



Alice Brindle

"But Natural Selection... is a power incessantly ready for action, and is as immeasurably superior to man's feeble efforts, as the works of Nature are to those of Art."

-Charles Darwin

This is what fascinates me about Biology, its immense power and unfathomable beauty. If you go outside and pick up a fallen leaf and examine it carefully, you'll understand what I mean. The utter complexity of the cellular, ecological, and evolutionary processes that went into molding that single organic form is mind blowing. The more I have become immersed in Biology the more I have learned to appreciate just how much remains shrouded in mystery. For every new study that is published, more questions are raised than answered allowing us to build from each other's work. This is a gift.

Unfortunately, it is a luxury that I am afraid could disappear. As a biologist fascinated by the behavior of primates, I am concerned by the rapid depletion of Earth's tropical rainforests, the biome that houses the majority of our closest living relatives. Several primatologists have already suffered heartbreaking losses of the wild primate troops they studied, in effect annihilating any possibilities of building from their previous work. This demonstrates the importance of using field research projects to educate local peoples and governments to instill in them respect for Nature as strong as we have, before the immeasurable beauty of our world vanishes forever.



Ashley DuMont

A year ago, when Dr. Yoo was interviewing me for a summer research position in her lab, she asked me if I was a curious person. In retrospect, that question really intrigued me. I realized that it was an excellent question to ask a potential research student because curiosity is a very important quality for a scientist to possess. For as long as I can remember I have been very curious. When I had the option of picking out a library book in elementary school, I distinctly remember picking only science books. At a young age, I also watched the *Discovery Channel* and *The Weather Channel* for enjoyment. Until I reached high school, I was actually set on becoming a meteorologist; however, upon reading *The Hot Zone* my junior year of high school, I became hooked on bacteria and viruses. I even decided to write my junior research paper on Ebola. At this point, I knew I wanted to study biology.

My experiences at Denison have intensified my curiosity and passion for biology. I have enjoyed the biology classes I have taken thus far at Denison immensely, and I am grateful that I have had the opportunity to do research in Dr. Yoo's lab. I greatly encourage underclassmen to pursue summer research either at Denison or at another university. You never know if research is right for you unless you try it, and a summer internship is the perfect opportunity to do so. I am glad that I was selected to do a summer internship after my sophomore year; not only did I get a lot of laboratory experience, but I also discovered that doing research is my passion.

Overall, being a research scientist is both frustrating and rewarding but if you are avid about doing research, the moments of euphoria following a new discovery are well worth the countless failed experiments that led to that discovery. The best advice I can give is not to do something because it looks impressive on a resume but pursue it because you genuinely enjoy it.

Brian Slaby

It was the vultures. The first thing that *really* stood out about Denison the first time I visited campus. The density was like nothing I had ever seen before, not to mention the fact that the black vulture doesn't normally occur this far north. Amid the chaotic barrage of new sights and information, almost overwhelmed by thoughts of what the next four years would be like, this odd biological occurrence put my mind in a comfortable state of questioning. Why were they all here and why were there so many of them? At the surface these questions may not seem too deep, and I soon got a simple answer. There was a lot of road-kill in the area, and so these roof-top residents gather here on the Hill to provide our campus with a little extra character. But this "answer" didn't satisfy me because it wasn't the complete picture. What caused all of the road-kill? The area around Granville is a mosaic of farmland, residential, and wooded areas. A patchy, fragmented landscape where edges prevail. And where edges prevail (and large predators do not), deer prevail. A single deer provides a substantial meal to a flock of vultures, and anyone who has cleaned up the portion of 661 adopted by DUBS can attest that the vultures have no lack of food. And I'm sure every Denison student has noticed the mass of giant black birds huddled on the roof of Doane during the winter, or dozens of them gracefully soaring on the swirling winds before a storm. Perhaps our hill is the perfect roosting spot, or perhaps it creates just the right wind patterns. What complex interaction of variable makes Granville such ideal vulture habitat?



It is these types of ecological questions that I will likely spend my whole life asking. My time at Denison has taught me how to approach these questions and formulate hypotheses about them. I began my freshmen year as pre-veterinary, but after taking classes like Ecology and Evolution and Conservation Biology I discovered a field that suited me more. My future suddenly contained more possibilities and a chance to tackle larger-scale issues. And, importantly, I could do fieldwork and not be confined by an office or lab all the time. I continued down this path by taking classes such as Herpetology and Wetland Ecology, and by doing summer research on spotted salamanders. I have found that the more I learn, the more questions I have, and the more complex the world becomes. As graduation approaches and I plan how I might spend my time afterwards I am overwhelmed with the possibilities. But one small comfort is that whatever I end up doing I will continue my education and continue to ask difficult questions, some of which I hope to find answers to. And while the knowledge that I will gain is intrinsically important, I hope to put it to further use by bolstering conservation efforts.

My interest in biology spans all levels: from enjoying the aesthetic beauty of life's many forms, to trying to understand why organisms and ecosystems are the way they are and using that information to help preserve them. I am grateful that I have had the opportunity to realize this passion and I look forward to how I will utilize it in the future.

Senior Fellow Awards in the Department of Biology are based not only upon excellent academic performance and service to the department, but also the positive attitude and contributions brought to the classroom, research lab and the general environment of the major. The Biology Faculty view Senior Fellows as students who pursue biology for its own virtue and provide excellent role models for other students.