School of Environment and Natural Resources

Wildlife Survey Intern – Manistee National Forest

Natalie Tobin – Natural Resource Management

MANISTEE NATIONAL FOREST – BALDWIN/WHITE CLOUD DISTRICT

The Baldwin/White Cloud District creates and manages oak savannas and wildlife openings to help restore some of the historical forest ecosystems of the area.

- Administered through the Student Conservation Association (SCA)
- Hosted by the U.S. Forest Service in the Huron-Manistee National Forest Complex
- Reported to the Baldwin/White Cloud Ranger Station in Baldwin, Michigan
- Approx. 1.5hrs drive north of Grand Rapids, MI

WILDLIFE SURVEYING AND HABITAT EVALUATION

Pre-NEPA Surveying:
- Evaluate timber stands that are staged to be harvested in the next few years
- Record forest composition and determine habitat quality for a variety of sensitive species on the forest to help inform management recommendations

KBB Surveying:
- Inventory managed habitat throughout the forest to establish presence or absence of the endangered Karner Blue Butterfly
- Establishing occupied habitat allows for increased land protections from timber harvest and destructive forms of recreation

Habitat Improvement:
- Plant over 1,000 native wildflower plugs surrounding occupied KBB habitat to provide nectar sources for dispersing individuals
- Hand water each plug weekly during extreme drought conditions
- Cut brush and trees to create more open canopy and enhance savanna habitats

Other duties:
- Conduct surveys for other sensitive species, including Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake and Red-shouldered hawk
- Outlining access routes and boundaries to sites where contractors will undertake habitat improvement projects

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the wildlife crew at the Baldwin/White Cloud District for providing me with opportunities to learn new skills and build towards my professional goals. Thank you to the SCA for making internships like this one possible for students across the country.

NEXT STEPS

- This internship helped me gain experience in wildlife monitoring and wildlife habitat management.
- I plan to continue seeking a career in wildlife management. This internship has also helped me build relationships in the Federal government.

Traveling between survey sites for Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake

Pre-NEPA surveys require hours of walking and provide opportunities to see how management has impacted many different areas on the Forest.