

Internship Reflection at The Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge

Spending this summer and fall interning part time at The Great Dismal Swamp was a unique and challenging experience. I am extremely proud to say that I have gotten the opportunity to be not only an intern with a federal agency, but to be one of the first students at Old Dominion University to be apart of the Conservation Leadership Minor.

After taking the adaptation and mitigation course during the spring, followed by sustainability leadership this summer, I felt better prepared to take on this internship. My internship consisted of a project that myself and Chris Lowie (refuge manager) created together. Chris expressed to me that this internship is important to the refuge because they need someone to sit down and really think about some of the specific issues we may be facing in the future with the impacts of climate change.

Knowing that I was able to contribute to this process means a lot to me as a conservation leader. Although this project was an individual process; I feel that it has made me a better leader. I learned how to manage my project while working with the stakeholders at the refuge to achieve a specific goal.

The Dismal Swamp is a very unique and diverse ecosystem. The refuge is beautiful and full of life and I feel lucky to have had the

opportunity to go there and work on something that will benefit the refuge. I learned how to analyze and compile data, something I have never had experience with. I looked at many native species of birds and assessed the upcoming risk to them and their habitat. Completing this internship had given me a sense of pride as well as a better sense of the inner workings of a federal agency. I am thankful for the opportunities given to me by U.S Fish and Wildlife Services, MARI, and Old Dominion and I can only hope that I will be working with USFWS in the near future! I am also extremely thankful for all of the amazing people who made these opportunities possible for my fellow classmates and myself!

-Karlie Pritchard