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Top Skills

Environmental Education
Conservation Issues
Ecology

Certifications

Certified Interpretive Guide
Certificate of Professional
Development
NCS First Aid, CPR & AED Course
Certificate of Completion: Reflecting
on Practice Program
Certificate of Completion,
NatureStart professional
development course

Honors-Awards

First Place, poster category
Certificate of National Service
President's Volunteer Service Award
Governor's Citation

Publications

The Origins of Doan Brook
Becoming naturally dramatic
Keeping connected: My reflections
on the NAI National Workshop in
Hampton
Breaking Barriers: Meeting the
Challenges of Revealing an Urban
Wilderness
An Urban Naturalist?

Alex Palmer

Naturalist at Sand Ridge Nature Center, Forest Preserves of Cook
County
South Holland, Illinois

Summary

I have experience and interest in urban ecology, watershed
management, natural and historical resource interpretation,
volunteer program management and conservation outreach.

I received my Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Studies
from Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin, and a graduate-
level certificate in Geographic Information Sciences (GIS) from
Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. I have also earned
a continuing education certificate in volunteer coordination from
Carroll Community College in Maryland, and I am currently pursuing
a certificate in nonprofit management from the University of
Wisconsin - Milwaukee. In 2017 I earned a designation as a Certified
Interpretive Guide (CIG) through the National Association for
Interpretation.

My pastimes include learning about different natural ecosystems,
outdoor recreation, wildlife observation, social issues, coffee,
socializing, and road trips.

I was born in Cleveland, Ohio and moved to Ashland, Wisconsin
in the Fall of 2006 to start my undergraduate education. After
moving around a lot, I now reside in Chicago, Illinois and serve as a
naturalist with the Forest Preserves of Cook County at Sand Ridge
Nature Center.

I possess skills and expertise in:

- Environmental Interpretation
- Identification of the flora and fauna of the eastern United States
- Natural resources management
- Invasive species management
- Social media/Social marketing
- Scientific Writing

- Public speaking
- Outreach
- Organizational partnership development
- Geospatial analysis
- Cartographic design
- GPS data collection

Please explore my profile to learn more about my career experiences applying these skills.

Experience

Forest Preserves of Cook County
 Naturalist at Sand Ridge Nature Center
 September 2014 - Present
 Greater Chicago Area

My current roles and responsibilities:

- Develops and carries out natural and cultural history interpretation programs for youth, families and adults
- Coordinates and facilitates Mighty Acorns field trips for under-served youth by hosting school groups from the south side of Chicago for ecological restoration and nature exploration activities in partnership with The Field Museum and Chicago Public Schools.
- Recruits and coordinates over 10 regular volunteers to support school field trips and summer camp programs
- Develops and carries out nature-themed day-camps for youth ages 7-12.
- Provides care of resident wildlife including native amphibians, reptiles, and raptors.
- Serves as a front-line representative to promote district programs and facilities by tabling at local schools, community centers, and festivals.
- Takes initiative on social media outreach by enhancing the nature center's Facebook page with photos and video clips of nature center events, programs, and naturalist observations.
- Writes and designs interpretive signage - including the sign standards- that highlight important natural features to nature center visitors.
- Presents slideshow lectures on natural history topics to local partner groups such as the Sand Ridge Audubon Society and other organizational partners.
- Assists with trail maintenance and split-rail fence construction

- Assumes supervisory duties of at least 5 other staff members
- Provides information and rehabilitation referrals for injured or orphaned wildlife to concerned visitors and area residents.

