

## **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR MASTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES**

My academic journey has been nothing short of transformative, steering me toward a strong passion for conservation. During my undergraduate studies, I was introduced to the field of forestry through rigorous coursework and immersive internships. What began as a curiosity soon blossomed into a genuine love for conservation. This academic journey has not only shaped my interests but also fueled my determination to make meaningful contributions to our natural world, a dedication that has only intensified over time.

My journey into the field of conservation began to take shape during my undergraduate thesis, where I conducted a study analyzing the changes in vegetation cover over a thirty-year period with GIS and remote sensing tools, in a forest affected by illegal mining activities. This research allowed me to present the devastating effects of illegal mining on the reserve, contributing to improved management practices and laying the foundation for my research career. While my interest in conservation was already growing, it was this research that truly kick-started my commitment to the field.

Following this pivotal experience, I joined Ghana Wildlife Society after my graduation as a graduate research assistant, where I currently play a critical role in several projects. The most impactful was a project focused on improving the conservation status of three endangered tree species: *Talbotiella gentii*, *Hunteria ghanensis*, and *Drypetes singroboensis*. I was instrumental in successfully raising and transplanting 42,000 *T. gentii* seedlings and other indigenous species, and restoring 74.03 hectares of degraded forest land. I was thrilled to witness the return of native birds and other wildlife to the habitat, a clear sign that our restoration efforts were helping to breathe life back into the area.

These two experiences in particular, my undergraduate thesis and the project on endangered species, have been pivotal in shaping my academic and professional journey. They have been a critical cornerstone of my career. My journey thus far has been one of growth and learning.

Building on this foundation, I recognized that preserving our natural world requires more than just ecological research. It involves understanding and addressing the social aspects of conservation, focusing on how to improve coexistence between people and their environment. This realization led me to work with the education team, where I had the opportunity to teach students aged 10 to 14 about the importance of environmental stewardship. Watching these young minds light up as they grasped the concepts of conservation was a deeply fulfilling experience for me. It reinforced my belief that education is a powerful tool in bridging the gap between human behaviour and environmental preservation.

The understanding of how human behaviour, cultural values, and socio-economic factors are intricately linked to ecosystem health has shaped my approach to conservation. By integrating a socio-ecological approach, I aim to investigate how anthropogenic activities interact with ecological processes and affect the survival of endangered tree species in Ghana. By ensuring that conservation efforts are informed by both ecological data and a nuanced understanding of the human dimensions, I believe I can drive impactful changes that address pressing environmental challenges and create a lasting legacy of conservation success. I am determined to find and

implement effective strategies to improve the restoration and conservation of endangered trees in Ghana and Africa as a whole and ensure that the principles of environmental stewardship are not only embraced but also actively sustained for future generations.

Pursuing a Master's in Environmental Studies at Evergreen State College is more than just an academic milestone, it is a crucial step toward making the difference I aspire to in conservation. The interdisciplinary approach of the Master of Environmental Studies aligns perfectly with my goal of integrating socio-economic factors with ecological research methods to address complex environmental challenges. What initially drew me to Evergreen is its mission to foster a space where students can discover their true selves, explore new ideas, and grow in an inspiring environment. Equally compelling is the stunning location surrounded by a vibrant ecosystem and lush forests that will provide a rich, immersive backdrop for my studies. I am confident that this program will equip me with the skills and insights needed to drive impactful change.

Sincerely,

Yaw Amoateng.