









WCS CAREER LATTICE

FINAL REPORT 2024 - 2025















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OVERVIEW

WCS Education is committed to inspiring the next generation of conservation leaders and STEM professionals. Our work with youth is central to this mission. Each year, the WCS Career Lattice supports 1,900 youth ages 14 to 24 in volunteer, internship, and employment opportunities across our five parks. This integrated career pathways initiative provides youth with expanded entry points to opportunities at our parks and access to a suite of workforce development services. These early professional experiences allow WCS to empower the next generation to build meaningful careers, expand their networks, and contribute to conservation efforts that benefit both people and wildlife.



The WCS Career Lattice supports young people using a three-pronged approach:

Connect



and recruit local youth for career opportunities through outreach and partnerships

Develop



their knowledge and skills through hands-on work experiences, professional development, and mentorship

Advance \



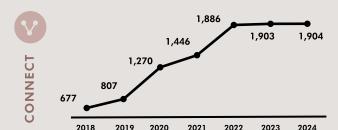
their careers through leadership training and tiered professional opportunities



LATTICING **OVER** THE YEARS

The Career Lattice has grown and developed since its inception in 2018.





Number of Youth

In 2018, the Lattice supported 677 youth in Education Department positions. The initiative has grown to support 1,900 youth today, spanning all zoo and aquarium departments. The number remained high in 2024 despite the temporary closure of Prospect Park Zoo.

A Local Focus

In 2024, 64% of youth lived in the same borough as the park where they worked, compared to 54% in 2018. We invest in strategic community partnerships to increase awareness of WCS youth opportunities in their neighborhoods.



DEVELOP

Breadth of Experience

The Lattice originally specialized in science education career development. Today, we support youth exploring careers in animal care, operations, hospitality, administration, research, and other areas integral to WCS's mission.

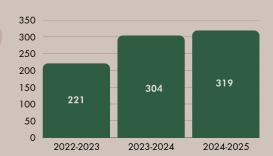
Strong Mentoring

This year, we increased our support for supervisors working with youth by providing inperson training for 80 supervisors looking to build skills in positive youth development, cultural competence, and mentoring. Trainees included supervisors from WCS and other New York City cultural institutions through the SCI Network NYC partnership.

Skill Building & Career Awareness

This year, we embedded professional development workshops and career talks into many of our programs. We also expanded the types of free skill-building events and networking experiences available to all youth.





Career Exploration

The number of youth who lattice into new roles at WCS has increased each year since we began tracking. In the last year, 319 youth moved into a new or elevated position at our zoos and aquarium.

Strength in Numbers

Fifty-six percent of interns, including all of our high-school interns, participate in cohort-based internships which provide a community of peers and scaffolded support. Our research shows that interns in cohort-based programs are 2.8 times more likely to move into a new WCS position than youth in individual internships.

IMPACT IN 2024

1,900

young people ages 14 to 24 participated in volunteer positions, internships, and parttime jobs at WCS's zoos and aquarium

In Spring 2025, we hired an additional 219 youth who will work with us during the 2025 season.

of WCS youth felt appreciated at work would like to work for WCS in the future

plan to pursue a science career

319 youth moved into new roles at WCS between April 2024 and March 2025

including advancing into elevated positions and exploring different opportunities. We call this "latticing in action."

earned in stipends and wages

live in New York City's five boroughs



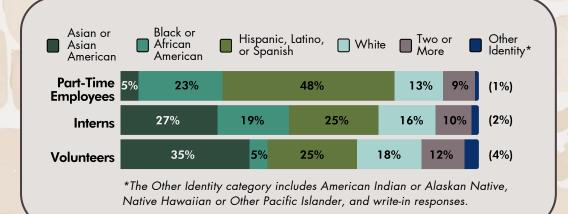
WCS volunteers and interns represent 317 schools, including 153 NYC public high schools

WHO ARE WCS YOUTH?

