

Smokey Salamanders Transcript

Well, right now we're out looking for salamanders. We're looking for the red-cheeked salamander. And right now I'm not having any luck, but I like it a lot.

Besides the fact that they're adorable little amphibians, because they are, salamanders are great bioindicators.

Here at Great Smoky Mountains National Park, everyone is always looking up at the amazing views here. But on this month's episode of Outside Science, we follow a group of interns who are taking a closer look at the cuter side of the park.

Yes!

You got them.

I never really thought small animals were important, you never really think about it. But all this internship has really taught me how important these tiny little things are. And so that's really cool. And just being outside, it's awesome. I love it.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park is the salamander capital of the world. Salamanders are great bioindicators. If we see a change in our salamander species composition or our population levels, that's a big tip that there's something going on in the environment that we should probably be concerned about, and that we need to look into further.

It's just fun to be able to come out here and look for the salamanders on the rocks and all that. And it's fun to get your hands dirty sometimes, too. We actually do catch them. It's pretty cool because all your hard work pays off.

Now we're just releasing them back into their habitat. I chose this rock right here because it's nice and damp down here, and salamanders love damp things. So wiggle them out, trying not get my germs on them. And there he goes.

I've been studying biology in university for the past four years and I've never really done any field research before. So to have my first experience with field research be out here in the rolling hills and mountains is really an incredible experience.

For the last two years, we've had the youth environmental leadership interns from Asheville Greenworks join us to work alongside our ACE, American Conservation Experience interns, on whatever project we have going on those days.

It's fun because you get to do so much hands-on stuff, and it makes me feel very empowering. It makes me feel like the work that I'm doing matters.

It's very heartwarming. It makes me feel good, makes you feel like you're making a difference even though you're starting off small.

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For a lot of them, sometimes it's the first time that they're in a national park.

There we go.

Oh, there we go, we found one.

Where?

It's opening a door that they didn't even know existed.

Erin, she's been awesome for this whole thing. And so I know that this is what I want to do for a fact now, because it's just been an awesome experience. And it's just been great.

It's really excited me to pursue something similar to this in the future, and knowing that my options are so wide open is really comforting.

Anything to help the Earth be a better place.

Thanks for watching "Outside Science (inside parks)." Be sure to check in each month for new episodes.
