

Internship in Conservation Leadership

Addressing the Discordance Between Conservation Efforts at Hoffler Creek
Wildlife Preserve and the Urban Ecosystem

CL 668 Summer 2026

Danielle Delp





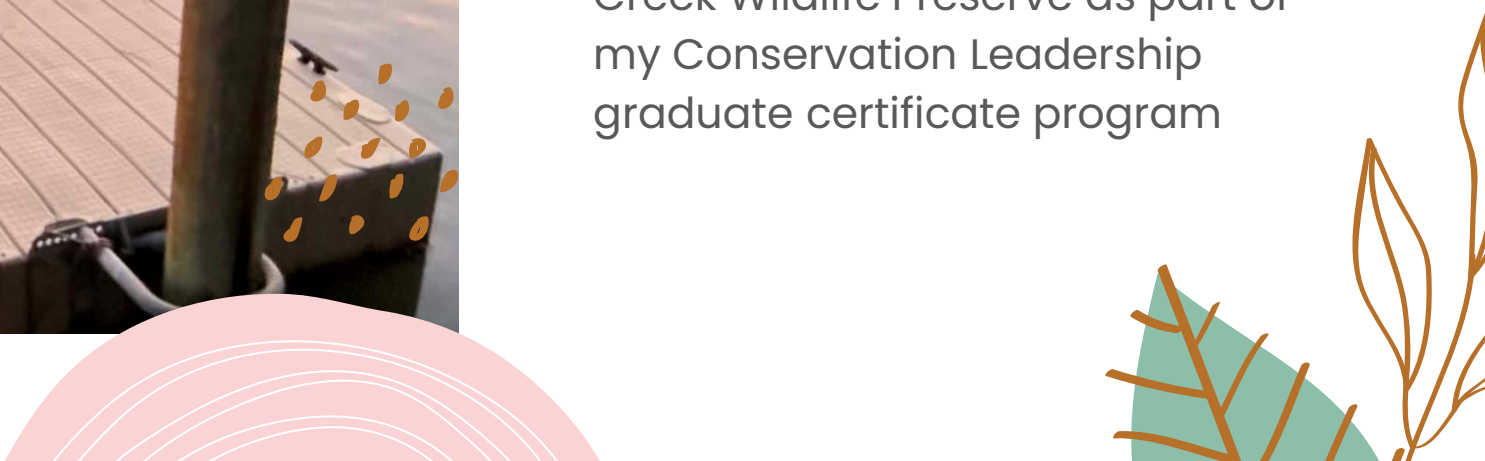
“Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land.” Aldo Leopold



