

Student Conservation Association (SCA) Intern Experience at Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge

Podcast Transcript

Hi. My name is Nicki Devanny. I am a Student Conservation Association intern for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I'm currently a hydrology and biology intern at the Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge in Parker, Arizona.

I decided to apply to be an intern because I was an environmental science major in college and it's a pretty broad field and I didn't really have any kind of specialized experience and I wasn't sure what area I'd like to get into so I was looking for an opportunity to get a wide variety of experience and on-the-job knowledge.

Through this internship, I've been exposed to multiple agencies. I've worked with contractors and researchers who have come through the wildlife refuge and I've been able to help in areas of botany, hydrology, in doing small mammal surveys, fish surveys, as well as just the regular office work and database entry and all of that as well.

It's definitely helped me a lot. I've really been able to kind of narrow down a field that really interests me, in terms of hydrology, and I now am able to take another step in that direction and use that in my career as a really good learning experience to apply to another job and graduate school in the future.

After my internship, I'll be going to work for the Cold Creek Watershed Coalition in Colorado where I'll be helping out as a watershed coordinator and working on restoration projects and helping to write grants.

For anyone who's at all interested, I would say that you should definitely be willing to take risks and look for opportunities that will expose you to a lot of different areas and not be afraid to just move somewhere new and throw yourself into a new environment. That's the best way to learn.

The staff here [at Bill Williams River NWR] has been amazing. Any opportunity that arises, they ask if I want to tag along or help out and anything that I have any interest in, I can propose ideas to my boss. It's a pretty open environment and he's [Refuge Manager Dick Gilbert] really great about the whole "internship as a learning experience" and just being exposed to as many things as possible.