

Meet Your Interns:

Hannah LaCava/USFWS Communications Intern

What drew you to conservation?

Like many conservationists, I grew up fascinated with the wildlife in my backyard. I often went exploring in the woods of my grandparents' 30-acre farm, and I'd spend hours trying to grab crayfish in the creek. Living in Raleigh, North Carolina, I was fortunate enough to have easy access to both the mountains and the beach, and I frequently visited both. As I was entering college, I had my heart set on pursuing a major and career in wildlife conservation, but I couldn't part with my love of literature, writing, and English classes. While talking to my advisor, she told me about the career of science writing, and I was thrilled to realize there was a way for me to combine both my love of wildlife and my love of writing. I think writing in conservation is important because it is a gateway to connect the public to both wildlife and the scientists who study it.

Why did you decide to come to Loxahatchee?

Loxahatchee is part of the Everglades, a habitat that, though very large, is the last of its kind. Because the Everglades span to both the east, west, and south sides of Florida, the habitats change with each direction—the Everglades host several different ecosystems. I was excited for the opportunity to come to Loxahatchee because I wanted to study, write about, and be a part of such a unique habitat and community.

How is the Florida environment different from the environment you came from?

While driving down here from Raleigh, I was surprised by how flat the land is. I'm used to seeing hills and mountains, especially when visiting my grandparents in Mount Airy, NC. The air is also more hot and humid. Regarding wildlife, Loxahatchee in particular holds more marshes, anhingas, and alligators than I am used to seeing.

How do you think the public can benefit from the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge?

The public can always benefit from the refuge by coming out to see it. When people are able to go out and experience something for themselves, they form a personal connection with it. Schools, churches, and other groups are able to come to the refuge to gain hands-on experience and learn about water quality and the different species that live in the Everglades through tours and public events. The refuge teaches and shows the public how everyone in both the wildlife and human community rely on one another.

Why do you think the Everglades are important?

The Everglades are important because they provide a unique habitat for a variety of species. Many endangered species call the Everglades their home. In addition, there are areas on the refuge that allow biologists to conduct experiments to better understand the Everglades and its ecosystems.

What surprised you the most about the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge?

I was surprised by the fact that the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge covers almost 144,000 acres of land. I knew that the Everglades were big, but I did not expect the refuge to cover such a large territory. I was also surprised that the refuge has so many volunteers--over 150 people volunteer throughout the year.

What do you hope to learn?

This is my first time working at a wildlife refuge, so I hope to learn about and participate in many of the events planned for the public. I'm looking forward to seeing how a refuge is maintained and operated. I also hope to learn more about the careers of everyone who works here.

What are you most excited for?

I am excited to learn more about the different species here at the refuge. I saw an endangered snail kite on the refuge the other day and am hoping to see it again.



Meet Your Interns:

Megan Lee/National Wildlife Refuge Association Intern

What drew you to conservation?

I've always loved animals and the outdoors. I decided on wildlife conservation as a major/career because I saw it as the perfect way to combine my passion for animals and the outdoors into a career path that I will enjoy in the future.

Why did you decide to come to Loxahatchee?

I'm very interested in national wildlife refuges and possibly working on one in my future career. I was given the opportunity to work at Loxahatchee through the National Wildlife Refuge Association, and I chose this job because I think that the Everglades are an extremely interesting ecosystem that I will love working in.

How is the Florida environment different from the environment you came from?

This environment in South Florida is extremely different from the environment where I live in Virginia. For starters, I am basically now in a subtropical climate which is very different from the temperate one that I am used to. Additionally, I am usually surrounded by mountains and forests instead of wetlands and marshes, and these different ecosystems are home to very different species of plants and animals.

How do you think the public can benefit from the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge?

I think the public can benefit greatly from the educational and recreational opportunities offered at the refuge. By spending their free time here, visitors can learn a lot about an extremely important ecosystem that is home to endangered species and is being overrun by invasive species. Learning first-hand about these issues can drive people to act on what they've seen by spreading the word or volunteering to help maintain or even improve the refuge.

Why do you think the Everglades are important?

The Everglades are extremely important as a home to a diversity of plants and animals, especially endangered ones. This part of Florida is unique in its biodiversity and can be used to teach people about the importance of keeping habitats as intact as possible for the good of the species that live there. And, as mentioned before, it provides a very important opportunity to educate the public about invasive species and the damage that they can do.

What surprised you the most about the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge?

I think what surprised me the most is how big it actually is. When you are in the headquarters area, the visitor center or the trails, I think you get a false sense that this place is kind of small. However, when I looked at it on a map and learned more about it I found out that the interior of the protected area is huge, almost 144,000 acres.

What do you hope to learn?

I'm hoping to learn more about the native species down here, how to identify them and what their habits are. I'm also really interested in applying what I've learned in the classroom to the real world, learning new field techniques that I haven't been exposed to, and seeing first-hand how invasive species are dealt with.

What are you most excited for?

I'm excited to do field work in the Everglades and, of course, to experience the refuge from an airboat!

