UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS



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Add address of institution

Dear Admission committee,

I am writing to enthusiastically recommend Katia Goldberg for the position of [add position] at [add institution]. At UC Davis, Katia has excelled as a student, a budding researcher, a field ornithologist, and a peer mentor. For example, she competed for and won the Lloyd W. Swift Award for Student Support two years in a row, will publish her new documentation of missing eyes in Western Bluebirds, and led a team of undergraduate field technicians through a six-month field season. She has an exceptional curiosity about the natural world and a proactive, ambitious approach to her career.

I am a PhD candidate in the Department of Wildlife, Fish, and Conservation Biology at the University of California, Davis and have served as Katia’s direct supervisor for her independent research project. Her already impressive research experience and her rock-solid positive mindset made my decision to work with her an easy one. She has conducted surveys of mammals and birds in Kruger National Park, South Africa, produced a review of her independent research on trade in rhino horns, and worked with PhD students at UC Davis to compile a database of primate traits. After her international projects, Katia wanted to contribute to ecology and conservation closer to home. In January 2021, Katia approached me to apply for funding so that she and I could collaborate on setting up a new study system in Davis, CA. We designed a project focused on understanding how temperatures vary across bird nest boxes in agriculture, forest, orchard, and grassland. To support our collaboration, Katia then applied for and received more than $15,000 in competitive funding over two years.

Over two summers, Katia launched a new study system of 130 bird nest boxes designed to test her hypothesis that temperature spikes reduce growth and survival in young birds. In the process, she mastered a wide variety of field ornithology skills including study system design, mist net use, bird handling, banding, and blood sample collection, and meticulous data collection and curation. She handled and banded more than 300 nestling birds of three species and more than 100 adults of 10+ species. In addition, she successfully applied for sub-permittee status on federal and state bird banding permits, demonstrating her mastery of field ornithology skills.

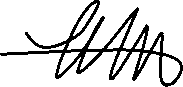
During her second summer (2022), Katia led her own independent data collection team and mentored two peers in bird handling and data collection. Her competence and confidence as a leader allowed more interested undergraduate students to gain valuable research experience and bird handling skills and demonstrated her commitment to service and mentorship. She also developed her data handling skills by curating a variety of different data types, entering paper data, and conducting quality control checks. Furthermore, her communication skills, trustworthiness, and resilience to challenge made her an invaluable collaborator on this project. She will continue to work with me to analyze the data, write a manuscript, and submit the product to an academic journal. She will have shepherded a major research project full circle from genesis to dispersal, an achievement rare among scholars at her career stage.

Beyond her research, Katia is an exceptional student and enthusiastic facilitator of community. I have been a Teaching Assistant for two of her classes, and she was the most engaged and enthusiastic student in both, which encouraged her fellow students to follow her lead. In addition, she served as the President of the Outdoor Crew at UC Davis for two years. She brought both her inquisitive energy and leadership experience into lab meetings, sparking more conversation and helping empower other undergraduate students to engage as well.

In summary, I am certain that Katia has an exceptional career ahead of her. Her potential has been recognized by the Department of Wildlife, Fish, and Conservation Biology with the presentation of their most prestigious service and academic achievement award. Not only does she command an impressive array of skills with ease and generosity, and serve as a leader among her peers, but she is also collegial and collaborative. In short, Katia has vastly exceeded my expectations, and I strongly believe she will also exceed yours. I cannot imagine a better candidate for XXX.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Katherine S. Lauck

PhD Candidate Dept. Wildlife, Fish, and Conservation Biology

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