

My interest in research at Evergreen State College comes from a combination of academics, international exposure, and a desire to have diverse experiences. My primary education enabled a lot of exploratory learning, such as robotics classes and regular visits to Boston's aquarium, zoo, universities, and museums. I grew up traveling to multiple different places with my family and knew that my understanding of the world was incredibly small. In my senior year of high school, I took on a project that focused on big cats and conservation as an independent study. I was able to chart my own path and focus on a topic that sparked my interest: big cat conservation, specifically tigers. Conducting research and presenting it in a well-articulated essay was not something I was taught in high school, but I had models I could follow. It quickly became my favorite class. I ended up spending most of my free periods writing and researching. At the end of the semester, I had to present my research. That this was my hardest, but most exhilarating experience I dealt with in high school. Since the day of that presentation, I have been determined to get my PhD one day.

During this time in high school, my definition of conservation was strictly species and habitat survival. What can I do to make sure that the animals that have been on this world just as long as we have been, continue to be here even after I die? I did not understand the larger societal impacts of conservation. I had only cared about the animals themselves. I thought of humans as almost a parasite on this world that continues to leach on limited resources without so much as a second thought about anything other than our wants and needs. Even at this time in high school, however, I knew that my world view was incredibly small. It was part of the reason I decided to go to a Liberal Arts college instead of a research-based college. Taking classes that broadened my understanding was important to me. These outside perspectives really changed my understanding of conservation.

During my second semester of junior year at University of Puget Sound, I took a class examining conservation in Borneo. My research interests on big cats continued by studying conservation programs impacting clouded leopards in Borneo. During the summer, we traveled to Sarawak to learn from those who live and work there. I discovered that my own understanding of conservation is drastically different from what I had experienced. For me, conservation and charismatic megafauna are known by most of the society I have grown up around. In Sarawak, most people I spoke with did not know the difference between the wild cats they lived with and those deeper in the jungle. What I expected from classroom study was that conservation groups strive for "gold standard," large scale efforts. When arriving in the field and finding that very few people have heard of or seen the animal of focus, it is a shock to the system. It was an eye opening experience to say the least. But this experience and my own lack of first hand experience and personal research, inspired me to continue on in research and academia. When I came back to the States, I decided I wanted to conduct a senior thesis.

My senior thesis was a field survey and the ecosystem impact of small mammals on Destruction Island. During my initial research, I found a subspecies of Trowbridge's shrew, endemic to Destruction Island. While performing the first survey specifically on the Destruction Island shrew in over 80 years, I developed a love for camera trap work and data processing along

with an adoration of these tiny animals. The shrew was unexpectedly thriving in the small area I surveyed. This research opened more questions about the shrew's behavior as well as their interactions with other animals (puffins and rabbits) on the island. This was a large jump from big cats to such a tiny mammal, but they continued to spur my love for research in every way.

Because of this experience, I ended up applying for the Watson Fellowship my senior year. I had wanted to travel the world and experience how people live alongside wild cat conservation efforts. There are a huge number of efforts in multiple countries that we, here in the US, do not know of or have heard about. I wanted to learn more about the experiences of those who live alongside the conservation efforts. Unfortunately, I did not receive the Fellowship, but continue to be interested in learning more, expanding my knowledge, and further exploring the relationship between people and conservation.

Curiosity, learning, and the desire to develop expertise continue to be a strong motivation for me. Starting during COVID, I completed independent and online study to expand my knowledge of animals. My national veterinary technician license required me to cover a wide range of subjects, including anatomy, parasitology, practical lab skills, and animal behavior of multiple species. It has been multiple years of online education that has inspired me to go back to in-person school.

I have found the most interesting information comes from spending time doing research. A Masters of Environmental Science would allow me to expand my skill set and set myself up for future academic and professional success. I want to learn to be a better scientist and researcher, including embracing the rapidly advancing work in statistical analysis and modeling. Conservation is my passion and the impact of climate change is a critical research area that goes beyond the need for species survival. Questions that continue to interest me are: how animals are impacted by anthropological changes on a behavioral level? On top of this, incorporating ecosystem changes, animal behavior, and anthropogenic impacts into conservation is my goal for completing my Master's degree and then going forward to receive my PhD.