

## **Professional Standards for an Interpretive Naturalist Intern**

Developed by the Iowa Association of Naturalists.....

### **Definition of an Interpretive Naturalist Intern**

The person in this position assists the naturalist or supervising staff to plan, develop, and present environmental education and/or interpretive programs for schools, youth and adult groups, or the general public and performs related duties as required.

### **Education and Experience Requirements**

A person in this position should be pursuing a degree from an accredited college or university, or seeking experience in environmental education or interpretation.

### **Supervisor Responsibilities to Intern**

- Assist the intern in acquiring the basic knowledge and skills in the below document
- Provide adequate performance evaluations
- Provide adequate office supplies and program equipment
- Promote opportunities for experience in other natural resource fields
- Provide adequate training and/or certification (hazardous materials, blood born pathogens, sexual harassment)
- Provide opportunities for growth in personal attributes

### **Intern Responsibilities to the Agency**

- Represent agency in a positive manner
- Learn, understand, and follow agency procedures and policies
- Present oneself in a professional manner
- Acquire basic knowledge
- Explore opportunities for experience in other natural resource fields

### **Knowledge and Skills**

The following is a list of skills and traits that naturalist interns should possess. These are arranged with those skills and traits a naturalist intern should possess listed first and marked with an asterisk, and those skills and traits acquired through experience and professional development listed second.

Following each section are traits that are considered advanced. These skills are not required for all internship positions but should be encouraged by supervisors whenever possible to ensure the professional development of the intern.

### **I. Knowledge of Natural and Cultural History and Recreation**

\*Knowledge of basic ecological principles;

\*General outdoor recreation skills in one or more areas including canoeing, backpacking, biking, hiking, spelunking, orienteering, archery, firearm safety, hunting, trapping, boating, etc;

Basic field identification and natural history of native plants and animals;

Knowledge of and ability to, provide proper care of live animals for educational purpose;

Knowledge of cultural history including archeology, art, music, anthropology, history, folklore, etc;

Ability to comprehend, analyzes, interpret, and explain conservation laws, principles, and practices;

Knowledge of organizations and agencies concerned with conservation, education, and natural resources;

Knowledge of environmental hazards and associated issues concerning safety of program participants, including Lyme disease, poison ivy, illegal drug residue and waste, etc;

### **Advanced**

- Knowledge of management of one or more natural resources including fisheries, wildlife, forestry, agronomy, grasslands, and aquatic ecosystems;
- Knowledge in a least one other area including astronomy, geology, insects, nonflowering plants, etc;
- Knowledge of current, historical, environmental issues, and the ability to distinguish between an opinion and a fact.

## **II. Program Development and Educational Skills**

\*Ability to write program goals and objectives;

\*Knowledge of where to find resources to expand knowledge and program delivery skills;

Ability to plan and evaluate programs appropriate for the developmental abilities and needs of the audience and how to integrate awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills, and participation into programs;

Knowledge of educational principles, teaching methods, learning styles, and trends;

Knowledge of Tilden's six Principles and ability to integrate them into interpretive programs;

### **Advanced**

- Knowledge of school curricula and how to integrate interpretive and environmental education programs with them;
- Familiarity with and ability to use appropriately environmental education curriculum such as Project Wild, Project Learning Tree, etc.

### **III. Communication Skills**

\*Ability to communicate orally and effectively with groups and individuals in both formal and non-formal situations in one or more of the following areas: indoor and outdoor presentations, campfires, trailside talks, classroom presentations, public meetings, storytelling, etc;

\*Ability to handle visitor complaints or emergency situations courteously and responsively and to be tolerant and respectful of differing opinions;

\* Ability to communicate effectively with co-workers and other agencies and organization.

Ability to prepare news releases, fliers, bulletin boards, and other basic publicity;

Ability to communicate effectively in writing to people of various ages and educational abilities including writing for display text, signage, brochures, newsletters, letters, and reports;

Ability to design and maintain temporary educational displays and exhibits;

Ability to operate computers, audiovisual, photographic and other equipment necessary for program delivery;

#### **Advanced**

- Ability to make radio and television presentations;
- Ability to maintain or create web sites;
- Ability to design and maintain permanent displays and exhibits.

### **IV. Administrative Skills**

Ability to work within a budget;

Ability to manage time effectively;

Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with groups, organizations, the general public, school community and colleagues;

#### **Advanced**

- Ability to establish and evaluate goals and objectives for the education/interpretation program and to communicate needed changes to others;

- Ability to develop and implement a budget;
- Ability to organize and conduct fundraising activities;
- Ability to create and coordinate the efforts of citizen support groups;
- Ability to oversee the recruitment, training, and supervision and to coordinate the scheduling of volunteers;
- Ability to maintain daily operation of a facility including maintenance of buildings and grounds, and coordination of program, public relations, and other activities;

**V. Personal Attributes**

- Creativity;
- Enthusiasm;
- Initiative;
- Flexibility;
- Poise and Confidence;
- Willingness to grow and advance themselves in the field;
- Sense of humor;
- Sincere love of the out-of-doors and the desire to communicate about it to the public;
- Organization;
- Personable;
- Patience and Tolerance.

**VI. Other certification and training that might be considered useful**

- Red Cross certifications – First Aid and CPR;
- Department of Natural Resources safety instructor’s certification;
- Outdoor recreation skills training;
- EE Curriculum training (Project WILD, Project Learning Tree, Project WET)
- Program that will enhance the ecological knowledge (IOWATER, Naturemapping, Master Conservationist);
- Membership in a professional organization such as the Iowa Association of Naturalists, the National Association for Interpretation, Audubon, Iowa Conservation Education Council, etc.

**Compensation Guidelines**

Compensation should be determined by the governing agency.