

Dispatches from a Girl Scout Abroad

By Nicole Popp

Dispatch #5 New York Environmental Education Center



Hi,

I'm Nicole Popp and this is my fifth installment telling my fellow Hawaii Girl Scouts about my Gap Year between High School and college. Right now, I am in Albany, New York volunteering at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center. I have been given two projects here -the first being mapping the invasive plants on the site and the second making a display showing an invasive insect here called the Spotted Lanternfly. I am staying with a family friend who moved here from Hawaii almost 15 years ago. This has been a great chance for me to get work experience in my chosen career field.

My plan is to become an entomologist; that is, to study insects. My interest was developed because of my Gold Award. I did a project on the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle, an invasive species in Hawaii that we have a chance to control before it devastates our coconut palms. It only arrived in Hawaii a few years ago and the hanging traps you see everywhere are used to determine how far it has spread. The beetles are large and fly at night.

The grubs are found in mulch piles and rotting vegetation. The damage they cause to a coconut palm is very distinct and easily spotted. My project was about outreach to educate the public to identify the beetles, grubs and the damage they cause.

I've been amazed at the recognition I've gotten for doing my Gold Award. Yes, everyone knows what an Eagle Boy Scout is and most people haven't heard of the Gold Award. However, the people who count are fully aware; that is, college recruiters, people who decide internships and scholarships, absolutely are going to ask you about your Gold Award. I think it was a major part of my getting an internship at the Office of Surface Naval Warfare last summer (<https://seap.asee.org/>). I also had an internship at UH when I was in High School working on a project with invasive slugs. I'm sure the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle got me that internship!

