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Building a Career in Conservation
SCCS-NY 2017 Workshop
Oct 13, 2017
Kauffman Auditorium
American Museum of Natural History

Dr. Rae Wynn-Grant

Research Interests: carnivore ecology & conservation in human landscapes
Currently: postdoctoral fellow at AMNH
Side projects: communicating science/engaging the media
Spearheading: equity, inclusion, and diversity in conservation
Former life: classical music

Christian J. Rivera
CONSERVATION BIOLOGY
M.A. CANDIDATE

Hometown: San Pablo, Costa Rica & Bridgeport, Connecticut
Education: B.A. Ecology & Evolutionary Biology; M.A. Conservation Biology
Interests: Human-Wildlife Interactions; Wildlife Trade & Exploitation; Cultural & Biological Diversity
Region: Latin America & Southeast Asia

Peter Houlihan

Mission:
Expedition leader fusing scientific research and visual media to raise awareness for conservation
Field sites: Tropical Rainforests
Currently:
Finishing PhD, University of Florida National Geographic Explorer
Director, (BRINCC) NGO in Borneo

Mary Blair, Director, Biodiversity Informatics Research

- Affiliated Professor, Columbia U. and RGGS
- Research interests: conservation biogeography & spatial priority-setting
- Social-ecological systems
- Vietnam, Costa Rica, Madagascar
- Background:
  - Liberal arts college; Columbia U. PhD
  - AMNH Postdoc
  - Theater & Music & Sports
  - Saami

Alexandra Sutton

Lead Editor, Energy Policy, Duke University

Research Interests: biodiversity conservation & human-wildlife conflict
Research Area: Sub-Saharan Africa
Languages: French, Swedish
Prior Funding: NSF, USDA, Gordon Institute, Ecological Society of America
Prior Study:
- M.S. Biology, 2007 Howard University
- M.S. Wildlife & Fisheries, 2009 Texas A&M University
Cynthia Malone

PhD in Geography at the University of Toronto

Career Highlights:
- AMNH-HSSRP dung beetle research
- orangutan ecology in Indonesia
- human-wildlife conflict in Cameroon
- organizer in movement for Black lives
- program manager for AMNH CBC in the Solomon Islands

Career Goals:
- Human-wildlife coexistence in multi-functional social-ecological systems
- A diverse, equitable, and decolonized conservation science

Who and what drives conservation research?
Who and what drives conservation action?
What drives you?

Conservation Science: What we need; Who we need
Rae Wynn-Grant
SCCS-NY Conservation Careers Workshop
Oct 13, 2017

Funding and Applying for Opportunities
Student Conference on Conservation Science - New York 2017
Dr. Mary E. Blair
mblair1@amnh.org

Where to look for funding:
- Government:
  - National Science Foundation
  - National Institutes of Health
  - NOAA/NASA/USAID/EPA
  - McNair Scholars
- Private Foundations
  - Ford Foundation, Fulbright, National Geographic.
  - World Wildlife Fund for Nature
- Professional Societies
- Your University

Crowdsourcing
- Experiment.com, microryza

Instrumentl
Understanding Bird Song as Indicator of Disease
Support
Network at Conferences

- ESA SEEDS
- SCB Sections
- Conferences are where things happen.
- Travel awards available for most conferences
- Apply for student awards!
- Your university/department may have matching or stand-alone funds

SCB Student Training Scholarship Winners 2014

Postdoctoral Fellowships

- Most important tip for graduate students: network and give talks at conferences, other universities

Mentors

- Developmental relationship
  - guide to a field of work/study
  - Enhance career development
- Mentor/mentee, near-peer, peer
- Facilitates increased access to
  - information, networks
- Practical day-to-day advice
- Can go both ways

Tips when Applying

- Start early -
- Look and ask for examples
- Don’t be afraid to contact the program director
- Send drafts! To friends and mentors and recommenders
- Ask for recommendation letters ~1 month before, send them bullet points
- Use and remember your institution’s grants office and writing center.

Do GREs matter?

- Despite known biases, GREs still matter. BUT — It’s more important to build a relationship with your potential advisor and get great letters from your mentors.

(Moneta-Koehler et al. 2017; Hall et al. 2017)
Interviews

• Self-reflection
  – How does it advance your career goals?
  – What skills do you bring? What more do you need to learn?
• Do your research, ask questions
  – Who else is at the organization/department?
  – How could you collaborate with them?
  – I am so impressed when students have read my papers and ask questions!
• Standard questions
  – How have you overcome a challenge?

What are my skills??!!?

• Research/Thesis = Project Management, Leadership; Time Management; “Works well independently”; Editorial, analytical, writing skills
• Field Assistants = Mentoring, management
• Team Project = Interpersonal, teamwork skills
• Blog = Communication skills
• Experience working with diverse communities

Negotiating an offer

• Conduct salary research - online, ask colleagues and mentors.
• “I am excited about this opportunity. I do have a question. What can we do to increase my starting salary?”
• Benefits, vacation time, start date
• Be enthusiastic
• Get it in writing before you accept

“Hiring is about potential, not experience”

Lean In by Sheryl Sandberg

My Personal & Professional Priorities

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