ABOUT ME



My name is Danielle Delp

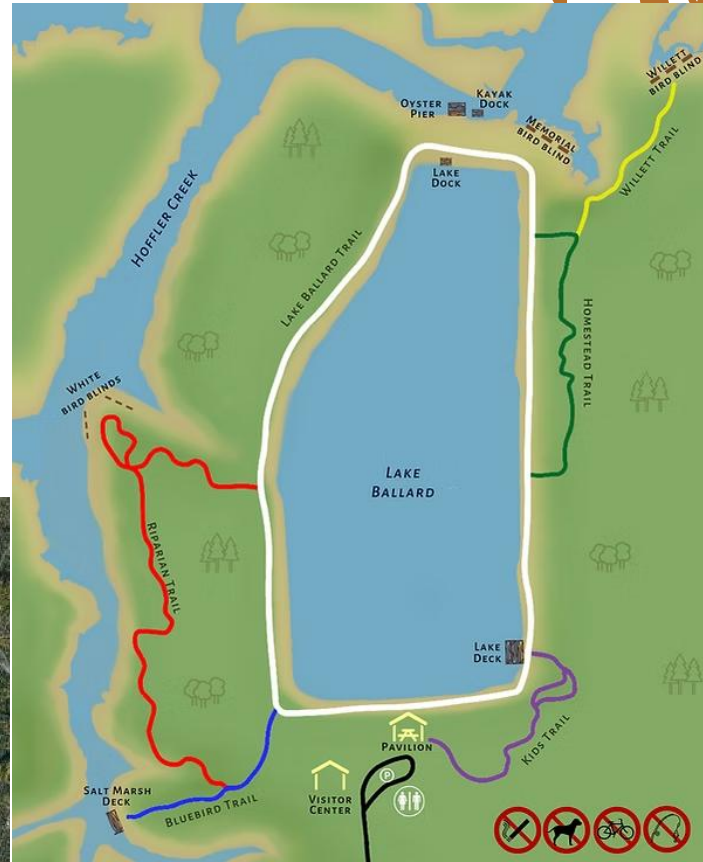
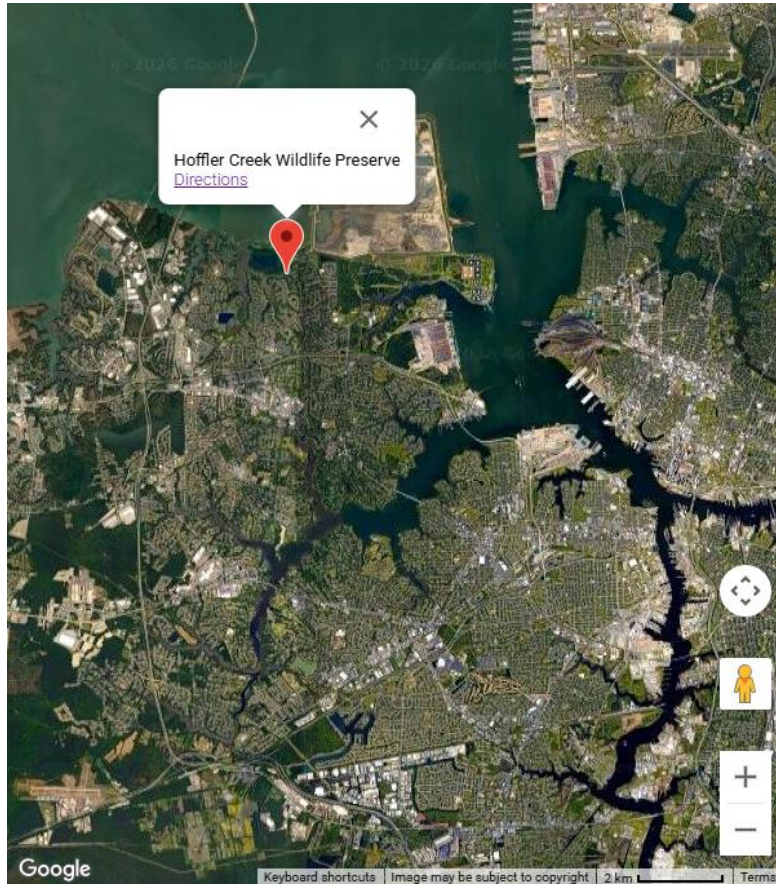
- I have a bachelor's degree in zoology and previously worked in forestry and agriculture
 - I am passionate about birds, forest ecology, and environmental justice
 - This summer I interned at Hoffler Creek Wildlife Preserve as part of my Conservation Leadership graduate certificate program
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The Internship



