

Reflection on the Conservation Leadership minor
and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Through my internship with the Conservation Leadership minor at ODU and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), I have gained experience that I would otherwise not have access to. Not only am I grateful to have been a part of this minor, but the ability to work with members of the USFWS has shown me how exciting and fulfilling working with the USFWS could be.

This opportunity was a perfect fit for my interests, skill set, and education; however, it allowed me to expand on all of them even more. The Old Dominion University Conservation Leadership minor collaborates with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to facilitate the development of conservation professionals enabled to address conservation under changing climate and rising sea levels. I have been working with USFWS to assess endangered species in Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge and develop potential strategies to ensure their proliferation. The classes that I have taken, such as Conservation Biology, Global Change Biology, Sustainability Leadership and Mitigation and Adaptation, have given me an excellent working knowledge of various ecosystems, conservation paradigms, and potential strategies to mitigate and resolve complex crises within threatened ecosystems. Furthermore, with the service learning project that we completed in Vero Beach Florida, and the internship that I participated in on the Back Bay NWR, I believe that have consolidated an immense understanding of what it means to be a leader. I feel that the combination of the classes required of me in the Conservation Leadership minor, as well as our service learning project and internship with the USFWS has truly aided me in discovering a career that I would like to continue to pursue.

Once I graduate with my Bachelor's degree, I plan on attending graduate school to obtain a Master's degree relating to conservation biology and the effects of anthropogenic factors on vulnerable ecosystems. Through my minor with ODU and the USFWS, I truly believe that continuing to educate myself in conservation and sustainability will be the most inspiring and rewarding path for myself. My ability to develop a large set of hands on skills and personal experience related to conservation and the USFWS before beginning a Master's program is an immense benefit to me and will positively impact my career choices and my ability to be an outstanding leader for the rest of my life. Additionally, I believe the USFWS and Conservation Leadership minor will challenge me to learn as much as possible about assessing and mitigating threats to ecosystems in the future. Due to my immense interest in conservation, persistent work ethic, and the skill set that has been provided to me through the USFWS and Conservation Leadership minor, I believe that I will be a valuable asset to any educational program or career that I my chose to participate in.

- Caroline Haymaker