**Research and Education Intern at Winous Point**

**Darienne Purtz - Environmental Science**

**Introduction**
Winous Point Marsh Conservancy was formed in 1999 and manages nearly 5,000 acres of wetlands in Port Clinton, Ohio. The Marsh Conservancy is a product of the Winous Point Shooting Club, the oldest duck hunting club in the United States. In October of 2022, I attended a Delta Waterfowl sponsored hunting trip at Winous Point Shooting Club for those who have not hunted before. It was on this trip that I found out about the internship opportunity.

**Mission**
- To assure the protection and stewardship of the Winous Point wetlands and property
- To aid and facilitate wetland conservation and restoration efforts in the greater southwest Lake Erie region
- To support and develop research and educational opportunities in wetland and wildlife ecology


**Frequent Duties**
- Marsh bird surveys at the beginning of the summer
- Carpentry - constructing hunting blinds
- Wetland plant identification
- Marsh bird and wildlife identification
- Mist netting

**Common Tern Research**
- The Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) is a seabird that is in danger of disappearing from Ohio due to the loss of suitable nesting areas.
- Winous Point Marsh Conservancy collects population research on two colonies of Common Terns by using pontoon boats with man-made nesting platforms.
- I gained experience in bird banding, handling wildlife, and recording data.
- Observing the terns grow up and fledge over the course of 21 days was one of the reasons why this research was my favorite part of the internship!

**Mallard and Wood Duck Banding**
- Winous Point works with graduate students and doctoral candidates to assist with their research, primarily studying waterfowl.
- The research I worked on this summer was focused on the genetics of mallards (Anas platyrhynchos).
- I was able to get familiar with drawing blood, taking feather samples, banding, and attaching backpack transmitters.
- Winous Point has a quota of wood ducks (Aix sponsa) and mallards that need banded yearly, and I was able to participate in bailing, creating and setting traps, and working with ducks.
- As I handled and studied the ducks, I grew more comfortable handling the birds and identifying their age and sex.

**Educati ng Youth**
- Winous Point hosts the Port Clinton Middle School 7th graders each year to teach them about water quality, local fauna, and the importance of marsh conservancies.
- Day on the Wild Side is an event where Winous Point invites 60 5th-8th graders from Northwest Ohio to teach them punting, shooting, archery, fishing, and native flora and fauna.
- I was a group leader and had the opportunity to observe my students as they became more enthralled with the nature around them.

**Reflection**
- I hope to work in research that connects my interests in the environment and wildlife, just like this experience. Teaching is also something I see myself venturing into, and working with students at Winous Point helped me see just how fond I am of it.
- I enjoyed the opportunity to work hands-on with wildlife and to navigate all aspects of research. It showed me that this field is something I am heavily interested in for my future career.
- Advice for those pursuing a research position: Sometimes, research can feel tedious or uneventful. In the end, it is incredibly rewarding to see how the little things can help the study! Your work has short-term and long-term impacts and will help others doing research in the future.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**
- The staff at Winous Point was incredibly helpful and kind, and I greatly appreciate their mentorship and guidance.

| A bevy of trumpeter swans (Cygnus buccinator) located in Cook’s Marsh, Winous Point. |
| A male wood duck (Aix sponsa) is being banded after we retrieved him from one of our traps in the marshes. |
| A juvenile common tern (Sterna hirundo) that is old enough to be banded sitting in the palm of my hand. |
| A juvenile bald eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus) perched on a tree. |
| An intern is letting go of a wood duck (Aix sponsa) after banding it in the field. |