A Refuge for Animals and Students

By Crystal Krapfl

Imagine being almost sixty-five miles from the nearest town, miles away from the nearest gas station, paved road, or mainstream society. This was the reality for Emily Kiefer, a Forestry senior in the NREM Department. But, Emily would not trade this experience for anything. Emily spent her summer at Fish Springs Wildlife Refuge, about a three hour drive southwest from Salt Lake City, Utah.

At the refuge, Emily was a Biological Intern and was employed thru the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. One of the many reasons Emily enjoyed her job included the variety of tasks she got to take part in through her internship. She worked on vegetation mapping using NVCS (National Vegetation Classification System), in which a GIS program was used to print off pictures of the refuge, GPS units were used to find the desired location and to map out where different plants could be found in that plot and then that data was entered back into the GIS program. She also got to take part in pesticide application, invasive species control, both of which an all-terrain vehicle was used, as well as small animal trapping and bat and herpetology sampling.

Another neat activity Emily took part in was spring and wetland mapping at the nearby Dugway Army Facility. Since the refuge was right next door, they would often hear sonic booms, which were scary at first, but occurrences Emily eventually got accustomed to. Emily found being at the Dugway Facility very interesting, and saw it in some ways as an oddity that it was located right next to a serene 17,000 acre wildlife refuge.

Since Emily did not have to work weekends, she got to do some really neat things during weekends. Her boss would frequently take her and the other interns on camping trips. One time they even journeyed to Zion National Park and camped there for the weekend. Emily recalls it being a bit intimidating to be with a group of people she didn’t know almost 24/7, but it allowed her to make new friends and to really get to know the other employees quickly. This also allowed her to gain problem-solving skills and experience working with a variety of people. At the refuge there was also a big swimming hole and Emily and her fellow co-workers would go there often to swim and barbeque as well as hike through the mountainous area of the refuge.

Not only were the weekends enjoyable, Emily truly did enjoy her job. She loved that she was never really doing the same tasks every day. She also appreciated being exposed to and seeing places she had never
seen before. She had never even been to that region of the United States, and through her job she was
immersed in the natural history of the area, and got paid for it. As many NREM student and faculty
would agree, it does not get better than that.