurth, Treasurer**

Coyote pupping season for the project that I work on starts in May every year. It is my favorite time of year as we get to locate and handle coyote pups! We find dens through telemetry clusters that we have on suspected parents. Our project team then searches the area where the adult coyote has been and if we are lucky, we find a den with coyote puppies! We take measurements, give them PITT tags for identification in the future, take blood or hair for genetic work, and note the sex and number of pups in a den. All this data helps us with current and future research projects on disease, genetics, and population dynamics.



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