



## Alexis Zigarelli Environmental Specialist



*I help Morris County (NJ) Mosquito Control with public education and do fieldwork, such as the trapping of mosquitoes and ticks.*

### **How long have you been an environmental specialist?**

Since September of 2024!

### **Where do you currently work?**

Morris County Division of Mosquito Control based in Cedar Knolls, NJ.

### **How do you spend most of your time at work?**

Some things that I spend most of my time doing include, but are not limited to:

- Reaching out to libraries, municipal buildings, and schools all across Morris County to create and confirm public education events about mosquitoes and ticks with [Teresa Duckworth](#) (Assistant Superintendent, Morris County, Division of Mosquito Control).
- Going into the field to set traps for mosquitoes and then sending them to the NJ Department of Health to see if there are positive cases of diseases so that we may protect the public from diseases.
- Going into the field with my co-workers to collect ticks for a new surveillance initiative!
- Hosting public education events with libraries, municipal buildings, and schools to educate the public on the importance of mosquito and tick safety.
- Refreshing material and bringing new ideas to the table for educational materials, events, topics, etc.

### **Why did you choose this career?**

Ironically enough, this career came to me. I attended a career fair and met Teresa and fell in love with the job description when I saw it. I never anticipated falling in love with this career originally. It just shows that sometimes doors open in life that you don't anticipate. You just have to keep your eyes and heart open and have some faith that they will come to you when the time is right.

### **What did you do to prepare for this career?**

I have a Bachelor of Science in Sustainability Science from Montclair State University! I love to believe that I am a jack of all trades in the jobs, research, and internships that I have carried over the years and that gives me a unique perspective on the way I am able to perceive things and reiterate them to others.

- Some of the research I have done is "Diet Composition and Chick Survivorship in American Kestrels (*Falco Sparverius*)" which I was lucky enough to present at the Lehigh Valley Ecology and Evolution Symposium.
- I also did an internship with Sustainable Jersey for Private Well Outreach and Testing with Hopewell, NJ during my time with Montclair State University.
- I was a substitute teacher for grades K-12 which was so very exciting to be able to educate the next generation of students and gave me a lot to think about in pursuing an educational career!
- Other jobs I have held include, but are not limited to: Co-manager of a landscaping company, Vet Tech, Animal Care Attendant, and of course, my very first job as Cashier at Hobby Lobby, which I discuss later on!

**ALEXIS'S FUN FACT**  
*My dream pet is to one day own an axolotl or a blue tongued skink!*



Posted June 2025

***What do you enjoy most about your job?***

I love being able to educate people about the importance of mosquito and tick safety because it truly is one of the most important up and coming things that are happening right now in the environmental world. With diseases such as Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) and West Nile Virus (WNV) being prevalent in the United States and NJ being among the highest states for tick borne diseases, it is incredibly important that we educate our public on how they can protect themselves against these challenges safely.

***What do you find most challenging about your job?***

Trying to fit all my given tasks in one day! Sometimes it just feels like there isn't enough time to get everything done when I have so many ideas and things I would like to accomplish! But through time management and the help of my amazing co-workers, I know I can get it done effectively and efficiently.

***What was one of your first jobs and how did that experience influence your career path?***

My very first job was at a store called Hobby Lobby! It taught me so much about how to treat people with kindness, patience, and allowed me to flourish with creativity, as it is a huge crafts store, so my limits were boundless! It allowed me to realize that I didn't mind working with people in a face-to-face setting and that I could pursue a role in education as well as use my creativity to make things exciting and new for them to learn the information that had previously been taught to them. I love giving things a new fresh coat of paint!



***What is one piece of advice you would give to a young person who is interested in your profession?***

Keep your mind open to any and all options that become available to you! Opportunities come in many and various forms you may never anticipate. I never predicted that I would be walking down this path, but here I am, and I am loving every minute of it. You never know where life will take you but don't knock it till you give it a chance!

