



BALD HEAD ISLAND CONSERVANCY, INC. *Wildlife Internship*

Summary:

The Bald Head Island Conservancy Intern Program is open to rising juniors, seniors or recent graduates from any accredited college or university, with majors in biology, marine biology, environmental science, education, or a related course of study.

Bald Head Island is part of a 12,000-acre island complex (Smith Island Complex) located at the mouth of the Cape Fear River in southeastern North Carolina, and consists of three forested peninsulas interconnected by a continuous beach strand: Bluff, Middle and Bald Head Islands. Bald Head Island features an upscale residential community of approximately 1,100 homes, with approximately 200 permanent year-round residents. The southern tip of the complex is Cape Fear, and includes ten miles of ocean beach. The island is accessible by a private passenger ferry from Southport, NC.

Funding for this internship is provided by Bald Head Island Conservancy, Inc. (*the Conservancy*), a non-profit organization formed in 1983. The Conservancy's mission is three-fold: conserving and preserving the natural resources of the Smith Island Complex and surrounding waters; providing quality environmental education for island residents and visitors; facilitating scientific research of benefit to the environmental resources of the area. As a part of this mission, the Conservancy operates a nationally recognized *Sea Turtle Protection Program*, and is the only non-governmental agency in North Carolina allowed to conduct flipper tagging of sea turtles. Because of the Conservancy's long-standing commitment to this conservation program, Bald Head Island is used by U.S. Fish and Wildlife as an index beach for sea turtle nesting activity.

In addition, the Conservancy provides diverse educational programs and activities for the island community, and serves as an environmental monitor for the island ecosystems, conducting surveys on both white-tailed deer and American alligator populations, as well as assisting in the eradication of invasive species, primarily beach vitex. Within a campus at the east end of the island, the Conservancy's facilities include a modern four bedroom "dorm" (used to house the sea turtle biologist, summer interns, and visiting researchers), an administrative office, an education center, and the gift shop *Turtle Central*, which underwrites much of the Conservancy's operation. In addition, the Conservancy owns a 21-acre nature preserve on Middle Island, and employs a permanent staff of 9 and a part time staff of 2. This internship is intended to give undergraduates not only a dynamic wildlife research experience, but also experience in working

at a small non-profit organization. While the majority of the summer will be spent surveying for deer, alligators and beach vitex, wildlife interns will also assist with various educational programs (specifically weekly alligator presentations for the public, kayak trips and children's camps), work at Turtle Central, staff BHIC's information center, and help with other various office-oriented projects (such as mail pickup and envelope stuffing).

Interns will also conduct individual research projects. Little scientific research has been conducted on the island apart from that focused on sea turtles. The research projects will not only benefit the student, but also provide the island, residents and researchers with invaluable knowledge of the island and its inhabitants. Students will be expected to complete the research project and present the results to the community at the end of the summer. In addition students will write a proposal for future research in the format of the NSF's Graduate Research Fellowship.

The work of the wildlife interns is supervised by the Conservancy's *Director of Education/Senior Naturalist*. As the primary educator of the Bald Head Island Conservancy, the Director of Education/Senior Naturalist is responsible for the development, implementation and coordination of its education programs.

Position Responsibilities

The wildlife interns perform their duties on the island at the direction of the Conservancy's Executive Director and Director of Education/Senior Naturalist. Day-to-day supervision and coordination of the interns shall be the responsibility of the Director of Education/Senior Naturalist. The Executive Director is the chief executive officer of the Conservancy, and has overall responsibility for management of the organization.

The wildlife interns must assume the following responsibilities:

1. Conduct nighttime spotlight surveys of white-tailed deer and American alligators to determine population size and sex ratios;
2. Assist the Director of Education/Senior Naturalist with a variety of environmentally oriented programs for the public, including but not limited to, kayaking, nature hikes and children's camps; present weekly lectures on the American alligator and island reptiles/amphibians and nocturnal wildlife to the general public; ability to handle less than favorable working conditions including intense heat & humidity and bugs (mosquitoes and no-see-ums);
3. Monitor golf course lagoons during the day for alligator activity and public interactions; respond to homeowner/public concerns about alligators;
4. Monitor the island for recurrence of Beach Vitex (*Vitex rotundifolia*), an invasive dune plant species, and spray new growth with an approved herbicide;

5. Assist with other duties as necessary, including working in Turtle Central, the Information Center and various office tasks;
6. Develop, execute and present individual research project;
7. Promote and practice stewardship of the Conservancy's facilities, properties, and research equipment;
8. Participate as needed in special events of the Conservancy during his/her tenure on the island;
9. Live in the Conservancy's dormitory during their service period, generally mid-May through mid-August;
10. Understand and agree to the documents *Guidelines for Naturalist and Summer Interns*, and *Dormitory Regulations and Advice* prepared by the Conservancy.

Students selected for the wildlife internship may wish to explore the possibility of planning a Directed Individual Study with an academic advisor from their school, in order to receive credit for activities conducted under this program.

Selection Process

A selection advisory committee is composed of the Executive Director, Director of Education/Senior Naturalist, Environmental Education Coordinator and Sea Turtle Biologist. The current Director of Education/Senior Naturalist is responsible for announcing the availability of summer internships, receiving applications, interviewing candidates, scoring and ranking applications in accordance with the *Application Protocol for Research Assistantships*. **All candidates selected for the internship must undergo a background check at the expense of the Conservancy.**

Selection Criteria

Selection criteria for the wildlife internship is as follows:

1. Outstanding undergraduate (rising junior or senior) student or recent graduate at an institution of higher learning.
2. Candidates for the internship will be judged on:
 - Education and academic potential

- Character and leadership
- Ability to be a team player
- Public relations and communication skills: outgoing, helpful and positive personality; ability to work well with children and adults; comfortable giving lectures to the general public including both adults and children; maturity and leadership abilities; the ability to handle sensitive situations in a tactful and diplomatic manner
- An expressed interest or background in wildlife/conservation biology and a willingness to work in a field environment that can be physically challenging.

Term

The term of the wildlife internship is for a period of three months: from mid-May to mid-August, subject to undergraduate academic schedules. **Interns should be able to arrive on BHI on the weekend of May 15/16, though a day or two of flexibility may be allowed depending on academic exam schedules and be able to stay until August 15, give or take a day.** Applicants who have graduated may have the chance to extend their stay through the fall as we typically keep one intern on for the fall months. Arrival in mid-May provides for a training period of approximately two weeks prior to the start of actual educational duties on the island. The wildlife intern serves at the will of the Conservancy, and the positions may be terminated by the Conservancy at any time.

Funding

The stipend to be paid for the recipients of the Bald Head Island Conservancy Wildlife Internships shall be \$1,200 per summer, paid monthly; this amount is pre-taxes. In addition to the stipend, living quarters in the Conservancy dorm are provided, as well as weekly ferry tickets for trips between the island and the mainland, and parking for a vehicle at the mainland ferry terminal.

Assessment

The wildlife intern's in-service performance shall be assessed by the Director of Education/Senior Naturalist and the Executive Director, and shall be forwarded to appropriate academic sponsor, if applicable.

Application Deadline

The deadline to receive applications for 2010 summer internships is February 12, 2010. Follow application directions very carefully, as incomplete applications will not be considered. Please *mail* your application to the address listed below; email is NOT preferable.

*If you desire more information about the
Wildlife Internship,
please contact:*

**Maureen Dewire, Director of Education/Senior Naturalist
Bald Head Island Conservancy**

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