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Before participating in The Bobolinking Project I did not know much pertaining to grassland birds or tallgrass prairies, but I did know that I was extremely interested in every aspect of the environment.

Upon arriving at The Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, the first thought that entered my mind was of its sheer beauty. It was the most stunning scene I had ever witnessed: tallgrass flowing all around me, over hills, and in all directions, birds of seemingly limitless species and color flying and singing everywhere, and so much more.

As we followed the path through the prairie to our destination, we identified various species of birds, insects, and plants, many of which I had never seen or heard of. I was enjoying simply walking and watching, but when we reached our first stop, I was thrilled. We were able to locate, using GPS, a previously placed nest within the grasses, and the difficulty of doing so was intriguing. It proved nature's ability to conceal and protect itself. Once the nest containing a quail and clay egg was found, it was remarkable to view the scratches and bites left behind in the clay by possible predators.

As we proceeded, we found so many exciting traces of predation on the clay eggs, ranging from small marks to large portions missing and fur left behind. I emerged from this project, not only having had the opportunity to observe fieldwork firsthand, but also personally participate in it. I had not really ever found birds or their study to be interesting, until this experience. I am now all the more convinced that an environmental biology path is perfect for me to pursue. I appreciate more than ever the importance of working together to better understand, learn from, and protect our environment.



Lauren examining markings on a clay egg