

2017 Department of Biology Awards

JAMES A. AND PATRICIA A. MACMAHON ENDOWED ECOLOGY GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH AWARD

Dylan Hopkins, Master's Candidate



My name is Dylan Hopkins, and I was born in April, 1989 in Meridian, Idaho. I grew up in the small rural community of Middleton, Idaho. I was introduced to camping and the outdoors by my parents at an early age, which led to an interest in wildlife. I always watched nature shows and quickly became enamored by the outdoors. My rural high school did not do the best job at exposing the students to science, but luckily, I had an ecology

teacher that made a big impression on me. He was passionate about his job and ecology always finding ways to incite thoughtful discussion about conservation.

This led to my desire to major in Wildlife Sciences at the University of Idaho. During my undergraduate career I gained valuable knowledge and insight into wildlife management practices, ecology, and interdisciplinary skills. I gained my first work experience helping graduate students on a project in Dillon, MT studying how Pygmy Rabbits respond to predators. This project and field work solidified my passion for wildlife ecology work as a career.

After graduating, I was hired as an intern working for Round River Conservation Studies to study the impacts of winter recreation on Wolverines in Idaho. In the spring/summer season, I worked as a research technician with the U.S. Forest Service studying White-headed Woodpecker occupancy and nest success in Idaho and Oregon. I continued to work on these positions over the next four years and became a crew leader. As a crew leader, I helped manage the research projects and provided learning opportunities for both the public stakeholders and the project's new interns. During the fall season, I would usually end up working various positions each year. In fall of 2015, I worked for Intermountain Bird Observatory (IBO) as a songbird banding technician. IBO provided excellent opportunities for local schools to visit the banding site to learn about our local birds and why banding these birds is important. I gained educational outreach experience and realized that this is also where I want to go in my career.

My overall career goal is to become a wildlife biologist working for either a land management agency or a private non-profit organization. I want to develop land management plans and research projects for non-game species to help conserve their populations for future generations. At the same time, I want to provide educational opportunities to the public about local wildlife and the conservation issues that concern these species. I feel that educating the public is key to conservation overall and plays a significant role in both raising awareness and funds, which will promote future research opportunities.

Utah State University has been vital in facilitating my growth in both research and public outreach. As a teaching assistant for General Biology and Ornithology, I have gained a greater appreciation for teaching and how to best integrate the students into the learning process by promoting discussions and providing hands-on learning opportunities. USU is also providing me the opportunity to develop my own research and this is important to my future career goals. Already I have learned much about project design and efficient implementation, as well as analyzing data. I will continue to put forth an effort into attending Science Unwrapped and other public outreach opportunities to learn how to best serve the community and wildlife conservation.