



Summer 2024

Deception Pass State Park Intern

Chloe Lindstrom
Western Washington University

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Recommended Citation

Lindstrom, Chloe, "Deception Pass State Park Intern" (2024). *College of the Environment Internship Reports*. 211.

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COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Internship Title: Park Aide at Deception Pass State Park '24 Summer Internship

Organization Worked For: Deception Pass State Park

Student Name: Chloe Lindstrom

Internship Dates: 6/24/20 8/9/20

Faculty Advisor Name Ed Weber

Department ESCI

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STUDENT SIGNATURE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chloe Lindstrom", written over a horizontal line.

DATE: 8/12/20

Summer of 2024, I got a job at Deception Pass State Park as a seasonal park aide. I received approval to have this job experience count towards internship credits, and the portion of my job that covers the internship was from June to August. Deception Pass is the most visited of all the state parks in Washington, and it consists of multiple campgrounds and satellite properties.

The park is located at the Northern end of Whidbey Island and spans over the bridge with property along both sides of the pass. Most of my work



took place in the main park, but I regularly

Figure 1. Arguably the most recognizable feature of the state park, the Deception Pass bridge connects Skagit and island counties. This photo was taken by me, from the North Beach Day use area

ventured to Bowman Bay, Rosario Beach, Kukutali Preserve, and other regions that make up the entirety of the park.

Raven Blahnik was my primary supervisor, but I worked under a few park rangers and alongside many other park aides, maintenance members, and interpretive staff. Raven is a ranger 1 at the park, and the other ranger 1's were Aerial and Ray. Aerial and Ray were also supervisors for the park aides. Paige and Nathan are the ranger 2 and 3, respectively, and both worked directly with me. Nathan is the assistant area manager, and our area manager is Jason.

Most of my background science work and most of what guided me towards Environmental Science was marine science and marine biology. I have an abundance of experience collecting oceanography data, and working in aquatic environments, but one of my learning goals was to branch out and away from marine science. Not only is it a popular destination for guests hoping to go outside and enjoy nature, but Deception Pass is also home to much wildlife. I regularly encountered chipmunks, bunnies, squirrels, bald eagles, red-tail hawks, deer, orcas, and other birds and mammals during my internship. All these organisms rely on the aquatic ecosystems, but most of them live within the terrestrial habitats in and around the state park. It was a new, and very amazing, experience to get to work around all these organisms and get a better understanding of the flora and fauna above the water.

It was important to me to explore terrestrial environments and get a good idea about at least one possible job pathway while completing this internship. This was the learning objective that was the highest priority for me. Many of the supervisors discussed with me the job of being a ranger 1 or 2, and it has become a consideration for a future position. Being a park ranger doesn't seem like an easy role, but it is one that would be worthwhile and I'm sure, fun for the most part. Especially early on in my training, there were few tasks I was able to complete on my own. I got to go with Raven to do various tasks she needed to do, such as campground checks, between the different training videos and hands-on work I had to do.

My identification of flora was improved through this experience from getting to sit at the East Cranberry checkpoint- where we monitored RVs and vehicles with trailers to

ensure they would not go into a day use area where they would get stuck- and doing landscape work around the park. I had some park visitors come up to me while at the checkpoint and ask about what different species a few plants were, and what kind of trees we had at the park. While I knew some of the answers, it really made me think about how little plant knowledge I have compared to that of animals. Over the course of the entire internship, a good amount of time was spent at the cranberry checkpoint. It is an important task in the park to ensure safety, but when there are no trailers or RVs coming through, I wanted to spend this time furthering my education, so observing the plants and bird species was a good way for me to do that.

While a lot of the regular work I had to do during the duration of this internship involved cleaning restrooms, this was one of if not the best work experience, I have ever received. Working outside every day, even the cold and wet ones, was fun and rewarding. My supervisors and coworkers alike all contributed to a positive work environment that fostered my passions for environmental science and the outdoors. Even not as a park ranger, continuing work in parks is also on my list of possible pathways. As most of the roles are seasonal, it would be a great way to branch out and getting to work in many different regions and parks.

