

## Spotlight on Westmoreland's Highschool Interns, Class of 2022!

Each year, Westmoreland Sanctuary offers high school and college students an opportunity to develop professional experience by participating in a 6-week internship program. Participants assist with habitat restoration field work, animal care, and educational projects. During this time, students gain valuable skills that they take with them as they embark on their academic and professional journeys. We are lucky to have such an engaged and enthusiastic group of students support us during our busiest season. Read on to hear about some of our intern's favorite memories!

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"A goal of mine coming into the Sanctuary was to be able to identify different animals and plants I am surrounded by in my local community. I thought this would be a difficult task to accomplish, like memorizing Spanish vocab words or AP Biology terms, but after my first day, I already felt more knowledgeable. I was weeding Barberry Bushes my first day, learning about pond ecology my second, and drawing native flowers my third. Westmoreland made this goal easy to achieve through its hands-on approach. The real-world experience I've gained at Westmoreland is completely different than learning in a traditional classroom and SO much more fun! I am so excited about what more I can learn over these upcoming weeks!"

**Jasmine S.**, Fox Lane High School



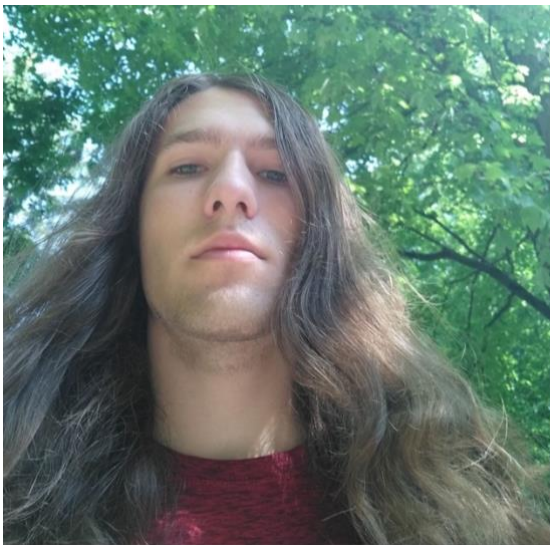
"One of my proudest accomplishments at Westmoreland Sanctuary was when I successfully removed much of the Garlic Mustard, an invasive weed, from a large hill. While the task was simple, it was physically demanding and took over 2 hours. However, I could see my progress in the end when I realized I had filled an entire bag and the hill was relatively clear of the invasive weeds. My efforts will help native, beneficial plants repopulate and ultimately restore the habitat's ecological balance. This experience showed me how even the simplest of tasks can have long-lasting impacts."

**Luke B.**, John Jay High School

"It was a mild spring morning, after I arrived at the Sanctuary, we headed off down the trail to learn about, and build, a drainage canal. The goal was to direct future rainwater into a meadow to allow it to house more plant life. We started to plan out where and how we wanted to make it. Once we did, we spent the whole morning and early afternoon shoveling the ground to form our canal. The day was filled with arduous and grueling labor. The drainage canal was planned to be at least 10 feet long and was going to be around 7-8 inches deep. During the shoveling and digging, we encountered many big rocks that were not easy to lodge out. Sometimes these rocks took a lot of energy and the collaboration of a couple people to successfully shovel them out. But the most difficult challenge was the tree roots; the roots were connected to a walnut tree close to the canal which could not be removed easily. I spent a lot of time and effort on this project, and though it was the most difficult assignment I had been given during my time at the Sanctuary, it was also my biggest accomplishment. It was the first moment I truly bonded with the other interns. Now, every time I see the drainage canal, I feel a sense of pride."



**Gabe P.**, Horace Greeley High School



"We did not have a plan, so brute force was called for. A scavenged collection of sticks, branches and small trees formed the base. The uneven base looked like it might be enough to start stacking logs. Each one had to be rolled over and then stacked into place. Despite the lack of a stable base, the stack rose steadily and is still standing. I am proud to have been part of this process and would consider this my biggest 'success story' of my time at the Sanctuary."

**Erik S.**, Fox Lane High School



“For my entire life, I have enjoyed the efforts of nature preserves and conservation, but I have never been on the front lines. At Westmoreland, I was given a chance to be on the front lines of nature conservation. There was a pond that was being overrun by reeds, and it was our responsibility to clear them. The second I entered the pond, a steady torrent of water began flowing into my waders through a small hole. But I remained in the muddy pond water and persisted to finish the job. The satisfaction of completing the job and helping to conserve the pond ecology was an unmatched feeling.”

**John N.**, Byram Hills High School

“Although the tasks I was involved in at Westmoreland required a lot of hard work to complete, in the end, we accomplished it all and fulfilled our duties as interns. But, completing one task doesn’t mean that it is the end, there is always more work to do, and more reward as well. Through this experience I gained a better understanding of what the professional workforce is like and without a doubt, it’s challenging but I am confident now that I can persevere.



