

January 7, 2025

Dear Graduate Admissions Committee:

I am writing to recommend Meaghanne O'Flaherty for your Environmental Program. I knew Meaghanne for two years during her college career. She served as a Museum Docent at the Puget Sound Museum of Natural History, which I directed and was a student in two courses I taught: Introduction to Environmental Policy and Decision-Making and Biodiversity and Conservation in Borneo, which was a field course.

Meaghanne is an independent and passionate student. She was engaged and active participant in the Intro course. The course involves a very involved group project focused on Puget Sound salmon recovery in which each group represents a watershed group applying for funding for a recovery project in their watershed. Students learn salmon science, policy, environmental ethics and economics in the course of the semester. I can't remember Meaghanne's groups specific performance but do remember her as an active participant in the process. Meaghanne writes well and is a good public speaker.

The Borneo field course involved a partial semester of class work, after which the group spent two weeks in Sarawak, Malaysia interacting with stakeholders involved in biodiversity conservation. We spent time in a remote longhouse village that had reclaimed their land from a government seizure through both national and international judicial proceedings, and was working on forest restoration in an area that harbored some of the last orangutans in Sarawak. We spent time talking to actors in government natural resource policy development, NGOs, oil palm agriculture, timber industry, and villagers. In addition, we spent time with local anthropologists, human rights advocates, biologists and wildlife rehabbers. Each student had a project in which they had to interact with some of the stakeholders. Meaghanne's project revolved around Sarawakians perception of wild felid species (cats), especially cloud leopards, but also the smaller cats. I think she was surprised that a fair number of regular citizens had little awareness of conservation issues surrounding the wild cat species. Her project was only a two week project but she threw herself into it. Her conclusions were perhaps less nuanced than I would have hoped, but I find that is true for many/most students who are passionate about environmental issues.

Meaghanne has worked for several years in animal clinics and other environments. She was unusual in that she took on some big life responsibilities as a student, including helping care for some children who are now her stepkids. I think that her work and life experience, coupled with her passion for environmental issues will make her a focused and effective graduate student. I highly recommend her for your program.

Sincerely,

Peter Wimberger
Professor Emeritus, Biology
Director Emeritus, Puget Sound Museum of Natural History