

Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks, Naturalist

Maria Bergman

Background

- I have been in various positions for the metro parks for 5 years, I started as a volunteer.
- Talk to those employed by the agency you are interested in and start to build a relationship. It is through this action that I received my position.

Mission Statement

“To conserve open spaces, while providing places and opportunities that encourage people to discover and experience nature.”

Purpose

- As a Metro Park employee, I work as a Naturalist at Blacklick Woods Metro Park. However, from June-August, I was reassigned to help out at Highbanks Metro Park for their youth summer camp program as a counselor.
- My duty is to provide environmental interpretation and education, and to foster a love and appreciation for nature.

Creeking Adventure Program



On the Job

- Activities change depending on the weather.
- As a counselor, I would have up to 9 campers a week that I would take kayaking, hiking, creeking, and teach activities such as archery, and about the various flora and fauna found in the park.
- As a Naturalist, my job is to take care of the Nature Center and critters within, to provide environmental education and interpretation of the resources within the park through public programs and displays.

Pond Exploration Program



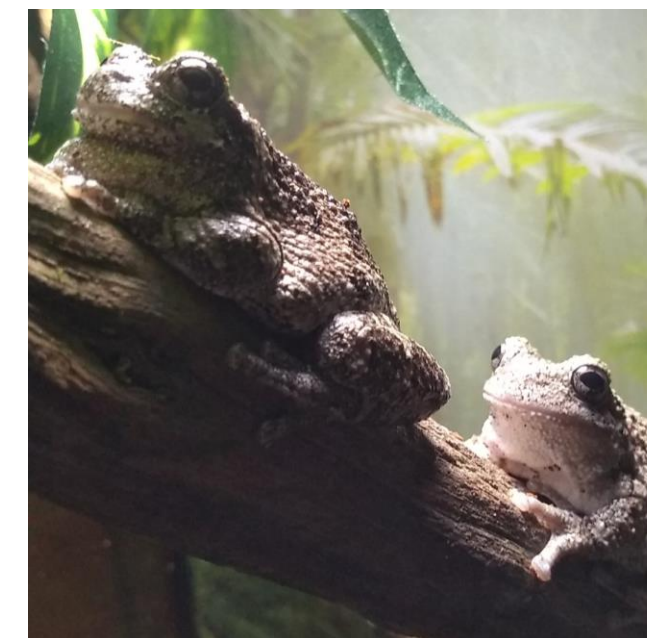
Programs

- Creeking Adventures, Pond Exploration, Hike with a Naturalist, Maple Sugaring, Tracking, Mammal Pelts and Skulls.
- Interpretive videos for our social media pages and requested videos on Ohio mammal pelts and skulls, vines, reptiles, and National Deaf Awareness Week.
- Wildlife Surveys on aquatic wildlife and stream surveys, butterflies, and mammals.
- Impromptu programs and talks while roving on trails.

Environmental Education

- When COVID-19 first hit, our Nature Center closed, and we stopped offering public programs.
- From March-June I worked remotely creating videos and posts for our Facebook page.
- The decision was made to proceed with summer camps but assigned more naturalists to work so that groups could be separated.

Animal Ambassador's Hylla and Earl Grey- Grey Tree Frogs



Roving the Trails with our Animal Ambassador, a Grey Rat Snake

Setting Salamander Traps in a Vernal Pool



Reflection

This experience has been constantly changing and has allowed me more freedom than I would normally have in my position. While working remotely I was able to create interpretive videos which reach a wider audience. While I was not hired to work as a camp counselor, I was able to spend each day teaching the campers a wide variety of activities. What I loved most about being with the campers was my ability to spend as much time as I wanted in each activity, and we were very fluid on the topics and activities- I was able to curtail a day to my group's interests. Once I was assigned back to my regular park and position, I was able to continue making programs and displays on topics I was interested. Furthermore, I love being able to spend my day roving trails, and not tied to a Nature Center. I would be happy to continue working as a naturalist for the Metro Parks or as an Interpretive Ranger for the National Parks.

Advice

- For anyone interested, I would first tell you to check out the park that you are interested in and talk to the employees for advice.
- Take any opportunity extended, because it all leads to experience, name recognition, and it is easier to work in a system after you have a foot in the door.
- Despite not doing what I expected to this summer, I got more hours doing interpretive work than I would have otherwise.

Bugstravoganza with a Praying Mantis

