



NGRREC's Conservation Team and L&C Student Intern Attend Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference

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East Alton, IL – The Lewis and Clark Community College National Great Rivers Research and Education Center's (NGRREC?) Conservation Team, including Land Conservation Specialists and the Habitat Strike Team (HST), recently attended the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in Springfield, Illinois.

“The conference was a great way for us to interact with some of our partners and learn about new restoration techniques as well as be inspired by the conservation enthusiasm of the conference,” said Lindsay Griggs, HST Senior Assistant. She has been mentoring and training L&C student interns since the fall of 2019.

The conference's theme, “Bringing Science Back to the Forefront of Resource Management,” was especially pertinent to their duties as conservationists who both conduct habitat management and assess/plan conservation practices in the state of Illinois.

Seven full-time staff and one L&C student intern were able to attend conference workshops, which featured information on invasive species removal and drone use in the natural resources field, and a day of professional speakers.

This was the first professional conference for several members of the NGRREC Conservation Team, and they benefited from networking with partners and learning about new research in the field. This knowledge can help them make more informed management decision and create great talking points with private landowners and the partners they work with, like the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR).

“I obtained valuable insight and knowledge from affiliates within the agencies I aspire to work for,” said Philip Rathz, the student intern who attended the conference. “I am looking forward to applying what I learned in pursuit of a career in wildlife conservation and habitat restoration.”

Rathz has been with the NGRREC Habitat Strike Team since fall of 2019 and has gained valuable experience with habitat management tools and techniques. He is currently enrolled in the Restoration Ecology Program at L&C and received class credit for completing his paid internship with NGRREC’s Habitat Strike Team.

This meeting was a great experience for Rathz, who has expressed interest in a career in wildlife conservation and biology. In addition to habitat management experience, he has been exposed to wildlife sampling techniques with wildlife ecologist and NGRREC’s Conservation Program Manager Justin Shew.

With IDNR partners, Shew is assisting with monitoring reptiles and amphibians, as well as avian communities, at Pere Marquette State Park associated with habitat management conducted by IDNR and NGRREC’s Strike Team.

“The conference has a history of being very student-friendly, and this year was no exception,” said Shew, who took on a couple of leadership roles for the conference by being a part of the student events planning committee, helping plan a successful student networking lunch.

At this lunch, professionals, including NGRREC’s Conservation Team, answered student attendee questions and gave authentic advice as they navigated the natural resources profession. Shew also orchestrated the mentee and mentor pairing for the conference to help students connect with professionals on a one-on-one basis. Mentor /mentee pairing hadn’t been offered in 10 years at this conference.

“One of my passions is helping and empowering students in the natural resources field,” Shew said. “Building a social/professional network is invaluable in any field and I hope that I have helped some of these students connect with a quality mentor to have a better sense of direction moving through school and finding their career path.”

For more information or questions regarding NGRREC’s Habitat Strike Team, contact Shew at jshew@lc.edu. For questions regarding the Restoration Ecology Program at L&C, contact Program Coordinator Scott Moss at jkmoss@lc.edu.