Another experience that really contributed to my ideas for career opportunities and pathways was working with the interpretation staff. Summer of 2023, I worked for Sound Salmon Solutions and got to be a part of their summer camp experience. I got to work with kids of varying ages for a week at a time and really see how education can be. I

absolutely loved that experience, and when the park ranger in charge of interpretation and education programs, Joy, reached out to me about working with her for a morning to assist with a summer school program I was very excited. I got to work with one of the AmeriCorps members and Joy to take the kids through the tidepools, a protected restoration site at the park that is open to the public via specific routes.

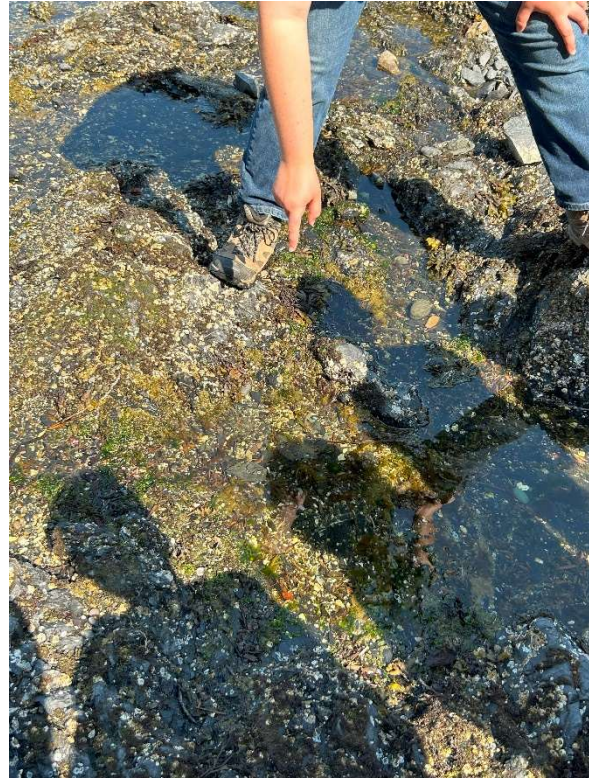


Figure 2. A photo I took of Andi pointing out a blue gunnel in one of the tide pools for the summer school group.

When going through the tide pools, much of the teaching was done by the AmeriCorps member, Andi. I did, however, answer questions from some of the group, and help keep people following the path. I was there if children needed an extra hand to hold to prevent trips and falls on the slippery rock and was there if children or chaperones had other questions about a given species. My background with the Seattle Aquarium and in marine science in general set me up to be able to answer these questions and help in ways that were not initially expected of me. The school group was split into three subgroups, and

one was taken through the tidepools at a time. Even with the group broken down, the smaller groups were still quite large. I was able to help make sure Andi was not overwhelmed, no question was left unanswered, and to make sure nobody was left behind.

Working with Joy and Andi was a valuable experience, and I got the opportunity during some down time to talk to Joy about interpretation and outdoor education. She gave me some pointers as to different job portals and boards I could look at, and I have been checking all of them regularly for job listings. Working with children has its challenges but is highly rewarding, and I got a taste of that when I got to help with the summer camp programs.

Overall, this experience was one of the best I have ever had. I got to tackle problems and face challenges I had no idea would be a part of this role. I got to work with amazing people, and work in an amazing location. This experience has set me up with a valuable skillset that I can take with me for future jobs, and also take with me outside of work. Through this internship, I was able to reach all of my predetermined learning goals of gaining experience with skills and tasks essential for entry level career positions, gain confidence and skills with interacting with the public, learn more in and about terrestrial ecosystems, and acquire skills and background working for the Parks and Recreation Commission at a state park.