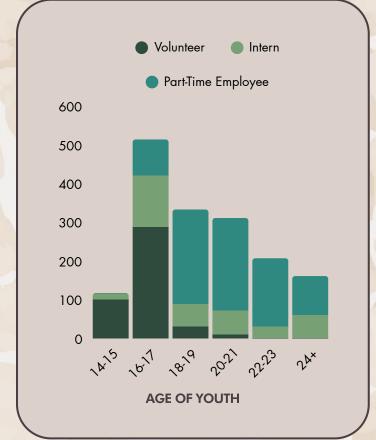
- 944 employees
- 488

54% of youth identified as Black or

Hispanic, reflecting NYC demographics



of youth were first generation college students



of NYC youth lived in a lowincome* ZIP code

*Up to 200% of the NYC poverty line based on median income.

Youth spoke 42 languages other than English

Bengali Russian Urdu Fuzhounese Punjabi Twi Swedis Punjabi Twi Swedish Hebrew Tamil Farsi Thai Albanian Taino Creole Nepali Italian Yoruba Japanese Hindi Tagalog

Tibetan

German ni ASL CantoneseYiddish Vietnamese Khmer Korean Bambara Polish Burmese Gujarati Greek Konkani

INTERNS

New in 2024: **Diversifying the Discovery Guide Leader Internship**

The Discovery Guide Leader internship was designed as a peer mentor position, with interns modeling how to engage visitors at Quest stations and supporting Discovery Guides volunteers leading live interpretation activities for the first time.

This year we diversified this internship, adding two new options:



Curriculum Design Lab

53 Fall Discovery Guide Leaders at the New York Aquarium, Queens Zoo, and Bronx Zoo planned and built new Quest activities for special events and Spring 2025.



Live Interpretation & Informal **Education Intensive**

10 Summer Discovery Guide Leaders at the New York Aquarium led animal chats for visitors and supported summer camp, working with campers to do science activities, animal observations, and art projects.

In 2024, WCS hosted 472 interns



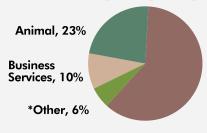
Jerin Tasnim

Queens, NY

- Sea Cliffs Intern, 2024
- BZ Discovery Guide & Leader, 2022
- Youth Ocean Advocate, 2020-21
- NYA Discovery Guide & Leader 2019-20

"We had a final project and mine was on sea otter ethology, the study of their behavior and movement. Having the time to observe sea otters was really great. It's just different - seeing them in front of you - than learning about their behavior and movement in class."

Internships by department



Education, 61%

*Other departments include Human Resources, Library & Archives, Exhibit Design, Public Affairs, Buildings & Grounds and more.





of interns said that the stipend enabled them to participate in the internship.

The 230 institutions accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums host approximately 17,000 interns total, and only 14% of these positions are compensated. We are proud to provide compensation to 100% of WCS interns.





Eleny Almanzar

New York, NY

Aviculture Intern, 2024

"I spent a lot of time with a baby emu socializing him, making sure he was eating well, introducing him to new food and to new environments. The zookeepers did a really great job of answering any of my questions and I learned a lot. I didn't know a lot about birds before this internship, but now I can definitely say it is an interest of mine because of the positive experience I had!"

A Focus on Career **Exploration for High School Interns:**

Many interns at WCS are interested in careers related to sustainability, animals, and conservation, yet are not exposed to the multitude of options available within those sectors. Our high school internships are designed to highlight both popular as well as lesser-known jobs for young adults who are still in an early phase of career discovery. Forty-one percent of high school interns indicated that they learned about a new career during their internship.





SUPERVISOR ENGAGEMENT

Youth success depends on strong supervisors and mentors.

We work with supervisors to support their development as program facilitators, mentors, and youth advocates.

Intern Supervisor Training

In Fall 2024, we launched a six-session training program for intern supervisors to build skills in positive youth development, mentoring, and career support. The first cohort of 16 Bronx Zoo supervisors completed the program in December and we are now training two more cohorts of 28 supervisors from across our five parks. Supervisors will complete a combined total of 600 hours of training.