CHEARS (Chesapeake Education, Arts, and Research Society) Volunteer Maryland Coordinator (Americorps)

2013 - August 2014 (1 year)

- Served for one year through Americorps as a volunteer coordinator for a small environmental nonprofit in partnership with a city government
- Developed volunteer recruitment materials such as registration forms, promotional materials, and newsletters
- Piloted a new program known as 'Eco Discovery Days' that provided urban youth near Washington, DC with environmental education and nature immersion activities
- Conducted 'service-learning' workshops that provided environmental education combined with volunteer work, including the Greenbelt Forest Stewardship Project, an initiative to provide community-driven environmental stewardship and education relating to forestry and natural resources management
- Coordinated a group of volunteers who operate a community demonstration garden program by working with them on scheduling, providing equipment and supplies, and promoting their programs.
- Utilized electronic communications and social media such as Facebook, Constant Contact, Wordpress, and Youtube to publicize CHEARS's volunteer events and efforts
- Generated press releases and other media for local newspapers and blog sites
- Initiated partnerships with local natural resources professionals and other nonprofit groups and agencies to recruit volunteers and share program resources
- Provided assistance to the City of Greenbelt's Public Works Department on setting up and organizing data on their new Geographic Information Systems (GIS) workstation
- Submitted grant reports and detailed statistics on volunteer program quality and measurable outputs
- Developed and implemented environmental education programs for socioeconomically marginal youth in an effort to connect them with environmental stewardship and sustainable gardening practices
- Produced a web map displaying the results of a plant and wildlife survey

Norfolk Botanical Garden

Garden Tour Guide

January 2013 - September 2013 (9 months)

Norfolk, VA

- Delivered environmental interpretation programs to garden visitors in which participants paid for in advance
- Gave tram tours to the general public
- Operated a pontoon boat for public boat tours on a lake
- Gave tours of Azaleas and other ornamental gardens to visitors
- Operated a cash register and credit card machine

Dunes Learning Center

Naturalist

June 2012 - August 2012 (3 months)

Chesterton, IN

- Worked as an environmental educator at a non-for-profit nature camp in partnership with the National Park Service
- Led hikes and nature walks for summer camps targeted at the 4th-8th grade range
- Presented hands-on water quality monitoring and ecosystem investigation workshops for youth that included tasks such as testing soil temperature, measuring wind speed, identifying freshwater invertebrates, and examining ecological succession
- Received training in proper historical interpretation techniques, with a focus on historical accuracy
- Portrayed 17th and 18th century key cultural figures for a historical interpretation program for youth
- Delivered instructions to urban high school students for a stewardship project that involved cutting and spraying invasive plants within a section of the park
- Represented a non-for-profit organization by leading a nature hike to the general public and answering questions they had about programs and activities during an open house event
- Planned and carried out arts and crafts workshops for youth

Calvert County Natural Resources Division

Naturalist Intern

September 2011 - December 2011 (4 months)

Calvert County, MD

- Designed environmental education programs for local school groups and scout troops

- Taught elementary and middle school students about marine wildlife along a beach at the Chesapeake Bay by showing them how to use a seine net to catch fish and other organisms
- Instructed middle school groups how to use water quality measuring instruments such as a dissolved oxygen meter and a refractometer (for salinity) for a program on oyster reefs in the Chesapeake Bay.
- Educated visitors about the native plants and animals of a popular nature park by setting up displays at the visitor center and leading guided nature walks
- Cared for nature center captive animals, such as a hawk, owl, and various reptiles by feeding them and cleaning their tanks as necessary.
- Handled live snakes for nature programs geared towards preschoolers and kindergartners
- Wrote a natural history-themed article for a nature center newsletter.
- Answered visitor inquiries and managed gift shop sales by staffing the front desk of a nature center
- Operated a park promotional tent stand at a local festival
- Created a brochure for a newly developed trail

National Park Service

Natural Resources Intern

March 2011 - September 2011 (7 months)

Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, Chillicothe, OH

- Served as natural resources intern for the park biologist
- Presented a public program on native plants in collaboration with a National Park Service biologist
- Operated bush hogs and mowers to mow the invasive Canada thistle
- Received training in proper herbicide mixing and handling, particularly with Round Up Pro, Crossbow, and Milestone.
- Cut and sprayed multiflora rose and other invasive plants with herbicide using spray bottles, backpack sprayers, and a skid sprayer.
- Organized public education programs with regards to the natural resources of the park, including a spring amphibian walk and a workshop on using native plants in landscaping.
- Maintained native plant garden near visitor center
- Conducted bluebird nest box inventories on a regular basis
- Assisted with the experimentation of using herbicide to control first year garlic mustard rosettes
- Conducted spring amphibian surveys at night with the park's chief biologist
- Created a brochure for an exhibit on the use of native plants by indigenous Americans

