

Tom got WILD work experience with the University of Northampton



University of Northampton Graduate, Thomas Gardner, has spent the last year getting his hands dirty working with the Wildlife Trust helping to protect the counties natural spaces through conservation work.

The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire is a voluntary charitable organisation, caring for wildlife and the countryside. Knowing they needed a little extra help to tame Mother Nature, the Northampton Office teamed up with the with University of Northampton's Changemaker Hub team, to hunt for a student volunteer to help them with their local conservation work through the Time2Grow Graduate Internship programme.

The Time2Grow Graduate Internship programme matches local business with skilled graduates from the University of Northampton, to work on a project to help an organisation tackle their most challenging problems. Through the programme, the University employs the graduates and funds 60% of the cost of their employment with the organisation.

Thomas, who was studying for a degree in Environmental Science, was already a Countryside Volunteer around his studies with the Wildlife Trust, and local conservation project, Nenescape. When the opportunity arose to turn his volunteering experience into a paid intern role with Time2Grow programme, he jumped at the chance.

Speaking about his experience, Thomas said: "While studying, I wanted to put into practice the things I was learning, so I joined the Wildlife Trust and Nenescape as a volunteer. I've learnt a lot of academic and research skills as part of my studies, but I wanted to get more hands-on, practical conservation experience. Through Time2Grow I have been able to expand on my volunteering role with the Trust and get some more experience, as well as being paid.

"I was able to work full time for the Trust over the summer and be useful at their busiest point. I've been involved in all aspects of the Trust work; getting out into the countryside and taking part in botanical surveys of wildlife

sites, habitat management of grassland sites, as well as desk based projects and office work to help improve the awareness and access members of the public have to the countryside in Northampton.”

Matt Johnson, from the Wildlife Trust, said: “The Time2Grow Graduate Internship programme was a real success, providing the Trust with some much-needed support from a graduate for an extended, 10-week placement. This has meant that we have been able to get Thomas really involved in what we do, and he’s been able to create and carry out whole projects – which is a really valuable experience for him. Thomas’ skills with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) were invaluable to our programme of work, including a project to map access to natural habitats along the Nene Valley, to improve public access.”

Thomas said: “Working with the Trust has reinforced that I’ve chosen the right career for me. I’ve been able to use the opportunity to explore areas of my future career and it’s helped me put in to practice my academic learning, as well as get some more practical experience. I’ve been lucky that the Trust have given me the opportunity to get involved in all areas of their work and that’s given me fantastic work experience to talk about on my CV, now I’m looking for a job.”

Janice Watkins, who runs the Time2Grow Graduate Internship programme at the University of Northampton said: “The Time2Grow Graduate Internship programme is an ideal way for graduates to gain valuable paid work experience in their chosen field and in some cases, it can lead on to a permanent role. Supported throughout the internship by the Changemaker Hub, I would encourage all graduates to look at this route as an alternative means of securing work.”

For more information please visit: www.time2grow.org.uk

