This was the third year of the **Bitterroot Wildlife Internship**, a joint partnership between Ecology Project International and **MPG Ranch**. From June through August, a select group of EPI alumni live and work on MPG’s ranch in Florence, Montana for one month each. Participants work closely with MPG researchers to **conduct and present scientific research** to further MPG and ecosystem conservation goals. Interns also contribute to **conservation service projects** to improve habitat for local flora and fauna. A total of **11 interns** from Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming participated in two separate, four-week sessions.

### 2016 At-a-Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interns</th>
<th>Research Hours</th>
<th>Service Project Hours</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>529</td>
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### Research and Conservation Service

**Scientific Studies**

Every **intern partners with an MPG researcher to contribute to ongoing scientific studies** happening at the Ranch. This year interns studied soil microbes, hummingbirds, bats, native and invasive plants, parasites, and more! The interns developed questions, collected data, and drew conclusions with the help of their MPG mentors. Their work culminated in **research presentations at the Bitterroot Wildlife Internship Research Symposium**. Each year, interns share that the research is the most powerful and impactful portion of their internship experience, and the primary driver of their desire to participate.

- **2 Miles of Fencing Removed or Modified**
- **4 Acres of Houndstongue Removed**
- **10 Acres Cleared of Bailing Twine**
Habitat Restoration

Interns dedicated 529 hours to improving wildlife and plant habitat on MPG Ranch by participating in conservation service projects. This is 129 more hours than promised! Their contributions included:

- Pulling invasive houdstongue.
- Weeding and maintenance at the MPG Education Garden.
- Removing or retrofitting barbed-wire fencing to make ranch habitat more wildlife friendly.
- Clearing bailing twine, which is harmful to osprey and other nesting birds, from over 10 acres of grassland.
- Removing 10 gallons of toxic shooting clays and plastic debris from an old shooting range.
- Collecting and pressing apples to reduce bear attractants, resulting in 20 gallons of cider.

Symposium

More than 100 people including 11 interns and 7 research mentors, EPI and MPG Ranch staff, friends and family, celebrated the interns’ achievements at the Bitterroot Wildlife Internship Research Symposium on August 30th. Each intern gave a formal presentation about the research they conducted, including their research questions, methods, results, and conclusions. Interns also shared the positive impact that the internship experience had on their personal lives and career aspirations.

“This experience made me more aware of my actions and what I can do to reverse negative human impacts on nature.”
~ Max, intern from Missoula, MT

New and Notable

This year’s interns and instructors were treated to a new camp location at MPG Ranch - The Education Garden. Tent pads, new tents, and cots provided the interns with deluxe accommodations! Many thanks to MPG Ranch for establishing this permanent operating area for the Bitterroot Wildlife Internship. It proved to be the perfect springboard for research and service project access and provided unprecedented learning opportunities through proximity to the native plant and education garden as well as the newly weatherized education garden pavillion.

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