On a post-program survey, 80% reported significant improvement in their confidence engaging interns and connecting interns with WCS's mission.

Youth Supervisor Support

We conduct a three-day, intensive training for our five entry-level Youth Engagement Assistant Coordinators, which covers how to work with youth, practical scenarios, mentoring, and more. These supervisors continue to receive ongoing support as they support 500+ volunteers and interns.

SUPERVISOR SPOTLIGHT



Liz Cruz Bronx Zoo Youth Development Coordinator

"Working with youth, you get the unexpected. I was happy to hear that some of the things that I experienced were common - there were terms for them, there were **systems of approach**. Something that stood out to me was using the 'feed forward' mentality. I had an intern and she would just keep making the same mistakes. When I switched my approach to say 'these are the expectations that we have for you' and 'this is what you should do going forward,' I saw the shift in her body language. She understood instantly that I was there to help her succeed."





SUPERVISOR TRAINING

We lead SCI Network NYC, a consortium of eight science-based cultural institutions that collectively support 1,100 interns per year. We provide training and networking opportunities for intern supervisors including hosting a session at Wave Hill in March, which focused on cross-cutting topics like recruitment, career development, and youth sense of belonging.

SUPERVISOR SPOTLIGHT



Marianne Scocco

Staten Island Zoo Volunteer, Docent & Intern Manager

What types of internships do you offer?

"The Staten Island Zoo offers internships to students passionate about conservation, animal well-being, and science. Our program helps them develop professional skills and explore their field of interest. My hope is that students will walk away feeling confident and excited to return to school with a foundation of real-world experiences and connections with mentors who inspire them."



How does SCI Network NYC support you?

"My biggest challenge has been reviewing internship applications. There are so many incredible young people interested in conservation and it can be difficult to decide who to bring on board. This year's SCI Network Supervisor Training was my first and it was nice to meet so many like-minded professionals who are passionate about providing opportunities to youth. I left with fresh ideas to strengthen our application review process, valuable guidance from experienced colleagues, and a renewed sense of purpose."

EMPLOYEES

Expanded New Hire Tours

At the Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium, part-time Visitor Engagement Associates led **64 tours for 350 new seasonal employees.** These tours increased park knowledge and built cross-department community for our seasonal team.

"The tours highlight our conservation success stories and foster comradery and togetherness for our troop of seasonal employees!"
-BZ Seasonal Supervisor

Celebrating Seasonal Employees

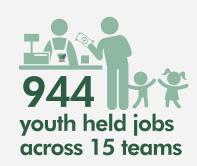
In 2025, we will launch a Rewards & Recognition program to celebrate seasonal employees' accomplishments, strengthen connections with WCS, develop skills, and promote advancement. The pilot will include pins noting job and professional learning milestones, community boards to share accomplishments, and celebration events.

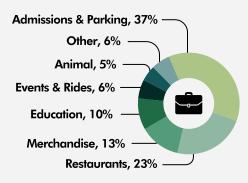


Omillo Harris

- Bronx, NY
- BZ Visitor Engagement Assoc, 2024
- Climate Solutions Intern, 2024

"I've learned a lot about how the Bronx Zoo operates and about all the work that's being done around the world to help animals. There's a lot of different branches to my major (marine environmental science) that I didn't realize were things that I could go into. I think working here will give me the opportunity to lattice and eventually end up in a career that I really want."





Prospect Park Zoo, 3%
Queens Zoo, 3%

New York Aquarium, 15%



Kiera Atkinson

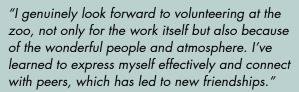
- Brooklyn, NY
- NYA Merchandise Assoc, 2024
- NYA SYEP Sales Assoc. 2024

"Working at the New York Aquarium over the summer was very fun and beneficial because it strengthened my social skills. I got a lot better at communicating with people in a respectful way, and I also learned quite a bit about managing my money responsibly."

