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A UNIQUE PROGRAM
THAT LOOKS PAST
DESTRUCTION TO
SEE THE FUTURE
ECOSYSTEM THAT
LIES WITHIN.



by Michele Tinker, Director of Annual Giving

Restoration Ecology is the art and science of restoring and repairing damaged or destroyed ecosystems, a much needed science in today's world, and an acclaimed program at Defiance College. Originating in the 1990s, DC's Restoration Ecology program is one of less than 20 available degree programs in the United States and Canada, and the only such program offered at a small liberal arts college. The program provides students with a global perspective on ecological restorations and prepares them for a wide variety of career options in this field.

Not only is DC's Restoration Ecology major one of very few in the U.S., but DC's Restoration Ecology and other science students have access to a unique campus resource -- the 250 acre Thoreau Wildlife Sanctuary which students use as a living laboratory. Thanks to the Diehl family who has made this possible, the students in this and the other science majors can utilize the Thoreau Wildlife Sanctuary as their very own living laboratory in which to exercise their curiosity and practice stewardship. They've been able to study prairie burns, participate in the reintroduction of native species and the control of invasive plants, and conduct experiments. Associate professor of biology Dr. Doug Kane calls restoration ecology the hands-on major for students interested in the environment and wildlife.

Restoration Ecology students have also gone further afield to observe, work, and experiment: the Maumee River, Lake Erie, New Orleans, and Belize, examining and testing water quality, and studying ecosystems.

These hands-on experiences have helped Restoration Ecology graduates go into jobs ranging from private testing research, for businesses and conservation agencies to the Bureau of Land Management, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and even the Department of Defense. ♦



In the five years he has been at Defiance College, Professor Doug Kane has seen the number of students majoring in Restoration Ecology (and field biology) more than double. Kane considers Thoreau to be a valuable resource of the college. "With the Thoreau Sanctuary, they're really learning by doing because they are actually physically working on the various ecosystems," Kane explains. The Restoration Ecology students visit other sites as well. In March, Kane and his students made a trip to The Wilds, a wildlife conservation center in southeast Ohio that is situated on 9,154 acres of reclaimed coal mine land. The Wilds is home to hundreds of native species as well as rare and endangered species from around the globe, living in natural open-range habitats. Dr. Kane's group of students planted trees at The Wilds and got to feed rhinos and giraffes. "Not an atypical weekend for us," Kane notes.



Andy Kibler, a senior from LaRue, Ohio, agrees with Dr. Kane that having Thoreau available to the students is what the program is all about, and it gave him great experience restoring and implementing new ecosystems. Another great opportunity Andy had at DC was visiting New Orleans, where he could study mapping of the shoreline and erosion pre- and post-Katrina. "I got to work with a lot of people, do testing, and kayak around the marshes." He hopes to be a wildlife officer for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources after graduation.