

Public Abstract

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Department:Fisheries & Wildlife

Degree:MS

Title:An evaluation of Missouri Master Naturalist Program:

Changes in volunteer knowledge and the relationship between motivations and changes in volunteer knowledge

The Missouri Master Naturalist<sup>TM</sup> (MN) program, jointly run by the Missouri Department of Conservation, University of Missouri Extension, and University of Missouri School of Natural Resources, empowers adults to become certified volunteers in conducting education, outreach, and service dedicated to the management of their community's natural resources. This research evaluated the Missouri MN training program to determine whether volunteers' knowledge of ecological processes and conservation issues in Missouri improved after completing the training, and to identify volunteer's motivations and any relationship between volunteer's motivations and any improvement in knowledge.

The research demonstrated that volunteer knowledge of ecological processes and conservation issues in Missouri improved significantly after completing the Missouri MN training program. Further, six-months after completing the training, volunteers still retained the knowledge they gained during the MN training.

Altruism, or a desire to help others, and a desire to learn motivated most volunteers to participate in the MN program. The research did not demonstrate any significant relationship between volunteer motivations and the improvement in knowledge scores at the end of the MN training program.