January 8th, 2020

MES Thesis Fund Committee

The Evergreen State College

Olympia, WA 98505

To the MES Thesis Fund Committee,

The following documents comprise my application for the MES Thesis Fund award for 2020. I completed and received credit for Case Studies and Thesis Design during Fall quarter of 2019. In Spring of 2019 I recorded bird songs that will be used for my data collection in Spring of 2020. I plan to graduate in Spring of 2021.

The goal of my thesis is to investigate the degree of speciation between two subspecies of vesper sparrow, *Pooecetes gramineus affinis* and *Pooecetes gramineus confinis.* I plan to achieve this by exposing vesper sparrows to conspecific song playbacks of both subspecies and quantifying male territorial responses. I will then compare the difference in response between the two subspecies’ songs to determine if there is a significant difference. Subjects of this playback experiment will include individuals of both subspecies, and the proposed study sites are located in the Puget Lowlands and the Columbia Plateau. This thesis project will ideally produce new knowledge regarding the systematics of vesper sparrows. It may also result in a better understanding of how the geographic barrier of the Cascade mountains isolates breeding populations of avian species from one another. A hope for this research is to bring attention to the imperiled *Pooecetes gramineus affinis* while producing a piece of evidence for the subspecies as a unique population segment.

I am requesting $1000.00 to cover mileage expenses to study sites in Eastern Washington as well as equipment not available through Evergreen’s Media Loan and Science Support Center.

Thank you,

Timothy Leque

Student, The Evergreen State College