

Marianist Environmental Education Center

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OVERVIEW

180 hours working with a non-profit committed to educating and guiding their community in ecological restoration, work broken into three main tasks:

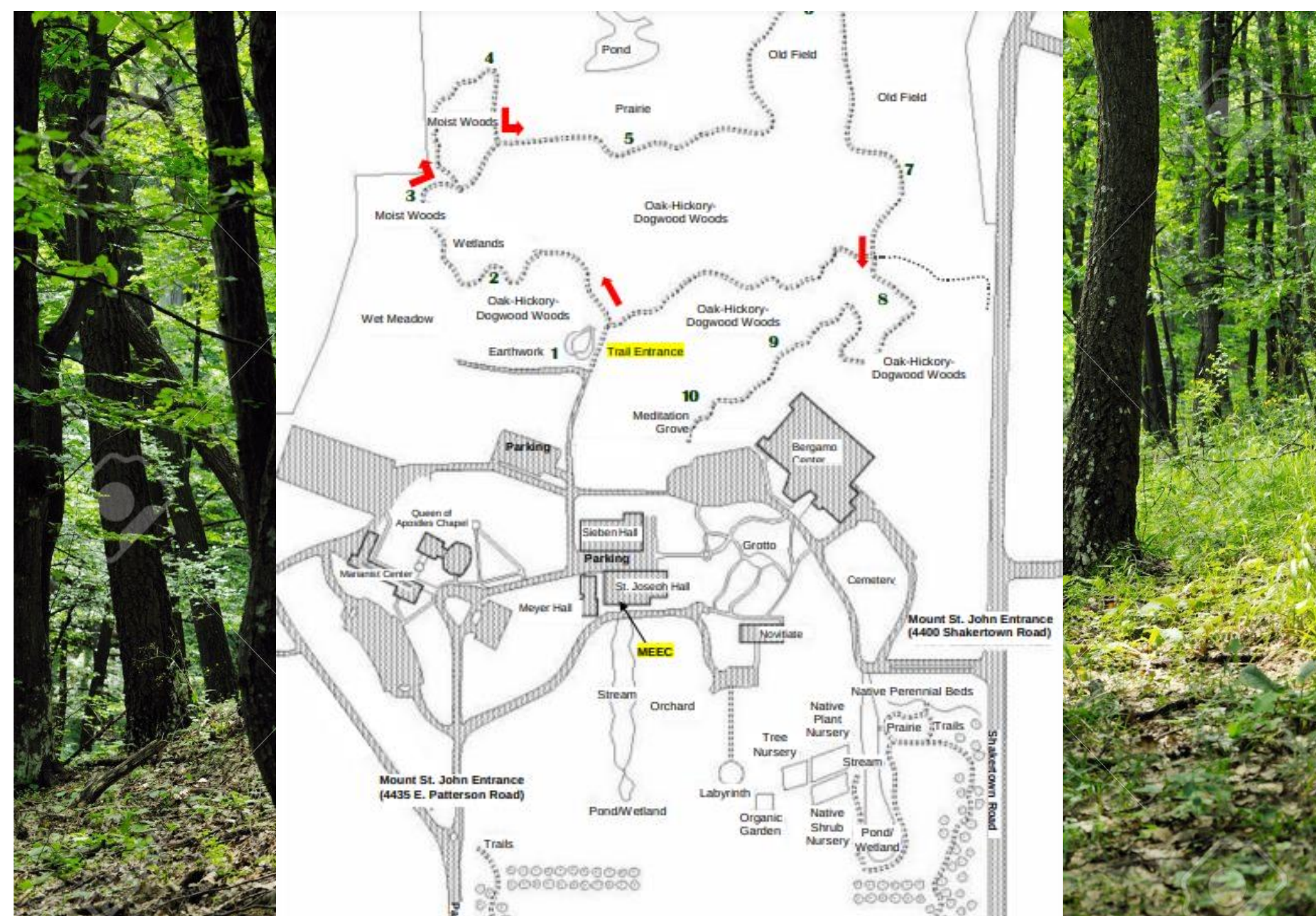
- 1) land conservation using native species
- 2) GIS project for land conservation partnerships
- 3) Native Plant Sale Event



Left is the wetland prairie and pond at MEEC, and right is a red admiral from the butterfly monitor program

MISSION

The Marianist Environmental Education Center (MEEC) is located near Dayton, Ohio, on the Little Beavercreek Watershed. Their mission is to "preserve and act in communion with the land and educate other communities in sustainability through ecology-based simple living, social justice, and spirituality." I learned of this internship opportunity from another non-profit Urban Farm in Dayton I was working at.