Removing invasive species is something that I'm proud of. I got to understand why it was important, and the benefits it has for the environment. Some of the plants that we removed were garlic mustard, mugwort, and barberry bushes. But I also got to understand the risks in place if we didn't take any action, and the harmful effects these invasives would have on the environment. In the end, I won't forget the bonds that I've made during my time here at Westmoreland. Even though we're from different school districts, we did our best to work hard alongside one another, to accomplish anything given to us. It was surely an adventure to learn more about the environment and participate in field work. I will continue to work hard to sustain the environment.”

**Calvin V.**, Horace Greeley High School





“We trudged through deep stream water, our feet sinking in with each step, towards a bridge which had blown away by a flood. The five of us were able to dislodge it and carry it upstream once more. I cannot even begin to imagine the flood that had shifted it so far. While it was heavy, we all had the perseverance to move forward and the motivation from each other to do our duty, especially since we hiked 40 minutes out into that part of the woods to finish the job. And finally, we had placed the bridge back where it had originally been, and we never could have done so without each other.”

**Gabe B.,** Byram Hills High School

“On one of my first days interning at Westmoreland, we were given a truly herculean task: to transport a 5-foot 2,500-pound log across a trail that took 15 minutes to traverse, simply on foot. With only a few hours and minimal tools, I thought the job was impossible. However, after our long and grueling journey to bring this log home, I learned that almost anything is possible with the right strategy and teamwork. Thanks to everyone doing their part and staying determined, we were able to transport the log in time and truly feel accomplished.”

**Ethan O.,** Byram Hills High School



“As an intern at Westmoreland, I help lead elementary school field trips to teach young kids about the animals and species that keep our environment healthy. While I have always feared snakes, my time at Westmoreland Sanctuary helped me conquer this fear. I usually avoid being close to snakes, but while I observed a third-grade lesson, I watched 8-year-olds pet and pass around snakes. I noticed the kids had no fear of holding the snake. I felt embarrassed that I, being 17 years old, couldn't hold a snake. After the students left, I built up the courage to face my fear and hold a snake. That day, I ended up holding a python, which is something I never thought I would do. If it weren't for Westmoreland, I wouldn't have been able to conquer that fear.”

**Megan R.,** Fox Lane High School



“A really fun experience for me was helping teach young students about pond ecology during their field trips to Westmoreland Sanctuary. It was fun to help the kids identify pond life and learn about it myself. Furthermore, I was impressed at how easy it was to get children to appreciate nature. It got me to understand why education is such an important part of Westmoreland’s cause.”

**Kye V.**, John Jay High School

“One of the most rewarding experiences I’ve had at Westmoreland Sanctuary came on the first day. On top of juggling the stress of a new experience and meeting new people, I also had to do field work in the hot sun. The other interns and I were tasked with emptying the compost box. We had to carry wheelbarrows full of compost down to a hole we dug, and when the hole filled up, we had to shovel another hole. This carried on from 9:00 in the morning to 3:00 in the afternoon. At first, it was a little bit jarring as it was my first day and I didn’t know exactly what to expect. However, when the job was finally completed, I felt satisfied with the knowledge that there was tangible evidence of my hard work. Additionally, I felt like I was able to develop friendships with my fellow interns. Throughout all my days at the internship, this kind of work strengthened both my ability to work effectively with others and my resolve.”



**Will O.**, Fox Lane High School



“One day at Westmoreland, my fellow intern and I were tasked with cutting a section of a hollow log and transporting it to the museum to be constructed into an educational exhibit. It would show how animals take advantage of trees for habitat. I was given the task of removing a section of the tree with a chainsaw, as I was the only one qualified to do so. First, I cut small branches to stick under the main log to keep it off the ground. Shortly after, I cut the log in two. Me and the other interns loaded the log onto a cart and tied it into place with ropes and chains. The trek back to the museum was not an easy journey due to the rising temperatures and treacherous terrain, but after a long and arduous trip, we managed to get the log back to the museum on time!”

**Joe P.,** Paul Smith’s College



“Throughout my time at Westmoreland, a major task has been weeding invasive plants like Garlic Mustard and Mugwort. Garlic Mustard injects cyanide into the soil which makes it difficult for other species to grow. Because these plants are invasive, deer and native animals do not consume it, so there is no restriction in its growth. With our hands-on experience picking for days, we have become so accustomed to spotting these plants instantly that even when doing other tasks, I and my fellow interns notice these plants and sometimes start weeding by instinct to remove those pesky little plants. Even outside of Westmoreland, I am a changed person after my experience with the weeds since

now when I drive around Westchester, I can recognize Mugwort and Garlic Mustard from a mile away and it seriously annoys me because it's everywhere and it penetrates my sight and is an eye sore! Westmoreland has changed how I look at what I once thought were just normal plants.”

**Maximus S.,** Byram Hills High School



Thank you to all our interns for your participation and enthusiasm! Your support helps Westmoreland Sanctuary achieve our mission to enrich and preserve land for the free use, enjoyment, and education of all.

## **Congratulations Class of 2022!**

