

Dear Curriculum Committee,

I found your listing on the Ornithology Exchange and the more I learned about the Deep Springs College community the more excited I became about this opportunity. Not only does the emphasis on interdisciplinary and place-based studies excite me as a scientist, but also the three pillars at Deep Springs resonate with me on a personal level.

My senior year of high school I went on a week-long trip with Ecology Project International (EPI) to Yellowstone. During that trip I got sap from big sage bushes all over one of my favorite shirts while clearing overgrown vegetation, I learned how to use a fencing tool, and I got to see baby birds up close and personal for the first time. I worked with EPI throughout college, first as a volunteer, then an intern, and eventually a full-time employee. My time with EPI instilled in me a passion for the power of hands-on learning experiences. This enthusiasm was bolstered by my later college experiences on similar volunteer-oriented trips in Moab, Utah and South Africa as well as my eventual experiences as a substitute instructor at EPI.

When I graduated from college, I spent one more year working with EPI before starting graduate school. My undergraduate education was focused on ecology and organismal biology, and through my studies I grew fascinated by endocrinology and the biological mechanisms underlying behavior. For my master's and Ph.D. research I delved into neuroscience and the genetic basis of behavior, and as a postdoc I now work at a much more landscape and population level of biological organization. My research has left me with a wide array of skills that span from the field to the laboratory and even into some computer science. Mostly, I blame my meandering curiosity for this varied assortment of academic experiences, however I also think it points to the value of an interdisciplinary perspective when considering the natural sciences. I adamantly believe that nothing in nature exists in a silo, and there is much more to be gained by finding connections than creating pigeonholes.

As you peruse my application materials, I hope you will come to the same conclusion as I did: the Natural Science Chair position at Deep Springs College is a perfect fit for me. I've been searching for a path forward in my career in which I didn't have to sacrifice too much of my personal and professional identities, and I think Deep Springs comes as close to that as I could hope for.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Respectfully,

Dr. Mackenzie Prichard, Ph.D.