Remember, people love pictures

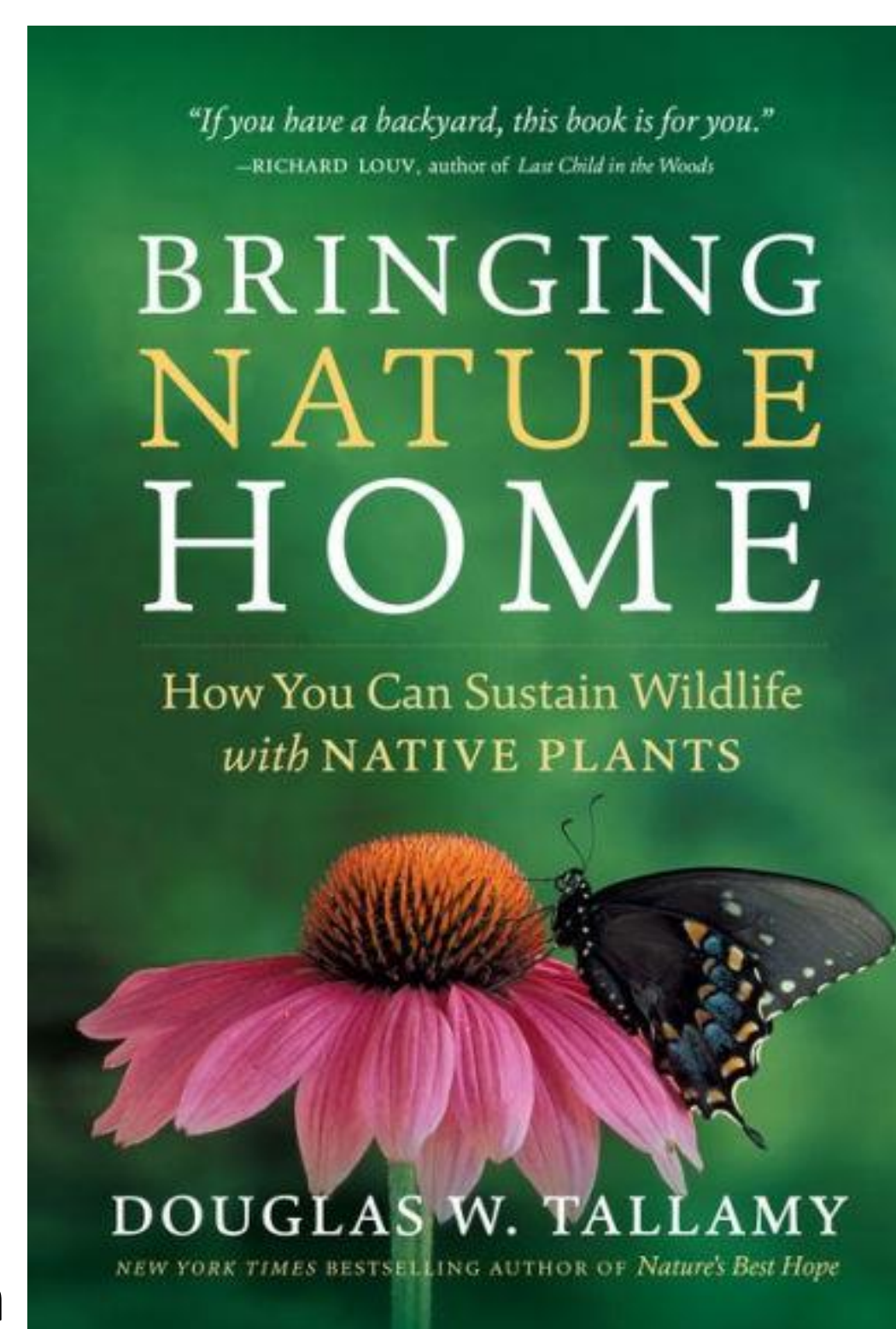
WEEKLY TASKS

ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION: During a given work week, three areas were focused on. The most frequent task pertained to ecological land restoration. Identifying and removing invasive species and replacing with native species was a major goal. Additionally, a weekly butterfly monitor program taught about the habits of native butterfly species. Raising thousands of native wildflowers and shrubs contributed to the Native Plant Sale each June.



Tiger Swallowtail

GIS ANALYSIS: MEEC hopes to create partnership with other religious entity owned lands in Ohio. Particularly land parcels which have a lot of undisturbed land, streams, wetlands, and heavy forest cover. In attempts to organize potential partners, I created a GIS program which mapped each property and identified some key land qualities on each site.



Literature Read to further understand advantages of Native Gardening and Sustainability.



Right: Grey Rate snake after being removed from netting

SPECIAL TASKS

NON-PROFIT DEVELOPMENT- In preparation of the annual Native Plant Sale, I cared for and helped managed over 200 different wildflower and shrub species, which helped me learned about identification and their role in providing food to other species. At the Native Plant Sale, I worked with the director Sister Leanne to understand non-profit fundraising events and coordination.



Left: Black Swallowtail,
Down: Wildflowers prepped for plant sale

ADVENTURES

Snake Rescue: One day when in the plant nursery, my supervisor Michele Banker, and I found a grey rat snake tangled in chipmunk netting. We had to free it so that it could continue playing its role in the ecosystem.

Invasive Cattails: In the pond, there are cattail species which are not native and needed to be sprayed and killed. I swam through the pond and sprayed the cattails. This will allow for native species to thrive in the coming seasons, pictured below.



TAKEAWAY

After completing this internship, I felt an incredibly strong connection to my physical world. I removed my plant blindness and developed a good understanding of sustainable methods to improving the quality of land, and diversification of native species. I thoroughly enjoyed learning butterfly species, wildflowers, and trees. The additional experience in GIS allowed me to become more literate in the data analysis field. I also gained a macro-perspective of non-profit development, which I was not expecting, but greatly appreciate.

THE FUTURE

Going forward, I will take these skills with me throughout life. I hope to pursue a full-time position with GIS to master the skill, allowing me to contract GIS services. Being able to contract GIS will enable me to focus my extra free time on land development. I hope to purchase forest land and use the skills acquired at MEEC to bring native species into the areas I own, and even possibly run my own Native Plant Sale in my community.

RECOMMENDATION

To those looking for similar internship experience, or just interested in the internship experience in general. Despite Non-Profits not having the payroll to reimburse interns very well, they have a wealth of knowledge and experience. I had a very personal experience which was not a traditional business internship, and it allowed me freedom to learn in directions I chose. My main suggestion: be humble and listen to your supervisor. I did not know very much about what I was learning, so I had to swallow my pride and learn, and the rewards are worth it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all three supervisors whom I worked under this summer. Director of MEEC: Sister Leanne Jablonski, Tara Polling, and Michele Banker. I also would like to thank Mike Shultz from Mission of Mary Cooperative for helping me find this internship.



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