

Glen Ellyn Park District, Natural Areas Intern

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Background

- Over the summer, I worked as a Natural Areas Intern for the Glen Ellyn Park District, which is located in the Chicago suburbs.
- I found this job through the Chicagoland Environmental Network Job Board, which is a great tool for people that hope to work in Illinois!
- My main duty was to assist in ecological restoration efforts throughout their natural parks. I also helped with nature camps, plant surveys, and outreach materials.



On the Job

I really appreciated this internship because I had a wide variety of duties, so I gained a many skills in different areas of the field. My main role was to help with restoration efforts in the parks, but I also helped with nature camps, plant surveys, and public outreach

Ecological Restoration

- The park district has 8 parks with varying restoration needs.
- My main duties were to identify and remove invasive plant species, mostly by manual pulling and cutting.
- I learned to identify invasive plant species and those native to Illinois, which was very enjoyable to learn!
- We also cut Buckthorn and Honeysuckle saplings and treated them with herbicide.
- I transplanted young plants throughout the the parks so that they can thrive and hopefully increase plant diversity in the natural areas.



Nature Camps

- The park district hosted week-long nature day camps throughout the summer. We had camps catered for students from Preschool to 6th grade.
- I was an assistant, so I mostly helped set up the activities, explain games, and manage children behavior
- I helped teach children about the natural features of the parks during our daily hikes. Being an assistant allowed me to have more personal interactions with children and provide them personal learning experiences.

Public Outreach

- A large goal of ours was to encourage the public's involvement in the parks and show them how to live sustainability.
- I helped create self-guided nature tours, which interpreted the park's resources to visitors.
- We also had a butterfly gardens and bioswales, that I regularly maintained. They gave visitors the opportunity to learn how to incorporate ecofriendly landscaping practices into their homes.



Plant Surveys

- We performed plant surveys to track the biodiversity and determine the effectiveness of the restoration efforts.
- I helped record and enter data during these surveys.

Reflection

- I hope to work in visitor services in the future, so I most likely will not follow a career path in ecological restoration.
- Despite this, I am extremely grateful for the position. Because I had a wide variety of duties, I gained lots of skills that will definitely help in my future career.
- I really enjoyed learning how to identify plants, and I hope to continue practicing this into the future!
- Sometimes restoration work can feel a little tedious because it may feel like you're "just pulling weeds". It is extremely satisfying to see both the immediate and long-term impacts of your work!

