

Summer Internship Report 2017

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**Small Mammal Research:
Office of Environmental Stewardship
and Sustainability
Sewanee, Tennessee**

Provide an overview of the organization/research project and a summary of your responsibilities, tasks, and/or projects.

In order to gain a better understanding of the impact of different types of forest management, our team set out to survey small mammal populations in different types of habitat on the Domain. Small mammals have a very important role in forest ecology as bioindicators, meaning the condition of these individuals can reveal the condition of the larger ecosystem. They are a necessary part of the food chain, serving as a food source for species such as birds of prey, snakes, and carnivorous and omnivorous mammals, and also play a key role in seed dispersal and soil management (Carey and Harrington, 2001). Additionally, as they go about their daily activities acquiring food resources and scurrying about they help perform essential functions including mixing soil and organic matter and facilitating the movement of seeds and spores (Carey and Harrington, 2001). It is necessary for this type of study to be performed on the Domain of the University of the South in order to inform future management decisions. To make the best decision possible for treating areas, one must have as thorough of an understanding as possible of all the layers on the ecosystem that is being considered to be managed.

During your internship, what did you accomplish or how did you make a difference? In what ways did you grow in your professional and technical skills?

The objectives of our study were to: 1) Compare the conditions and abundance of small mammals on different types of managed sites on the Domain, and 2) Create a baseline analysis of the condition and abundance of small mammals for future studies to be performed as the areas of the Domain continue

to be managed. I grew in knowledge and experience regarding field work and how to set out and execute full scale research projects from start to finish.

Describe a problem that you helped to solve at your internship. What skills or knowledge from your education at Sewanee helped you address the problem?

One day we were in Lost Cove after a storm. We didn't have a chainsaw and three trees were down in the road blocking our path. I'm pretty great at problem solving but because of my experience helping log and skid trees in Louisiana Circle, I thought of just using the truck as a tool and skidding a whole tree out of the road. All we had was a chain and that's all we needed. We were able to jerry rig the truck and move the tree safely.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

I had to learn to adapt to people who were not as enthusiastic or as driven as I am. I learned how to push through tough field work conditions without complaining in order to bring up my work mates and finish projects on a timely manner.

How did your internship affect your career plans?

It exposed me to the wildlife side of the environmental sector. I am very geology oriented and this internship exposed me to the variety of field conditions that encompass land conservation, as well as forest management. I'm now looking at graduate programs geared towards forest management as well as hydrology.

In what ways did your internship cause you to encounter people of different backgrounds from your own? What steps did you take to communicate effectively with such persons? What did you learn from such persons' perspectives?

I really learned a lot from the domain management team. It was refreshing being around like-minded people regarding land ethics and conservation, however we all came from very different backgrounds and were brought together under a common goal of conserving the domain. I realized what a great resource the OEES office was in grouping eclectic individuals with the common goal of land conservation.

Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:

To the University: My endless gratitude for giving me the best summer of my life, for allowing me to know a place and know it well. Amy, Nate, Sandy: you guys have inspired me and taught me so much more than I can ever thank you for. You guys are a beacon of hope in a pessimistic world and fight for what you believe in and for that I thank you.