VOLUNTEERS

Angela Li Queens, NY

QZ Discovery Guide, 2024



In 2024, we hosted



Discovery Guide youth volunteers

The Discovery Guide program is the earliest entry point into the WCS Career Lattice.

Discovery Guides educate visitors about the animals at our parks and our global conservation work through fun and engaging activities.

They complete 40 hours of training and 80+ hours of in-park engagement to practice their science communication and public speaking skills.



Since April, Discovery Guides facilitated over

400,000

interactions with zoo & aquarium visitors





Emily Peralta Bronx, NY

- BZ Discovery Guide, 2024
- BZ Discovery Guide Leader, 2024

While she was a Discovery Guide, Emily was selected to join the Bronx District Attorney's Youth Advisory Council, an initiative to promote youth civic engagement.

"The Youth Advisory Council has been an incredible opportunity to contribute to discussions about advocacy and community safety. I've learned how to amplify young people's voices, and I am proud to be part of a council that prioritizes empowering youth!"



of high school **Discovery Guides** attend NYC 76% public schools



of Discovery Guides live in the same borough as the 70% park where they volunteer



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

We implement a multi-pronged approach to workforce development.

In addition to the learning that happens in their positions, all Career Lattice youth are invited to additional workforce development opportunities:

CAREER AWARENESS SESSIONS

showcased the diversity of WCS careers by offering a behind-the-scenes look at our parks and opportunities to speak with professionals across departments.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Wildlife Health Center Tours
- Wild Animal Encounters with Zoo Keepers
- Lunch & Learns

SKILL-BUILDING WORKSHOPS

equipped youth with careerready skills that will help them find, secure, and excel in their next position and beyond.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Resume Roadshows
- Financial Literacy Seminars

PEER NETWORKING EVENTS

connected youth with each other in a casual setting to share experiences and insights while building a supportive peer community.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Spring Game Night
- Holiday Lights Sneak-Peek

"I want to be a wildlife crime investigator! I had no clue that it was a job until we learned about the different job opportunities that WCS has to offer, but now it is my desired career!"

- 2024 WCS Youth

367

youth attended Career Lattice events in 2024, an increase of 100 from 2023











For our cohort-based programs, we embedded workforce development in regular programming. Some 2024 highlights:

- Youth Ocean Advocates and Discovery Guides completed 30+ workshops including many tailored to their specific program topics, like WCS campaigns to promote conservation action and animal care at our parks. Youth completed a combined total of more than 150 hours of workforce development training.
- We introduced an enhanced onboarding experience for summer camp counselors, with two training days that brought together counselors from across our parks. Youth participated in skill-building workshops and activities to strengthen their connection to each other and to our zoos and aquarium.



Chazzity Ramirez

Queens, NY

- WCS Library & Archives, Photo Mgmt Intern, 2024
- CPZ Admissions, Unit Manager, 2022 2025
- CPZ Admissions, Team Lead, 2021
- CPZ Admissions, Sales Associate, 2019

"I came last year to the Resume Roadshow Event and worked on my customer service resume. This year I'm applying to jobs with my new degree, so I came back again. I encourage my staff to take advantage of it too."

WCS youth develop skills across a number of specific and general domains.

51% of volunteers and interns reported they gained teamwork skills

of volunteers and interns **73%** reported being better able to teach about science and conservation

56% of seasonal staff said they gained workforce skills like communication, flexibility, and time management

"The time management skills I learned in this position are priceless. I've learned so many scheduling, managing, and general office skills!"

- Education Staff Member

INTERNAL LATTICING

YOUTH MOVED INTO A NEW **POSITION FROM APRIL 2024** TO MARCH 2025.

We call this "Latticing in Action"

Highlights include:

became interns

. employees

youth became fulltime employees

2017-2018

BZ Merchandise Associate

2018-2019

WCS Youth Employee Advisory Council Intern

2019-2021

WCS Education

Registrar



2022-2024

Administrative Coordinator of VCS Education

2023-2024

Co-Lead of WCS Black Leadership Advancement Consortium (BLAC)



Manager of WCS **Educational Administration**

Yvonne Bennett

"When I got the position in the Bronx Zoo gift shop, I was really excited because I got to interact with customers a lot -and I'm an extrovert, so I really like interacting with people. After I graduated, a supervisor guided me to the registrar job in the Education Department. I didn't know I would like it as much as I did! I think a highlight of working at WCS is that the people care about where you're going and what you want to do, and they help you get to where you want to go."