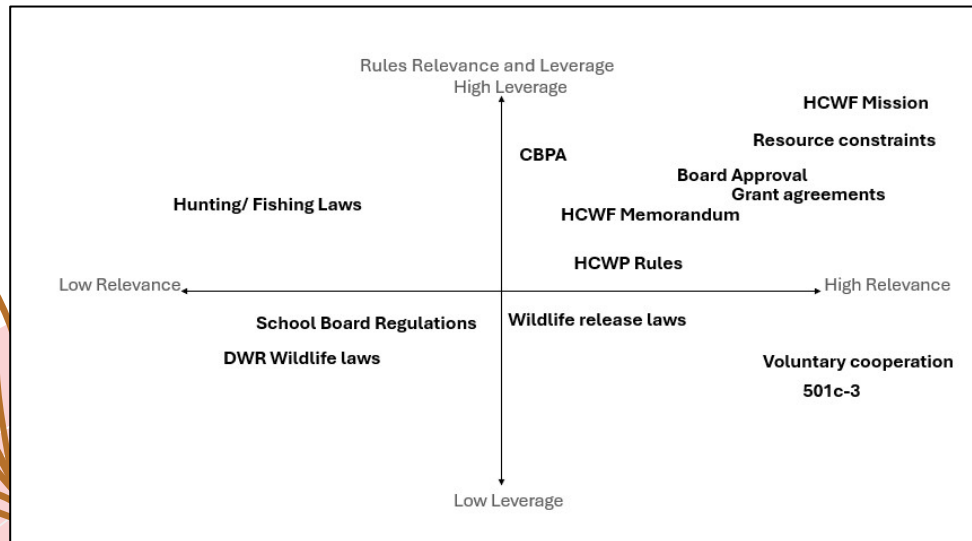
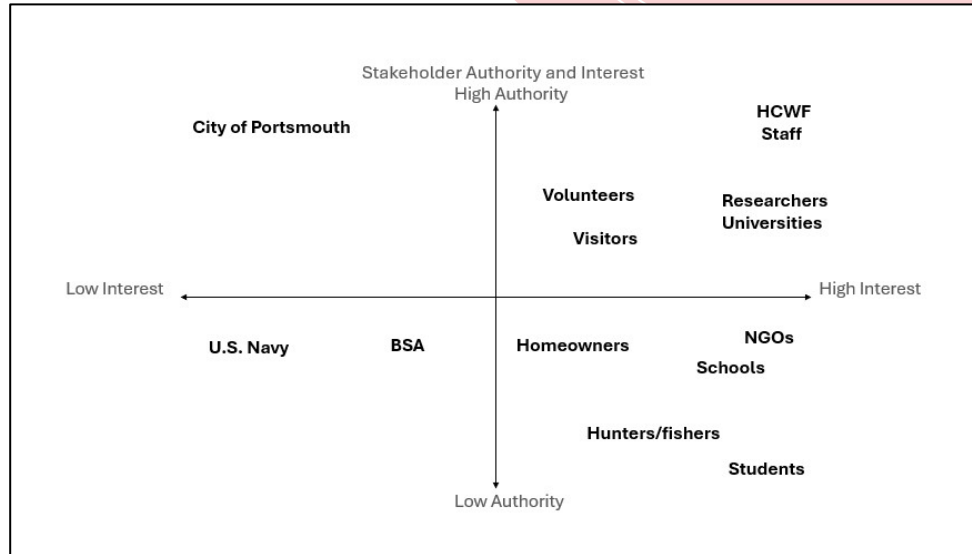
- I got to learn about water quality testing and how it affects the Elizabeth River
- I met many volunteers and visitors, and formed relationships with the community
- I learned new techniques for invasive plant control
- Experienced firsthand how biodiverse HCWP is and encountered lots of wildlife

The Project



- Hoffer Creek Wildlife Preserve (HCWP) is an urban wildlife preserve in Portsmouth, Virginia
- Their mission is to manage the preserve for conservation, education, research, and recreation consistent with good stewardship.
- They have many engaging educational programs and kayak tours

The Project- Decision Space



- The main decision maker for HCWP is HCWF and the board of directors. Other important stakeholders include staff, volunteers, visitors, other environmental non-governmental organizations, and grantors
- Goal statement: A future where HCWP has antifragile management practices and acts as a resource for the community.



