



water temperature in the Meramec River watershed. Juan is dual majoring in biology and computer science.

“My summer internship, though much detached from a ‘normal’ experience, gave me the freedom to work on a research opportunity I have always wanted to explore,” Juan said. “I’m really glad the internship program was still held despite the adverse conditions. Everyone was great to work with and I’m extremely appreciative of the opportunity.”

Juan’s research found there may be a viable alternative to field collected data when estimating canopy cover, and canopy cover alone does not appear to be an accurate predictor of water temperature sensitivity or maximum water temperature.

“Alex possesses strong skills that integrate biology and computer science, which is a great fit for the research in my lab, which focuses on computational studies of the impacts of humans on water resources,” Professor Knouft said. “He was able to contribute to a project that focuses on how to reduce the impacts of humans on river water temperatures as climate changes.”

Ashleigh Montgomery, a recent Saint Louis University graduate, studied the effects of road salt applications on soil characteristics with her advisors – NGRREC Watershed Scientist John Sloan, NGRREC Environmental Technician Miles Corcoran and Saint Louis University Assistant Professor of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences Elizabeth Hasenmueller.

“This internship was a really great opportunity,” Montgomery said. “It was wonderful to work with the NGRREC staff and receive new perspectives on my research and advice on surviving grad school. The symposium felt like the perfect finishing touch to my undergraduate career. It was so nice to finally have the opportunity to present research I’ve been passionate about and working on for so long. While it’s unfortunate it had to be virtual this year, it meant I could share my work with family and friends who wouldn’t have been able to attend otherwise.”

Phil Rathz, an L&C Restoration Ecology student, worked with NGRREC Conservation Program Manager Justin Shew to explore the effects of bush honeysuckle on birds in Illinois.

“Phil has been a student member of our very own Habitat Strike Team, and he was in a unique position of doing research for his internship that was associated to management he has actually conducted with our Strike Team,” Shew said. “During the summer he gained valuable data management, analysis, oral presentation skills that will give him valuable confidence in his career moving forward.”

Rathz's research found that honeysuckle removal is beneficial.

"Even though the trends are very slight, we still noticed there are less species being documented around this bush honeysuckle-infested sites," Rathz said. "It's still beneficial to remove the honeysuckle."

Although Rathz's research methods had to be adjusted due to COVID-19, Shew was pleased with the results.

"The NGRREC education staff and others did a great job hosting the virtual symposium this year," Shew said. "Phil's work and presentation practice came together beautifully in end and he did a wonderful job communicating the results of his research, which generally showed that invasive bush honeysuckle reduced the richness of forest birds (i. e. number of species detected) and the abundance of several of Illinois's priority conservation species."

Watch this year's NGRREC Intern Symposium at <https://youtu.be/nKy8sEk12qs>.

Since the program's inception in 2003, 405 interns have been placed, and 60 institutions and organizations have hosted interns. You can learn more about the program at www.ngrrec.org/internship.

National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC?)

Founded in 2002 as a collaborative partnership between the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Lewis and Clark Community College, NGRREC is dedicated to the study of great river systems and the communities that use them. The center aspires to be a leader in scholarly research, education, and outreach related to the interconnectedness of large rivers, their floodplains, watersheds, and their associated communities. To learn more about NGRREC, visit www.ngrrec.org.