2018-2019

BZ Discovery Guide & DG Leader

Summer 2020

BZ Project TRUE Field Research Assistant Intern

NYA Youth Ocean Advoccate Intern



Summer 2022

BZ Conservation Camp Counselor



NYA Fish & Invertebrate Intern

Byron Quevedo

"When I finish a position it doesn't just end there. At the resume workshop, I met someone who was my supervisor when I was a volunteer when I was 14 and she still remembered me. Those experiences don't just amount to something that's on my resume, but also to connections I have in real life with the people I work with. WCS is like a little family."







BUILDING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

We invest in relationships that create pipelines into WCS for the youth who reside in the communities surrounding our parks.

COLLEGE CONNECTIONS

We are developing partnerships with a number of NYC colleges to connect students with opportunities at our parks.

This year we hosted:



61 INTERNS FROM THE CITY UNIVERSITY



24 INTERNS FROM THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

two renowned institutions that pride themselves on providing a high-quality public college education for New Yorkers.

Connecting Classroom Learning with Careers in **Animal Research**

In Spring 2025, we partnered with CUNY and the NYC Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) to offer a four-session weekend course, "Using Research to Explore Animal Behavior" at the Bronx Zoo. Twenty-two CUNY students attended the course, which covered topics like animal observation, data analysis, and scientific writing. All students reported growth in interest and knowledge about science, with 95% reporting interest in a STEM career. Through this partnership, ten students will continue as animal behavior research interns this summer.

HIGH SCHOOL CONNECTIONS

We work with the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) to connect NYC youth with WCS internships.

This summer we hosted:

SYEP YOUTH ACROSS SEVEN **DEPARTMENTS**

Additionally, as part of SCI Network NYC, we work with our cultural institution partners to leverage SYEP to support our internships. This year, we supported SCI Network partners in placing an additional 198 SYEP youth at their sites.





Michaela Chiu

Queens, NY

CUNY Career Launch Intern with WCS Education, 2024

"I've been going to the Queens Zoo since I was little. My internship taught me that Queens College has a lot of opportunities for me to make connections with employers, and I can look at the resources we have at the zoo to make more connections as well. My supervisors are super helpful with that, talking to us about next steps."

ECO-VIVENCIAS 分外



This year, we launched the Eco-Vivencias Internship for Bronx college students. Interns spent ten days in Puerto Rico learning about field conservation work and zoo-to-field connections.

PUERTO RICO

Interns were hosted by staff from WCS's local conservation partner, Para La Naturaleza. They spent time connecting with the natural wildlife of Puerto Rico, including hiking in the biologically diverse El Yunque National Forest, canoeing on the bioluminescent bay, and snorkeling. They visited reintroduction sites for the Puerto Rican crested toad -Queens Zoo played a crucial role in bringing these toads back to the island.

In follow up interviews, interns described how they learned about conservation, ecology, history, and culture. They connected with community members who shared their efforts to address conservation challenges. Overall, the interns left the trip with a great deal of optimism and confidence in their ability to overcome their fears.



INTERN TESTIMONIALS

"Obviously, the environment in Puerto Rico is completely different from the environment in New York City. I think just being there opened up my eyes to a lot of the different biodiversity that can be found in the world."

"It definitely made me fall more in love with science, especially field work. It's different when you see things in a textbook as opposed to really getting your hands dirty and getting involved with nature and the land."

"I know the importance community plays in ecology and conservation, but I didn't know how integral it is to being a successful scientist. This trip taught me when to take a back seat and allow people to teach me about how they do things, and then from that, how we can reach a solution."

