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Hannah Huddle: Visually comparing art and science

By Mark Hardison

Hannah Huddle, a junior at VCU majoring in communications arts with a concentration in scientific illustration, has been working on a research project with VCU biology professor Dr. Lesley Bulluck, and a group of six students, researching the Prothonotary Warbler. Unlike most researchers, Huddle is both studying the biology of the bird and making illustrations of the bird and the research involving the Warbler.

Huddle was a recipient of the UROP Summer Fellowship for Undergraduate Research and Creative Scholarship which requires an undergraduate student to apply for the research grant to support them in a unique research design of their choice. She said this was the hardest part of her application process but it also helped her to narrow the focus of her research as well. Through the UROP grant, Huddle created a project that she believed would highlight both her artistic, and biological strengths. Although her research was mostly scientific, Huddle decided she would focus her UROP project specifically on the art side of biology, and its importance in accompanying the data and statistics of science. “Art is very process-heavy and biology is very focused on results, so I wanted to do something that would show the medium between the two or otherwise show the artistic process of biology research that isn’t really seen,” Huddle said.

Huddle spent two months during the summer working with Dr. Bullock and a research team on biological research of the Prothonotary Warbler, and also helped with a survey of bugs and vegetation.

“I didn’t realize how long it would take to do everything. I feel like I spent a lot of time on the research, but I’ve gained a further appreciation of how long it takes to do everything on the scientific side,” Huddle said.



Prothonotary Warbler

She also took the opportunity to make drawings of the research as a part of her scientific illustration research project. These illustrations would eventually become part of a Zine that Huddle would create as a part of her final research presentation. The illustrations she created were to serve as a reminder of the artistic value of science.

Huddle handed out copies of her final research Zine at the 2014 Richmond Zine Fest, and is currently continuing her work with hopes of creating an exhibition based on her research next fall. Huddle will travel with Dr. Bullock in January 2014 on a study abroad trip to study the Prothonotary Warbler in Panama, Central America. The two-week trip gave Huddle an opportunity to continue pursuing her research goal of bridging the gap between art and science, and exposing her diverse interest in the art of biology.



Prothonotary Warblers



Hannah Huddle's drawing of Prothonotary Warblers