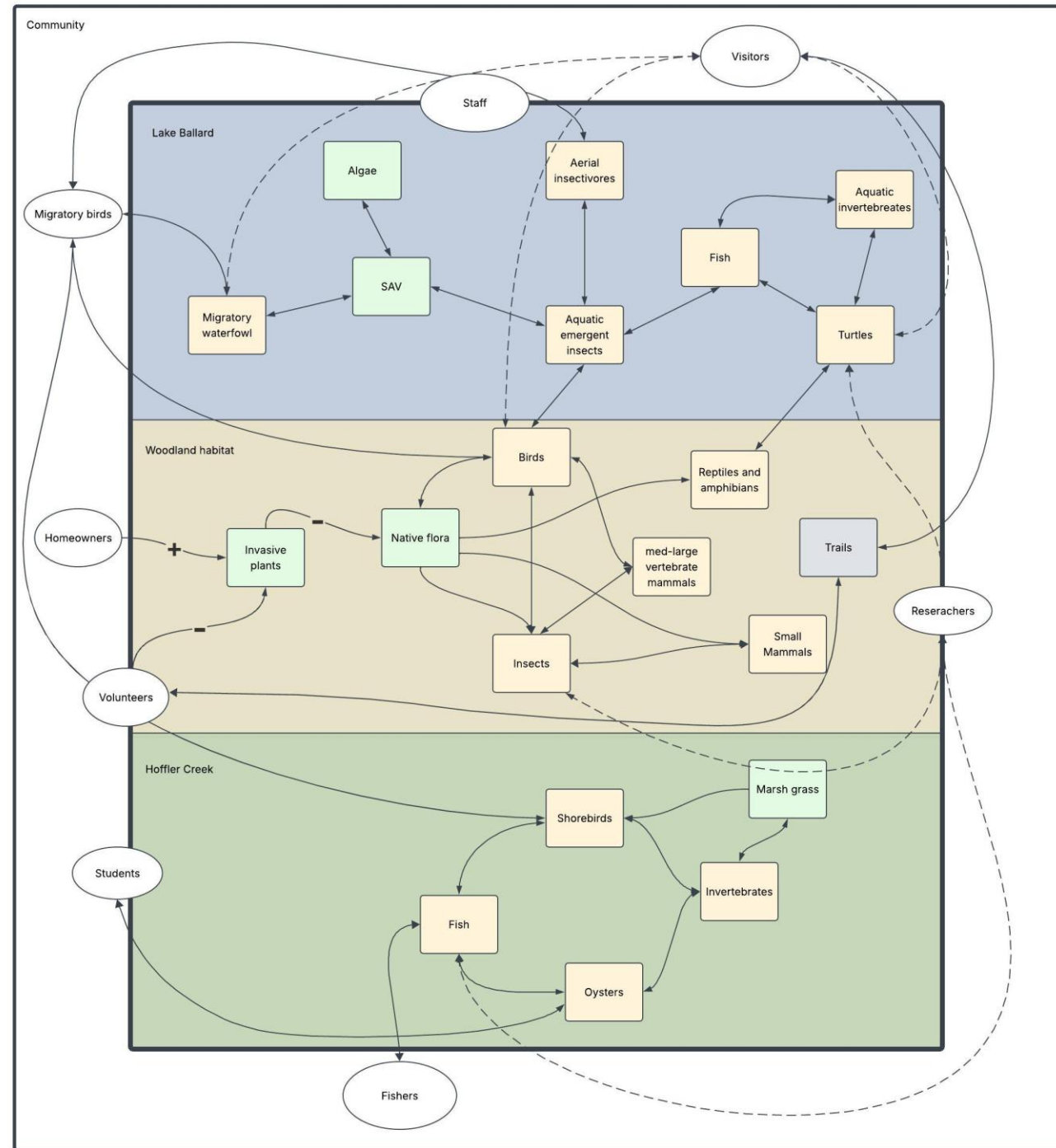
The Project- Conceptual Models



Wildlife and domestic animals are often released at the preserve

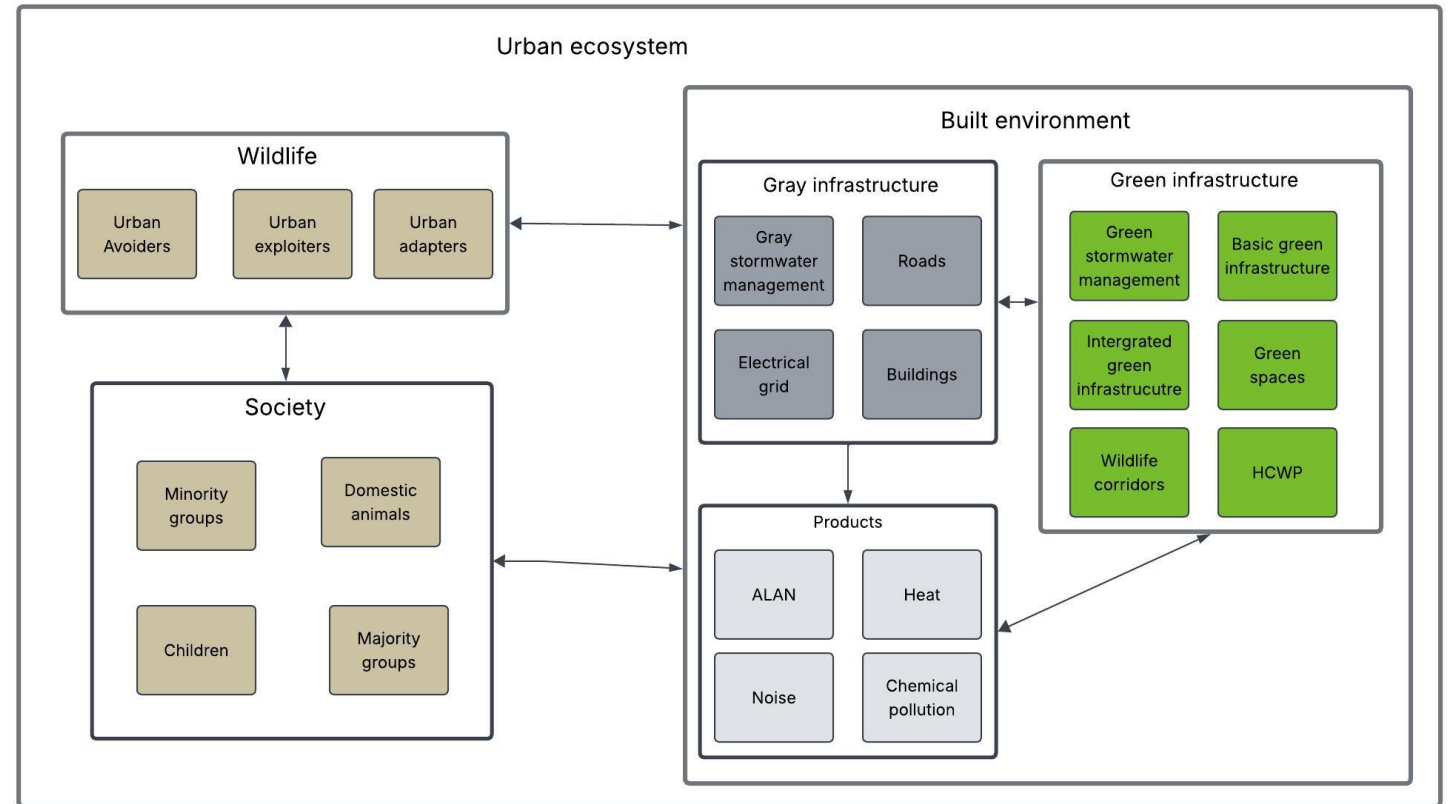


Invasive plants are highly prevalent



The Project- Conceptual Models

- Urban wildlife can be categorized 3 ways: urban avoiders, exploiters, and adapters
- The built environment is everything humans have built and cultivated
- Products of gray infrastructure are highly detrimental to humans and wildlife
- Portsmouth has a high population of minority groups



Left: light pollution on Hoffler Creek from homes



The Project-

Fragilities and Hazards

Fragilities

- ❖ Funding and labor requirements
- ❖ Wildlife requirements
- ❖ Racial and economic disparities
- ❖ Ecosystem fragilities

Hazards

- ❖ Anthropocentrism
 - ❖ Loss of resources
 - ❖ Invasive plants
 - ❖ Pets, the Pet Trade, and Poaching
 - ❖ Increasing Urbanization
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The Project-

Possible Futures

Present

Desirability

Time

Urban Ecosystem Collapse

Invasive Plant Inundation

Persistent Flooding

Environmental Gentrification

Current Trajectory

Sea Level Rise Adaptive Management

Ecocentric Society



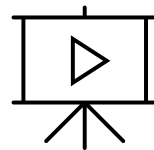
The Project- Recommendations



1. Early childhood education storytime

- Establish a read aloud program for young children

Benefits: raises literacy rates and exposes children to nature early



2. Digital Interpretive Media

- Create a digital interpretive experience such as a virtual tour

Benefits: makes information accessible and personally relevant to visitors



3. Pursue volunteer retention

- Find ways to encourage volunteers to engage long-term

Benefits: Addresses concerns for labor resources

Final Comments

Biggest lessons learned:

- Community and relationships are incredibly important for small organizations
- Children LOVE crabs!



Thank you!



Thank you for your time!

Presentation by Danielle Delp

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All photos by author taken at HCWP

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