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Shaping future conservation scientists

Archbold Biological Station

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Chelsea Wisner Folmar, center, teaching intern Brittany Welch, left, and seasonal researcher Kaysie Gallup, right, how to point count surveys for bird monitoring.

ANGELA TRINGALI PHOTO

Archbold Biological Station is renowned for its long-running internship program. In fact, Archbold's Post-baccalaureate Internship program is one of only a few programs in the United

States in which recent college graduates can gain research experience before they commit to continuing their higher education or other career choices. Internships at Archbold provide exceptional opportunities for those who intend on pursuing a career in ecological research. Archbold also offers seasonal full-time positions in endangered species management, land management, habitat restoration, agroecology, and environmental education.

Internships at Archbold typically require a candidate to commit to living on-site for six to nine months and devote half their time being mentored and assisting with data collection for long-term research projects. Interns are compensated for their part-time work as well support for room and board. Additionally, interns are also afforded the opportunity to develop and execute their own independent research projects under the mentorship of professional scientists. This process is an effective catalyst for acceptance into graduate school, a typical 'first step' in beginning a life-long career in scientific research.

For those with career interests other than graduate school, or those who are seeking full-time employment, Archbold regularly hires full-time seasonal (~6 month) Research Assistants. In the Avian Ecology Program seasonal research assistants support permanent staff during the bird breeding season, when most of the endangered species monitoring and management work occurs. Seasonal staff work full-time under the direct supervision of staff researchers. This allows the year-round staff to meet heightened labor demands during the busiest time of year, and seasonal staff to expand their expertise in avian ecology under the guidance of experienced biologists.

New interns and seasonal employees of the Avian Ecology Program already possess some skills, like working independently in the field, but specialized skills are taught by full-time staff during the duration of their employment. Because working with Threatened and Endangered species requires permits from the US Fish & Wildlife Service, seasonal staff shadow full-timers, allowing them the opportunity to learn and refine skills including capturing and banding adult and nestling birds, taking biological samples, and nest searching and monitoring, all under the watchful gaze of experienced biologists. These highly specialized skills often become the qualifying experiences that propel seasonal Research Assistants into permanent employment in wildlife monitoring and management.

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Both internship and seasonal research assistant positions provide critical learning opportunities to early career professionals, and both allow for the opportunity to travel to Florida and become familiar with the plants and animals living here. Although these experiences appear similar on paper, they typically encourage different outcomes. Interns in the Avian Ecology Program often go on to graduate school to earn a master's or doctorate degree whereas seasonal Research Assistants often pursue permanent employment in wildlife management, though some also choose to continue their higher education.

Seasonal Research Assistant positions offered through the Avian Ecology Program provide a means of professional development that can be more accessible to a variety of applicants of diverse backgrounds and experiences, especially for those who are looking to gain full-time employment in wildlife monitoring and management. The Avian Ecology Program has nurtured the development of countless wildlife biologists working to conserve wild Florida as wildlife and land managers across the state. Do you know someone who has a future in wildlife conservation? Stay up to date on internship and employment openings at www.archbold-station.org!

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