

[From Winter 2007]

## **Volunteer Services Intern**

By Jenna Ricchiuti

This past May I graduated college and I can now call myself a biologist. I prefer to call myself a "muddy boot ecologist" as I love working in the field. My first summer out of school, just like any other graduate, you believe you'll find that full-time job and start your stable lifestyle; however I did not find it. Instead, on August 26, 2007, I arrived at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge to begin my internship as a volunteer services intern. I was welcomed by Becky Wolff who not only showed me the ropes of the refuge, but welcomed me into her circle of friends, which made my experience here at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge complete.

I came here because I wanted to spread my passion for conservation and learn what management practices needed to be put in place for continuous conservation. I will have to thank my supervisors Laurel Wilkerson and Michael Dickson for allowing me to accomplish my goal by experiencing my two favorite fields, education and biology. I will have to give special thanks to the Biologists Amanda Daisey and Eva Savage for their patience in adventuring on the ATV, and for encouraging me to take the time to identify any plant species I did not know, as well as giving me the resources to do so.

The memories of seeing the smiles on visitors' faces when they saw their first jellyfish or Delmarva Fox Squirrel will never be forgotten. My internship here at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge has not only taught me and given me the experience that I wanted, but the staff and volunteers are amazing. For anyone moving to a new town, especially for one living on the inhabited island of Assateague, everyone here has been so welcoming and inclusive. Thank you, staff and volunteers, for all your support and advice. From my experience here, I intend to move on to do graduate work in the biological field. To all prospective interns, seasonals, and volunteers.... Remember Emerson said "Life is a Journey not a Destination" so do not be afraid to be in one place for a short amount of time. The experience and the people you meet here at the refuge and in town are unforgettable and have taught me a lot!