

The Sprout Experience

Serena Contreras



Background

- The Sprout Experience is a 501(c)(3) educational nonprofit organization that provides immersive domestic and international travel programs for youth, based out of Avon Lake, OH.
- The mission of Sprout is to provide immersive programs that encourage a love of learning, foster social/emotional growth, promote global citizenship and have a long-lasting impact on the lives and learning of our students.
- Sprout was created by two teachers, Julie Milkie and Daniel Grigson, that wanted to expand education beyond the borders of a classroom and out into the natural world.
- I heard about Sprout through the praise of a Sprout student alumni and soon joined the organization as the Program Development Intern.



Julie Milkie, Sprout Director, pictured on a Sprout Reptile Experience

Programs: Trinidad & Kenya

Trinidad & Tobago

- Students stay along the coast of Trinidad while researching and rescuing sea turtles.
- Visit Nariva Swamp to see Amazon rainforest flora and fauna.
- Snorkel and SCUBA in Tobago, exploring coral reefs.
- Experience native Trini culture, music and food.

Kenya: Lale'enok & Maasai Mara

- Students stay at the Lale'enok research center and a river camp along the Maasai Mara.
- Track lions in the African night with wildlife biologists.
- Observe wildlife such as cheetahs, zebras, elephants and giraffes.
- Exchange culture and conservation ideas amongst local school and villages.

Sprout student pictured during SCUBA in Tobago.



Sprout pictured with local Maasai in Kenya

Students and myself post-snorkel in Florida



Students and myself slogging in the Everglades

Florida Everglades: On The Job

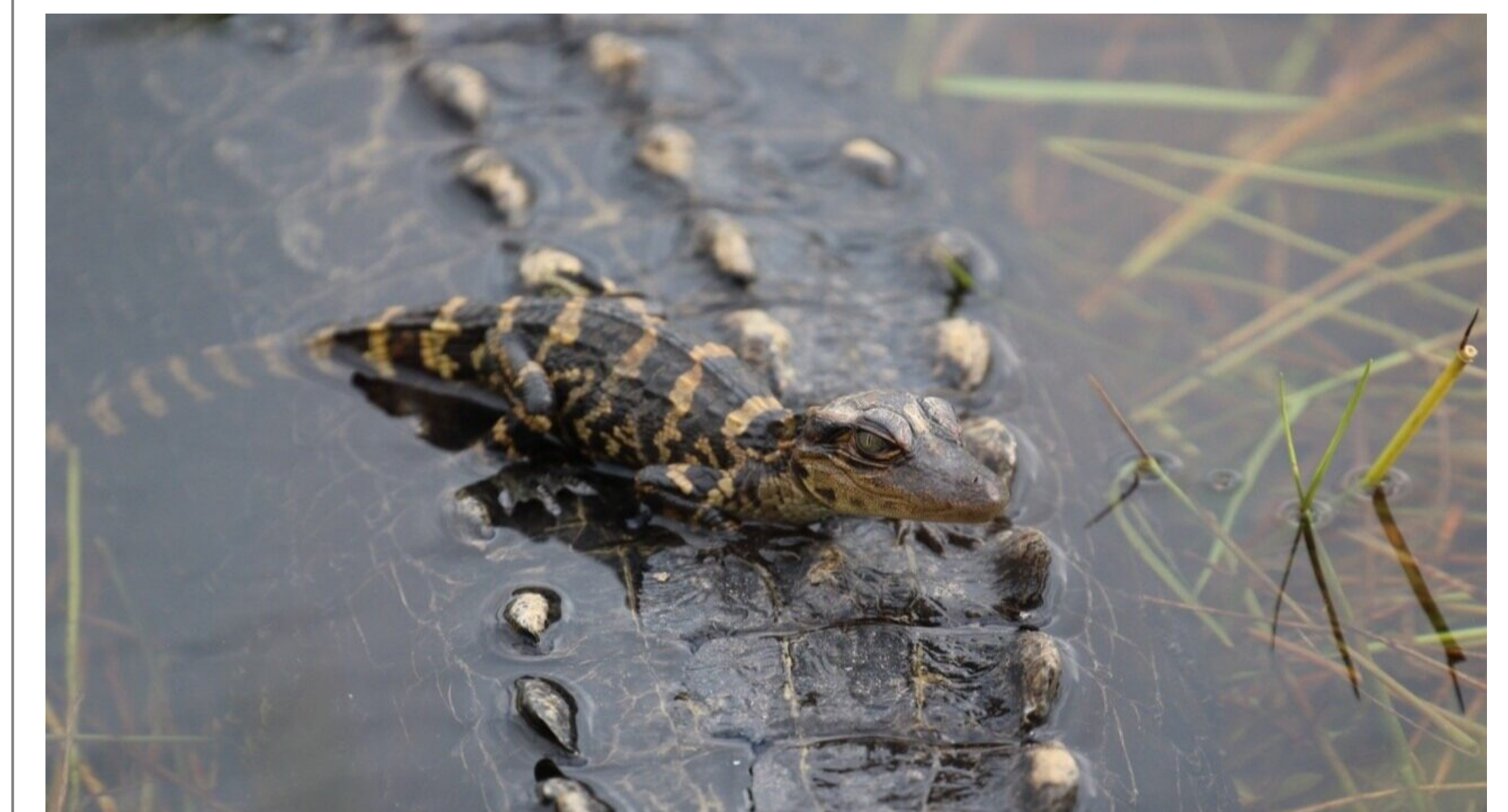
- Students, myself and other co-leaders stayed in reclaimed airstreams on an organic farm located near the Everglades National Park.
- Together, we ate fresh organic meals provided by the farm owners.
- Freshwater kayaked through mangroves, searching for a 15ft crocodile known as "Croc-zilla".
- Explored the Everglades searching for and capturing pythons, learning about invasive species.
- Identified types of corals and marine wildlife while snorkeling at John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park.
- Slogged through the swamps of the Everglades, finding an alligator nest and plenty of unique floral and fauna.

Reflecting Back

With Sprout I was able to...

- Create life changing experiences with students.
- Learn how to enforce what I learned as a SENR student to real world environmental education programs.
- Assist in the fundraising and operation of a non-profit organization.
- Learn how to build educational programs from the ground up.
- Improve upon my skills as a mentor and teacher to youth.
- Realize I want environmental education to be a part of my future career endeavors as well as The Sprout Experience as a whole.

Wildlife pictured in the Florida Everglades



Sprout student posing in the Galapagos Islands

Acknowledgment

Thank you to The Sprout Experience for allowing me to be a part of the organization.