

Volunteer Spotlight: Allie Skalnik

Allie Skalnik's summer reading list was impressive: it comprised more than 100 scientific papers spanning decades from the 1890s to the present day.

The high school junior completed this massive undertaking in two months to help The Nature Conservancy in Nevada conservation staff fill in missing population data on rare and sensitive wetland-dependent species in Nevada. Skalnik's research will help fill in data gaps on 18 animal species in the Silver State, including birds, butterflies, springsnails, fish, frogs, mussels and river otters. Sometime next year, these data, along with information on another 50 or so animal and plant species, will go into the Nevada Division of Natural Heritage (NDNH) database **Biotics**. These are species in Nevada identified by NDNH and TNC that have not been well-documented recently.



"Allie has been a huge help to us," said Laurel Saito, Nevada Water Program Director for The Nature Conservancy. "We are so grateful for her hard work and it will help benefit animal species in Nevada."

Skalnik's volunteer work is meaningful as it will contribute to management decisions in Nevada. When a land management action is proposed for public lands, the proponent has to start a consultation process as stated in the National Environmental Policy Act of 1973 with the responsible public land managers. Agency experts need to write a biological opinion on the effects of the proposed action on sensitive species, and this requires them to look up the species' status and occurrences in state databases like **Biotics**.

The project helped Skalnik, an Indiana resident, learn about Nevada's animal species and local ecosystems.

"This was interesting to learn about what ecosystems in Nevada look like," she said. "I think of Nevada as a very dry place, but we were focusing on wetlands. It helped for me to see that they exist and are very important."

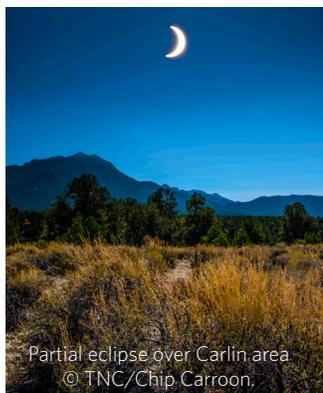
She also learned more on the valuable science skills of surveying and writing scientific papers.

"If I ever have to write a scientific paper, there are specific things I'll do because I've read so many of them and know what to do now," Skalnik said.

Skalnik is passionate about fighting climate change and loves to write. As she finishes up this project and heads back to school, she is looking forward to taking an environmental science class this year and continuing to do volunteer work with environmental nonprofits back home in Indiana.

"This experience has definitely shown me that environmental science is something I'm still really interested in and even more excited about now," Skalnik said.

Interested in volunteering virtually for The Nature Conservancy? Email us at nvfovolunteer@tnc.org.



Partial eclipse over Carlin area
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