Guest Speaker Quiz

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1. What you learned from the entire speaker series (5 points)

Throughout the entirety of the speaker series, there were several themes that stood out to me as important. One of these was the importance of good science communication in your work. This was touched upon by Emma Atkinson and Dr. Callwood, who both emphasized clearly being able to communicate science to others. The guest speaker series also highlighted the importance of getting a variety of experience, whether that was Emma Atkinson’s focus on developing complementary skills or Dr. Godwin’s focus on developing statistical analysis skills in order to effectively analyze the data collected. Overall, the speaker series was very helpful in giving me a variety of concrete ways people are working in the field of ecology. Everything post graduate school can often feel very abstract and daunting, and I took the most out of being able to see specific and varied ways that people are progressing through academia and applying their degrees.

1. Three vital pieces of information were given to you to succeed as ecologists (6 points)

One vital piece of information that stood out to me was developing complementary skills in the field and on the computer (from Emma Atkinson and supported by Dr. Godwin’s tip on learning basis statistics/R). This is a very applicable piece of advice with an action plan, and one that reinforced all of the R that we did throughout this course.

Another piece of information that stood out to me was the importance of creativity from Dr. Hennessey. When coming up with scientific questions and methods of answering these questions, it can often help to think creatively. This is something that I have experienced at my time at BMSC several times already, whether through asking ecological questions to test in the field or in designing and carrying out my DS project. This tip felt important to me in particular because often creativity and science are not presented as going hand in hand, and while I have often felt that creativity plays a big part in science, it was reaffirming to hear this from someone with a PhD in biology.

Lastly, a third vital piece of information given in the speaker series was Dr. Callwood’s tips on the importance of building trust in the community, which felt very tied to Emma Atkinson’s tip on good science communication. This is something that has been glossed over a lot in my science education. Good communication and ethical, community-based ecology and conservation are things that I think are very important and that these speakers summarized very well. Researchers need to be able to communicate the importance of what they are doing and their findings to the general public, and the public needs to trust researchers in order for scientific findings to have any impact. Without trust and communication, I think science loses a lot of its importance and meaning.

1. What information from the lectures you were able to use during the course/beyond (4 points)

There was a lot of information from the lectures that I was able to use during this course and that I will take away from it. The most directly applicable information was Emma Atkinson and Dr. Godwin’s advice on becoming comfortable with basic statistics and programming. We’ve been doing a lot of that in this course, and hearing from other places that this is a valuable skill gave more meaning to the coding we’ve been doing in this course and ADA. The importance of creativity in science is also something I have actively used at BMSC, specifically in my DS project. There are a lot of hurdles that I have faced with various logistical issues and new problems cropping up that need troubleshooting, and I’ve found creative problem solving to be key in tackling these issues (even on a scale this small). Creativity in science is definitely something I will keep in mind beyond my time here. Beyond this, the information on the importance of effective science communication and building community to build trust in researchers was very impactful. This is an overlooked side of the scientific process, but one that I feel is extremely important. This information helped solidify for me the importance of being a good communicator and tackling relevant issues in an ethical way, and while this feels very abstract I hope it is something I take with me beyond this course.