PROJECT TRUE TO



Project TRUE (Teens Researching Urban Ecology) brings together teams of Bronx high school students and Fordham undergraduates to research urban ecology on Bronx Zoo grounds.



high school juniors and seniors

100% of high school interns live in the Bronx



undergraduate mentors

Since 2016, we have recruited undergraduates in partnership with Fordham University's Collegiate Science & Technology Entry Program, which aims to increase the number of minority students pursuing STEM and related degrees.

Intern Demographics

SPOKE A LANGUAGE **ENGLISH AT HOME**

IDENTIFIED AS BLACK OR HISPANIC

WILL BE FIRST GENERATION **COLLEGE STUDENTS**

This summer, five teams of high school interns led by Fordham undergraduate mentors conducted research on trees, turtles, eels, spotted lanternflies, and birds living in and around the Bronx Zoo.

As part of the NYC Science Research Mentoring Consortium, Project TRUE interns networked with high school research programs from around the city through site visits and networking events. At the end of summer, interns presented their research findings at a symposium at the American Museum of Natural History attended by 400+ youth researchers and 1,100+ guests.

VIEW RESEARCH PROJECTS HERE



Lowell Iporac (Project TRUE Conservation Educator) published an article about Project TRUE in El Bohío boletín electrónico, a Latin American journal on marine ecology and conservation, sharing the program successes with an international audience of conservation scientists and educators.



VIEW HERE





For the second year, Project TRUE operated as a multi-season program with over 95% retention from the summer to the fall seasons. This year, we updated the fall curriculum with new lessons guiding students through the process of developing new research questions that build on their summer projects. In smaller teams, interns incorporated publicly-accessible NYC datasets with their summer field data to ask novel research questions. They will present their findings at the Bronx Science Consortium Poster Symposium in January.





Tahsan Latif

Bronx, NY

- Project TRUE Field Research Assistant, 2024
- BZ Discovery Guide, 2024

"Being in Project TRUE helped me become a better scientist overall and connect to nature in a way that just reading textbooks could not. One of my favorite memories was when we reached our goal of documenting pest metric data for more than 10 trees in one day!"

LEADERS IN STEM RESEARCH

2023 alumni, Trinity Pujols and Izzy Melendez, qualified to present their Project TRUE research at the GENIUS Olympiad, an international STEM competition which takes place at the Rochester Institute of Technology. They won a bronze medal for their research on herpetofauna richness, out of a field of 725 projects.

WCS's Jobs, Internships, and Volunteer Expo

In February, we kicked off the 2025 recruiting season with the 9th annual Jobs, Internships, and Volunteering Expo (JIVE). The event allows young people to learn about opportunities and careers across WCS's five parks, gain resume and application advice, connect with hiring managers, and apply to positions on-site. As of March 2025, 78 JIVE participants have been accepted for positions across 14 teams. We expect this number to grow as hiring continues into the busy season.

494 attendees

78% new to WCS

63% middle or high school students

4,200+

views of digital resources



- 130 young people participated in JIVE workshops. In financial literacy workshops led by Citizens Philanthropic Foundation, participants learned about budgeting, credit cards, and paychecks.
- In a WCS career panel featuring staff who work with animals, exhibits, education programs, and government officials, participants learned about the breadth of jobs at WCS and asked questions about their career paths.

"It was amazing! It was great being able to speak with program managers one on one and be able to hear what they love about their jobs and how they got into their field."

"Everyone there was very professional and eager to answer all of my questions. They were informative, and I felt like I learned a few new things about wildlife conservation. I'm looking forward to working or volunteering for WCS. Fingers crossed!" 85%

Saw positions they were interested in and eligible for in the hiring hall

40%

Learned about new jobs they hadn't heard of before



YOUTH ADVOCACY



Our two youth advocacy internships bring together high school students to learn about conservation issues, meet with WCS's government affairs and policy teams, and advocate on behalf of the environment.

YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATES

21 Interns



YOUTH OCEAN
ADVOCATES

20 Interns



Youth Advocacy Interns represented WCS at community events.

