

The COVID-19 outbreak marked the beginning of my college journey, a time of profound uncertainty that reshaped life in my home, the Pacific Northwest. As the pandemic unfolded, I witnessed the intricate connections between the environment, my community, and the challenges of navigating an unknown future. Growing up, I had heard about climate change in school, but it wasn't until my curiosity was sparked during this tumultuous time that I began to explore its implications with the pandemic as a whole. My community now faces a dual crisis—one of public health and one of environmental resilience. I found myself reflecting deeply on these intertwined struggles and how they shaped our collective experience of "home."

The isolation and upheaval of those early days left me feeling lost, my plans upended, and my sense of purpose shaken. My academic performance during those semesters reflected the turmoil as I struggled to find direction and adapt to a rapidly changing world. Yet, in hindsight, those challenges were transformative. They taught me resilience, self-awareness, and the importance of seeking purpose in adversity. During this time, I began to recognize the environment as not just a backdrop but a central player in our lives. This realization became a turning point, guiding me toward environmental science and shaping the person I am today—someone determined to understand the world and contribute to a sustainable future, as well as teaching people about the world around us.

Despite these hurdles and the trial and error of adjusting to college life, I eventually discovered scholarships and a different direction within the academic landscape. This pivotal moment led me to pursue a major in environmental science. Initially, I struggled to define my goals, but as I engaged with various classes, I discovered my passion and purpose in this dynamic field. The experience I had in that class helped my academic journey and played a crucial role in deepening my interest in my work. I realized that my curiosity wasn't fully satisfied until I enrolled in classes that provided me with a comprehensive understanding of research and the technology I could employ in this field.

The first academic experience that ignited my interest in ecology was Aerial Methods and Research by Aerial Methods and Research 345," taught by Professor Scott Pike, who also served as my advisor. This helped clarify many of my uncertainties regarding the essence of research, data collection, and the importance of collaborative teamwork. Through this class, I truly began to appreciate the process of working together effectively and engaging with innovative research methods.

I found that my journey in the science sector allowed me to excel in my courses and focus on honing my skills. This led me to take additional classes with the same professors, diving deeper into behavioral ecology. Over a two-year period during my sophomore and senior years, I engaged in significant research projects that captivated my interest and allowed me to gain skills such as understanding how to search for reliable sources, as this was important for the final writing of a paper on my findings though that I also honed in on was being able to manage time as this was really important in a collage course like this as I was focusing on my research.

One major focus of my research dealt with bird strikes, examining how these incidents impact both safety and wildlife, more specifically in the Pacific Northwest region, and analyzing other areas of the world as well. One of my advisors, Prof David P. Craig of Willamette University, made a connection between my interests in aviation, animal ecology, and the PNW and the work of Hannah (Trageser) Whidden. In 2016, Hannah completed the paper *An Assessment of the Raptor Strike Avoidance Program at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport* with Mike Ruth, graduate advisor, as a part of this program. This research helped me gain a better understanding and experience when it came to understanding not just birdstrikes, but this allowed me to gain a lot of understanding when it came to birdstrikes as well as allowing me to bridge into different areas like looking into small, marginalized communities as well. This allowed me to bridge the gap and open a further research study.

I have always been drawn to understanding the intricate relationship between people and their environments, which is why I want to attend an evergreen state college. My interest is not only in the biological aspects of ecology but also in the browser environmental context. This fascination was further ignited when I read Hannah Trageser's paper, which highlighted the depths and relevance of your program. I have a profound connection to my community, and one of the key reasons I want to attend Evergreen State College is to make a positive contribution to a place that means so much to me. I believe that Evergreen's diverse program, along with the valuable internship opportunities and its proximity to areas of interest, will provide me with the chance to explore various fields. This experience will not only foster my growth as a learner but also deepen my understanding of how I can make a meaningful impact in my community. My aspiration is to leverage my knowledge of GIS, aerial drones, and climate change ecology to contribute to restoration and resilience efforts within environmental sciences. Through my exploration of low-income communities, such as those in SeaTac, Washington, and other areas in Montana, I gained valuable insights into the interconnection between community well-being and ecosystem health. Understanding these dynamics is essential for promoting safe habitats for wildlife while also enhancing community welfare. This holistic perspective has been pivotal in shaping my academic journey and has reinforced my desire to pursue a master's degree in environmental science. I believe that by integrating these insights, I can effectively contribute to fostering sustainable environments and resilient communities.