

DIVERSITY IN CONSERVATION INTERNSHIP



JAMIE KOLLMAN

2026 Highlights

The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin's Diversity in Conservation Internship Program (DICI) provides **meaningful, paid experiences for undergraduates interested in careers in natural resource conservation**. The goals of this cohort-based program are to introduce students to the field of conservation and its career pathways, and to help strengthen their knowledge and skills **to meet the need for diverse professionals in Wisconsin's conservation field**.

This year, NRF hosted 10 interns, who were each paired with a Wisconsin conservation organization for a unique internship experience. Interns also participated in **weekly programming** and **field trips** that connected them to Wisconsin's natural resources, conservation professionals, and future career opportunities. This year's cohort took field trips to Kemp Natural Resources Station, the International Crane Foundation, Devil's Lake State Park, the Aldo Leopold Shack and Farm, Havenwoods State Forest, and Lulu Lake State Natural Area. The summer culminated with an afternoon of final presentations and celebration held at the UW-Madison Arboretum with **over 90 guests** in attendance.

Read on to learn more about this year's interns!



3

partner
universities



10

host
organizations



10

interns



20+

professional
connections



4,000

hours of
conservation
experience



PHOTO CREDITS FROM TOP LEFT TO BOTTOM RIGHT: JAMIE KOLLMAN, NICO GITTERLE, JAMIE KOLLMAN, JAMIE KOLLMAN, JAMIE KOLLMAN

"This internship was beautifully well-rounded, and gave me valuable experiences and skills that I will take with me to my future career."

-Aileena Ilanderage, 2026 Cohort

All photographed bird banding, marking, and sampling is being conducted under a federally authorized Bird Banding Permit issued by the U.S. Geological Survey's BBL.

MEET THE INTERNS

Aaleeyah Padela, UW-Madison

Host Organization: Aldo Leopold Nature Center

“This internship will forever be a treasured experience that showed me what it's like to work to preserve the natural world not from the outside as a scientific observer, but on the ground itself . . . Most importantly, I have gained a new way of looking at the world. Using the skills I have learned—from invasive species management to plant identification—I hope to protect this world that only ever grows more wonderful and wonderfully strange the more I learn.”



Aileena Llanderage, UW-Madison

Host Organization: Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance

“This internship strengthened my passion for wildlife ecology and the environment, and definitely motivated me to pursue a career in conservation and keep working to protect the world around us . . . Meeting these people, making these connections, and building these relationships has allowed me to feel much more prepared to enter the professional workplace after I graduate.”



Alexander Martinez-Pajaro, UW-Milwaukee

Host Organization: Wisconsin DNR-Milwaukee

“I am grateful that this internship provided a chance for all the interns to explore new pathways into conservation. . . the program has convinced me to pursue a career in conservation and continue to explore the wonderful world that is the conservation field. “



Ellyn Suske-Funk, Lawrence University

Host Organization: The Nature Conservancy

“This internship gave me an incredible baseline of conservation work experience that has made me feel so much more confident in pursuing future work in this field. But beyond typical work experience, this internship has broadened my perspective on diversity, what it means, and how I contribute to it and learn from it.”



Isaac Ruby, Lawrence University

Host Organization: Holy Wisdom Monastery

“This internship was wonderful for my confidence and knowledge heading out into the conservation world. Looking back on this summer, I learned so much more about prairie ecosystem dynamics than I could have imagined.”



Kaitlyn Lund, UW-Milwaukee

Host Organization: Zoological Society of Milwaukee

“The Diversity in Conservation Internship helped show me that there is not one single nor incorrect path into a career in conservation. After getting to meet with a variety of amazing conservationists at different stages in their careers, I am now less anxious about making the ‘right’ decisions for a conservation career and more focused on having experiences that are meaningful to me.”



Kate Lund, Lawrence University

Host Organization: Lake Michigan Bird Observatory

“The NRF Diversity in Conservation Internship shaped how I see conservation by connecting me to a broad community of people who care about the environment. Through this internship, NRF and the partner organizations provided extensive and diverse experiences in conservation, both in the field and between people.”



Maya Ivanova, UW-Madison

Host Organization: International Crane Foundation

“After experiencing this internship, I feel a lot more sure of myself and whatever path in conservation I might take. I feel confident that I belong in this field, even though these opportunities weren't there for people like me in the past. I realized I can tie my love for nature, animals and community into my work through the field of wildlife conservation.”



Oscar Cheng, UW-Madison

Host Organization: UW-Madison Arboretum

“This program has taught me the most important aspect in conservation is to be yourself and express your interests/passions at 100%. It has made me feel more confident in my future career outlooks, and has reinforced my place within this field.”



Tarynn Lassiter, UW-Milwaukee

Host Organization: Wehr Nature Center

“The Diversity in Conservation Internship allowed me to learn about my career field. It's a lot more clear to me what direction I am going in after schooling, so it's meaningful that I had this experience on a smaller scale such as an internship. I felt seen as a black woman working in conservation and additionally gained new perspectives from the other interns about their experiences.”



2026 Partner Organizations

Lawrence University

University of Wisconsin-Madison

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Aldo Leopold Nature Center

Holy Wisdom Monastery

International Crane Foundation

Lake Michigan Bird Observatory

Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance

The Nature Conservancy

UW-Madison Arboretum

Wehr Nature Center

Wisconsin DNR

Zoological Society of Milwaukee

THANK YOU

We are deeply grateful to these donors and NRF's members for their support of this impactful program.



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