

[From Spring 2008]

Congratulations Becky

As the sun sets on Assateague Island, I begin to reflect on the past two years that I have spent along these tranquil shores. I will be leaving these waters for the sweeping plains of Oklahoma, filled with nothing but gratitude in my heart.

Working at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (CNWR) has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. The memories and friendships I made will carry with me onto my next adventure. Soon I will be heading to Jet, Oklahoma, to work as a permanent employee for the US Fish and Wildlife Service at the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge, my dream job as an Outdoor Recreational Planner.

However, I could never have succeeded without the unwavering support structure I found here at Chincoteague. It was Jill VanScoyoc and the Chincoteague Natural History Association who brought me to these shores as an intern in the summer of 2005. For that I am eternally thankful. I came here as a quirky fresh faced recent college graduate who did not know what path to follow in life, until I presented my first program. To teach and educate the public, to show them the wonders to be found, is the best job anyone can ask for. Through my internship, I finally found a path that I can follow in life. The road less traveled my family says, but it is the path of the interpreter, environmental educator, and bird enthusiast in which I chose.

These islands cast a spell on you as soon as you get that marsh mud and sand between your toes. After my first week as an intern I became hooked on the Fish and Wildlife Service. Not long after my internship ended, I applied for a job as a Recreation Assistant at CNWR, and returned to Chincoteague as a seasonal employee in April 2006. Since then, I have had the opportunity to hone my interpretive and environmental educator skills under the instruction of the Visitor Services team. "8-11-4" became a new motto for the EE duo, and surf fishing programs were the new hit of the interpretive programs. I will always treasure the memories that I have made here at CNWR.

Some of my fondest memories include oystercatcher banding, sea turtle monitoring, Children in the Woods Day Camp, surf-fishing, campfires on the beach, staff lunches, and bird watching, just to name a few. I have had several titles while working here at CNWR, but the most rewarding one to me was being the Children in the Woods Day Camp coordinator. I spent a week with twelve amazing kids who still inspire me everyday with their insight of the natural world. I will take these memories and experiences with me onto my new position in Oklahoma, but I will not say goodbye to Chincoteague and Assateague just yet.

My family culture does not believe in saying goodbye. We send up a prayer that simply says 'until our paths cross again', and they shall. Thank you to CNHA, Refuge staff, and the volunteers for making my experience here so amazing. See you all soon!