

## Expanding Horizons: *The Intern Experience* by Pamela Becwar



There is that one special full moon in July when you can almost count on the skies being clear and the temperatures mild. Each year, this event is marked by an invitation for the summer interns to spend a night on Tiffany Mountain with Peter Morrison and Aileen Jeffries. This year did not disappoint. The sun set over the rocky crags and snow patches of the North Cascades to our west, and the moon rose through blue-gray clouds on the opposite horizon. In the morning we sat, bundled up, watching the pink ribbon clouds and purple mountains. With the sunrise, the full moon slowly descended in the west. This is the kind of experience that often defines an intern's time at PBI.

There are the many hours spent in the office and working in the field, but there are also many afternoons to be spent hiking or biking after the work day is done. This summer Becky Schultze, Kirsten Harma and myself, Pamela Becwar, spent many wonderful afternoons and weekends out exploring the North Cascades.

The North Cascade region offered Becky many opportunities that aren't available on the plains of South Dakota. Becky took her first backpacking trip early in the summer and found a new love in fording rivers and climbing mountains. She also kayaked and kept up her habit of running every morning at 5:15 am. Becky is now back in South Dakota finishing her degree in biology and considering graduate school.

Kirsten became the wildfire intern. Her contributions came in the flurry of the Wildfire Report with late nights and tight deadlines.

Kirsten also worked on the weeds project and wetlands delineation for the Roadless Washington Campaign. Amazingly, she still had time to go on wilderness trips, go biking and play ultimate Frisbee. Kirsten headed back to Western Washington's Huxley College of the Environment to finish her senior year.



Kirsten Harma

For myself, there was the wealth of knowledge (seemingly endless) that Peter shared with me during my internship. He would touch leaves as we walked by during our many hours in the field, asking if I knew the plant species. Often I, shaking my head would think "This will be on the test." But after many repetitions of this exercise I find myself walking by plants, touching them, saying their name. What a treat to spend the summer in the North Cascades!

Often times at the office, I will be looking through files or projects and find that the quality of past interns work is wonderful. I'm impressed with the work they have done. I am also impressed with PBI's commitment to interns. A great deal of training and effort goes into maintaining an active internship program. I have heard Peter say that the interns are one of PBI's most valuable resources. Every intern brings something new to PBI but PBI gives us incredible experiences and training. I have to say that I appreciate all the opportunities that the internship program has offered. Thanks PBI!



Becky Schultze



Pamela Becwar

*To find out more about internship opportunities at PBI, visit our website at [www.pacificbio.org](http://www.pacificbio.org) or call 509.996.2490*

## Alien Weeds Project *by Becky Schultze*



**Becky Schultze and George Wooten study a vegetation plot.**

I expected my summer with PBI to provide me with a greater knowledge of science and research. However, I did not

expect the lessons to include an ancient language. Before I could go into the field to collect data for various plant studies, I needed to brush up on the scientific plant names, which meant a lot of Latin!

Once I was able to identify plants and apply their scientific names, I was ready to make my contribution to three studies on alien weeds. I assisted in data collection and entry for the Chewuch Weed Pilot Project. This study is focused on weed control strategies on a section of the West Chewuch Road near Winthrop, WA. The second year of data was collected and a report written for another study that was concerned with manual control methods of Dalmatian toadflax (*Linaria dalmatica*) and Diffuse knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa*) on a shrub-steppe ecosystem. The final report will be an ongoing study looking at the population dynamics of six weed species in the Chewuch watershed.

The invasion of exotic plants into natural ecosystems is extremely detrimental to wildlife habitat and the value of many natural resources. Exotic plant invasions decrease soil productivity, cause tremendous economic loss, and contribute to the endangerment and extinction of native species. Most exotic species become established in areas where soil disturbance has occurred or the native vegetation has been removed or altered. Weeds can also enter ecosystems by the movement of their seeds by human activities, livestock, and natural seed dispersal mechanisms. These exotic species out-compete the native vegetation because of their natural competitors and predators are absent.

The goal of these ongoing studies is to increase

our knowledge of what methods are and are not effective in weed control and what conditions encourage weeds to establish themselves. And I will continue brushing up on Latin.

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## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT OR CONTROL WEED INVASIONS?

- Learn to identify weeds and learn about the characteristics of the weed species invading your neighborhood.
- When you find a new weed infestation, take action immediately. Small populations can often be eradicated or suppressed by hand pulling.
- Larger infestations may be too labor intensive for manual control. A biological control may be an option. Depending on the weed type and the landscape, mowing or cultivation can be effective treatments.
- Volunteer to help your neighbors and your community with their weed control. By placing a social emphasis on the job, it becomes a fun occasion. It also feels good to “clean up” the community in which you live.

*PREVENTION OF INFESTATION IS THE BEST CONTROL METHOD, BUT OFTEN PUBLIC AWARENESS OCCURS TOO LATE BECAUSE SOME INVASIONS ARE GRADUAL AND INCONSPICUOUS. KEEP YOUR EYE OUT FOR ANY NEW WEEDS AND GET RID OF THEM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO PREVENT A NEW INFESTATION.*