

Midwest Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (MWPARC) Student Travel Grant Report

Awardee: Samantha Skerlec
Organization: Wichita State University

In one or two paragraphs, describe the work you participated in that was facilitated by this award.

The Midwest PARC student travel grant went towards my master's thesis research investigating the impacts of drought and drying events on plains leopard frog tadpoles. It is not uncommon for small grassland stream pools to completely dry, but the impacts of this drying on the organisms that live and breed within these pools is not well-understood. In this experiment we used 64 1000-liter cattle tank mesocosms to simulate drying and rewetting, and compared this to permanently-filled pools. Newly hatched *Lithobates blairi* tadpoles were introduced to the mesocosms, and their body mass, developmental stage, time to metamorphosis, and mass at metamorphosis were recorded throughout their larval period. In addition to tadpole measurements, data on the identity and abundance of larval insects were collected monthly to estimate predation effects on the tadpoles. I plan to present and publish the results of this study later this year.



How has this work aided you in achieving your career goals?

My career goal is to become a research scientist at a university with a lab of my own. This project allowed me to gain skills in designing and running an independent project from start to finish. For this experiment, I personally hired and trained a field technician to assist me with this project. This was my first experience being a mentor, and it taught me how to manage projects and schedules with others in mind. The challenges faced throughout this experiment required critical thinking and on-the-fly decision making. I feel that this work has made me a better, more well-rounded scientist overall and I am grateful for the opportunity to conduct this research.