EVENT HIGHLIGHT:

Interns planned the WCS Youth Conservation Summit at the New York Aquarium, which brought together over 100 conservation-focused students from 50 schools across NYC. The day included workshops on addressing the impacts of climate change, workforce development, and a beach cleanup. 98% of attendees left feeling knowledgeable about local conservation issues, including dozens who indicated that their knowledge increased because of the Summit.

87% of attendees made connections with like-minded peers.



YOUTH ADVOCACY



Youth interns represented WCS at city, state, and national events.

CITY HIGHLIGHT:

In January 2025, WCS intern Yandel Ramirez testified at the New York City Council Culture Committee. He shared about the transformative role of internships for young New Yorkers and his experience as a Project TRUE intern as city councilmembers considered funding priorities for the next year.



COM E SEATE

STATE HIGHLIGHT:

In March 2025, WCS interns made two trips to Albany to attend meetings with state senators and assembly members to discuss the Environmental Protection Fund and Oceans and Great Lakes funding.

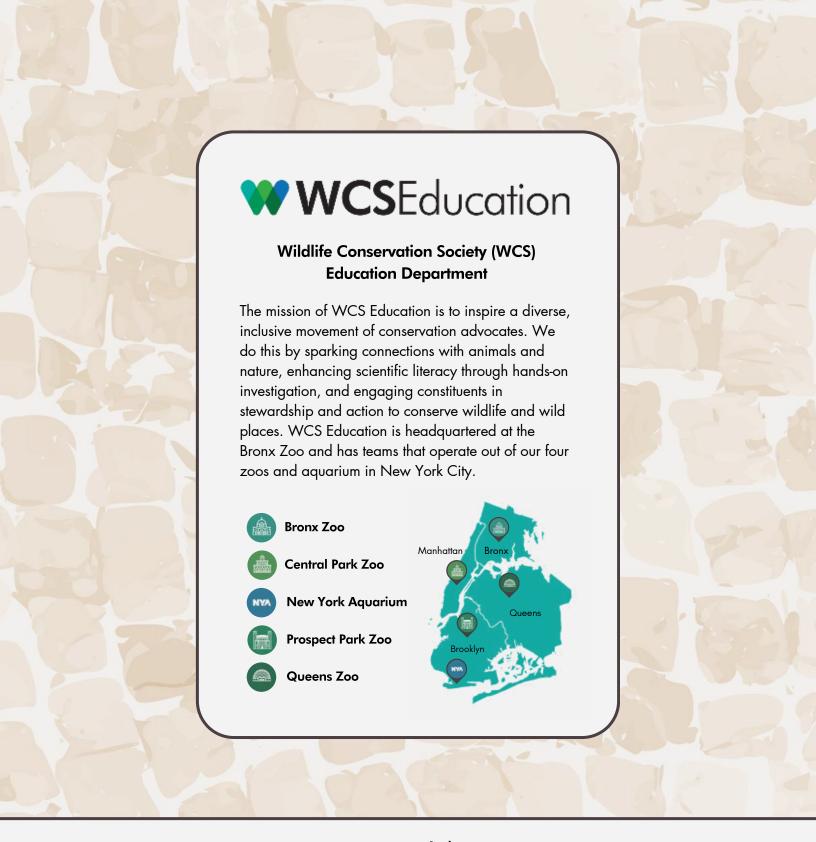
"It was a really eye-opening experience to the policy aspect of environmental work and ocean advocacy. It gave me a chance to see how my career could expand if I wanted to work in government or work with local people and report back to the government."

- Ja'maine Douarnynney, Youth Ocean Advocate

NATIONAL HIGHLIGHT:

In April 2024 and March 2025, WCS interns joined colleagues from conservation organizations all over the country at the Association of Zoos & Aquariums Advocacy Day in Washington DC, where they attended meetings with US representatives and senators. Key issues included joining the Congressional Zoo and Aquarium Caucus, expanding awareness of the role of aquariums and zoos in animal rescue and rehabilitation, federal conservation legislation, and appropriations priorities.





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