The Nature Conservancy

Restoration Intern

October 2010 - January 2011 (4 months)

Merrillville, IN

- Served as a restoration intern for The Nature Conservancy's South Rim of Lake Michigan Project.
- Removed invasive woody plants using brush cutters and herbicide to restore globally rare dune and swale habitat fragments
- Distributed native plant seed to restore oak-savanna prairie habitat
- Received introductory training on prescribed burns of an oak-savanna prairie
- Created large bonfires to burn stacked piles of removed brush.
- Maintained equipment by sharpening brush cutter blades and cleaning herbicide sprayers.

Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy

Conservancy Intern

2010 - 2010 (less than a year)

- Served as a volunteer intern for an urban parks and trails advocacy group in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania,
- Performed invasive brush removal in an urban park
- Advised the field ecologist of a source population of invasive plants
- Began preliminary data-entry for a comprehensive geo-referenced database system
- Assisted with general office duties
- Monitored urban stream velocity and depth during rain storm events

Round River Conservation Studies

Environmental Studies Student Researcher

2009 - 2009 (less than a year)

Cuenca, Ecuador

- Monitored for signs of Andean bear in the upper montane cloud forests of Southern Ecuador
- Set up camera traps to monitor for signs of Andean bear, pumas, and other cloud forest mammals
- Familiarized myself with the Grinnell format of natural history note-taking
- Completed a GIS-based analysis of changes in vegetative cover in a river valley for a tropical conservation NGO
- Assisted in the collection of rare frog species in preparation for scientific documentation

Northland College
Conservation Field Technician
2009 - 2009 (less than a year)
Ashland, WI

- Conducted a bird and amphibian survey in a local marsh
- Assisted in construction of a rain garden
- Performed a stream bank restoration
- Planned field outings for wildlife habitat monitoring

Lake Metroparks
Interpretive Naturalist
2008 - 2008 (less than a year)
Lake County, OH

- Led hikes and guided nature walks
- Coordinated and carried out environmental education programs
- Participated in a wildlife management project aimed at controlling geese in a marsh
- Assisted with special events and programs
- Assisted park visitors with information about trails and park facilities
- Staffed nature center by being 'naturalist on duty'

Cleveland Museum of Natural History
Botany Intern
2007 - 2007 (less than a year)

- Conducted aquatic vegetation surveys of various glacial lakes in Ohio
- Operated a GPS to mark plant locations
- Cooperated with private landowners to get access to certain lakes
- Worked one-on-one with museum botany curator and other museum scientists

Cleveland Metroparks
Volunteer
2005 - 2007 (2 years)

- Assisted in the implementation of special event programs such as Bugfest and Bat Gala which are events teaching people about these animals through crafts, displays, and educational programs
- Assisted with field research to determine the most effective method for managing milkweed in the production of monarch eggs
- Accompanied naturalist-led hikes

Zagara's Marketplace

Grocery Packer

January 2006 - August 2006 (8 months)

- Ensured customer satisfaction by placing grocery items neatly into bags.

Nature Center at Shaker Lakes

Volunteer

2002 - 2006 (4 years)

- Monitored water quality and coordinated urban stream related projects
- Spearheaded a new water quality monitoring location
- Assisted naturalist in leading hikes for groups of adults
- Maintained grounds and facilities to include invasive species control as well as maintenance of the butterfly garden
- Assisted in the coordination of various special events and education programs to teach people about invasive species of plants as well as the natural history of their region

Education

Northland College

Bachelor of Science (B.S.), Environmental Studies · (2006 - 2010)

Old Dominion University

Certificate of Studies, Geographic Information Science · (2012 - 2013)

Carroll Community College

Continuing Education Certificate, Volunteer Maryland Coordinator Training · (2013 - 2014)

Beachwood High School

· (2002 - 2006)

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Certificate, Nonprofit Management · (2017 - 2017)