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Need/Objective

As our 4-H teens age many have been in 4-H since they were five or six. For faculty these students have been a part of our programs the entire time and it can become difficult to challenge their skill and knowledge level as they grow.

This program was developed to:

- Serve as a capstone project for 4-H teens who have completed entomology projects for several years in North Florida
- Challenge teens to become visionaries in conservation
- Provide an advanced experience for older teens
- Introduce teens to conservation research and environmental-related careers

"4-H Teen Conservation Experience" provided an opportunity for 4-H youth who have a passion and love for entomology, natural resources, and environmental 4-H projects to expand their knowledge for why conservation is vital.

Impact

The teens decided that this was an influential experience for them and an important way to culminate the skills they had learned throughout their years in environmental - focused 4-H programs. They decided to begin a 4-H program called the Florida Conservation Corps. They would act as somewhat of an advisory group working with faculty, mentoring younger 4-H members and creating experiences where they could be a more influential group of young people for conservation and environmental education.

Method

- 9 teens from across north Florida were invited to attend (ages 14-18); they had previously participated in entomology events and macro and conservation photography
- 3-day overnight experience to Jekyll Island 4-H Camp
- Teens researched and presented a local conservation issue
- Attended CoastFest – a conservation festival with state, local agencies promoting education, conservation, and research
- Participated in guided lessons with UGA 4-H camp staff (marine ecology and marsh ecosystems)
- Participated in guided lessons with UF faculty (night and day insect collecting, tree ecology)
- In-depth discussion on the importance of research and field work with Jekyll Island Conservation Department (tracked rattlesnakes in the marsh)
- Practiced conservation photography throughout



Tomorrow's Visionaries

Yesterday's Dreamers

Results

- Teens were challenged to define "conservation" as a group. Through debriefing sessions and in-depth discussions as a group, they came together to develop an understanding of the link between education, conservation, and research. Interestingly, many did not consider education as part of conservation before this experience.
- Several students co-authored an article about their experiences in Pest Pro Magazine. It is printed and distributed to over 12,000 pest control professionals in Florida.

