

News Release

Natural Resources, a Natural Choice

By Rikki Roscoe, communications assistant on Tuesday, July 14, 2015

Classes are not in session at the Crookston campus but for a number of students, the learning does not stop. There are several student worker positions over the summer filled by students who are eager to gain valuable experience within their career field, which is exactly the case for senior Tiffany Muellner, a natural resources and wildlife management major from Sauk Centre, Minn.

Muellner is getting her experience working under Laura Bell, a lab services coordinator within the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department and also helps Professor John Loegering. Muellner spends her days working on a variety of different tasks including doing research, working with data, mowing, weeding the Nature Nook, and more.

Some of Muellner's time is spent at the Red River Valley Natural History Area, which is located less than a mile from the Crookston campus and serves as a living museum, a teaching laboratory for students, a preserve for a variety of habitats, and a demonstration area where various conservation practices are illustrated.

The Natural History Area is where Muellner helps with bird mapping. Mapping is a process of catching birds in nets to take measurements of their wing length, body mass, and age. From there the birds get banded and released. The data collected is then shared between various researchers to track patterns in rare birds to help prevent extinction. "Bird numbers are lower this year which is really interesting," adds Muellner. "There were only 25 birds recently captured when normally there are 40 to 50. "We are not exactly sure why, but it could simply be one of the down years." Muellner explains that most populations run on a cycle of ups and downs.

One of the most enjoyable things Muellner does in her position is assist with programs that teach children about various natural resources related topics. "The kids are full of questions," says Muellner who recently helped with a presentation about water bugs. "I love teaching kids, but I could never be a teacher," she admits with a smile. "Just 15 minutes with them is great."

Choosing a career field came easy to Muellner, "I grew up on a dairy farm so being outside is natural for me. I chose natural resources because it allows me to continue life and work outside." She specifically enjoys her major because of all the hands on work that gets done. "We go on field trips, plant trees, and more." Muellner says. Bud capping—stapling a piece of paper around the bud of a tree to protect it from hungry deer—was her favorite field trip activity.

During her time at the U of M Crookston, Muellner has been involved in Delta Theta Sigma which is an agricultural based fraternity, Collegiate Future Farmers of America, which focuses on premier leadership, personal growth, and career success, and is also a member of the Newman Club. In her free time Muellner enjoys reading, going to the lake, and just spending time outside. She specifically noted that hunting is not one of her hobbies. "I'm probably the only person in Natural Resources who doesn't love hunting," she laughed.

The University of Minnesota Crookston now delivers 33 bachelor's degree programs, 22 minors, and 36 concentrations on campus as well as 14 degree programs entirely online. These degrees are offered in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of 1,800 undergraduates from more than 20 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit www.umn-crookston.edu.

In the photos, top, left, Tiffany Muellner in Itasca State Park bud capping in fall 2013.

Bottom, right photo, Muellner is busy in the Natural History Area working on a bird mapping project.

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