



Happy New Year from the ECPWG!

The **Early Career Professional Working Group** is a working group of The Wildlife Society dedicated to addressing the challenges and opportunities that early career wildlife professionals encounter. “New Professional” members of TWS automatically receive membership to the ECPWG. We hope to guide the TWS council in making decisions that benefit early career professionals, as well as providing financial support, opportunities to network, and overall increasing accessibility to the wildlife field.

Contact Us

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Logo Contest

We are holding a logo design contest! To enter your design, email us by March 31. The winner will receive a free year of TWS membership and stickers of their logo, and their design will be featured on all ECPWG material.

Did you know that the ECPWG provides two grants?

Professional Development Grant: Provided on a bi-annual basis, this grant helps defray costs associated with attending a professional event such as TWS annual conference, local or regional meetings, or relevant workshops. See page 7 for the most recent awardee’s experience in Cleveland.

Certification Scholarship: Meant for early career professionals who are no longer enrolled in school but are lacking a course for an AWB or CWB certification, this scholarship helps cover coursework costs to fill requirements for the certifications.

Find out more about our grants and scholarships [here](#).

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featured comic

ASHLEY ZACHERY (@BLOBCOMIC)



Career Features

In this issue, we're featuring interviews from two incredible professionals in the wildlife field. We asked them questions about their careers, advice on job hunts, and salient issues in the field for ECPs. Read their interviews on pages 9 and 11!

Auriel Fournier, PhD

is the director of Forbes Biological Station, leading a team of ecologists. She is an applied ecol-



ogist and ornithologist who works across interdisciplinary boundaries to better understand bird migratory patterns and inform wetland decision-making.

Priya Nanjappa, MSc

is the Director of Operations at Conservation Science Partners. She is a wildlife biologist who has worked in



applied conservation and policy for over two decades, and leads teams working across institutions and organizations to come up with conservation solutions.

Follow Auriel at
[twitter](#)
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Follow Priya at
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ECPWG Selected Survey Results

In an effort to better pinpoint the needs of our members and how we can support them, we conducted a survey of our membership this fall, which was sent to all “early career” members of The Wildlife Society, as well as posted on our social media pages. Over 250 people responded to our survey. Here are some of the responses—and we’re working on addressing your feedback! Look for a full report soon.

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF ECPWG?

64%

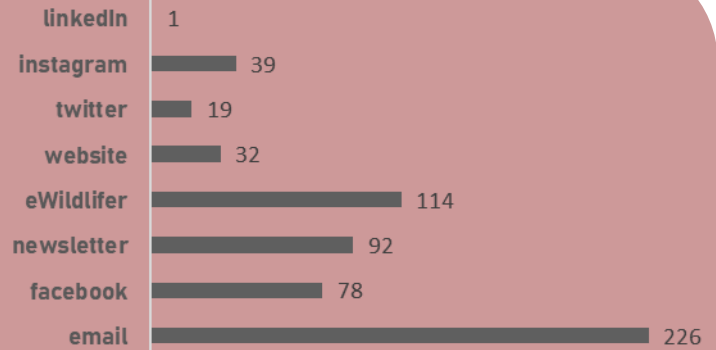
were not dues-paying members (due to financial limitations) or did not know they were dues-paying members.

36%

were dues-paying members of TWS & ECPWG.

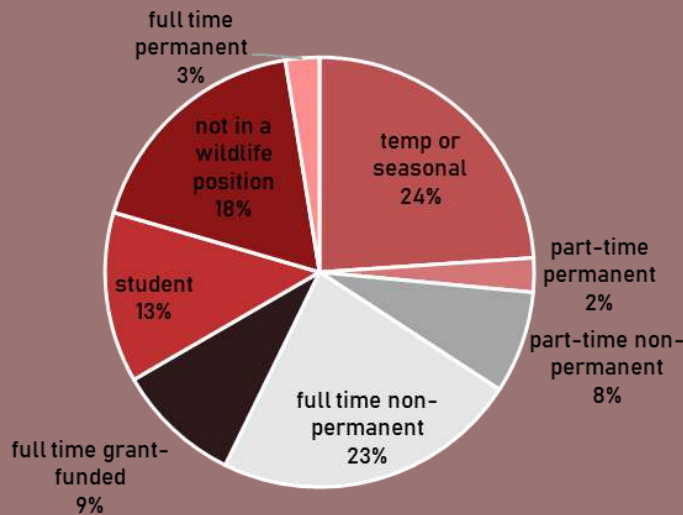
If you are a [member of The Wildlife Society](#), and join as a “New Professional,” you automatically have ECWGP membership for free. If you join as a regular or student member, you can add membership to our working group for \$5 by going to Membership > Add Organization Unit > Working Groups. If you are unable to afford membership to TWS, no worries—we make all of our resources available on our website and social media pages!

PREFERRED COMMUNICATION METHOD?



Our announcements are sent out as part of the weekly TWS eWildlifer email, and is also posted to our Facebook and Twitter. We update our website frequently. Due to this feedback, we will work on sending our own emails out to membership for important news and announcements!

EMPLOYMENT STATUS?



As ECPs, we struggle with attaining full-time employment in the wildlife field and we want to help folks be aware of the resources and employment available to them (especially outside of “traditional” wildlife paths like academia and federal government). The board will be discussing underemployment at length and we hope to come up with ways to address systemic issues ECPs face and provide resources for folks to find jobs.

UPDATES FROM TWS & AFS JOINT MEETING: RENO, NV



ECWPG Accomplishments & Updates

The Early Career Professional Working Group met for its seventh annual members' meeting at the national TWS and AFS joint meeting this past fall 2019. During the meeting, which was attended by nearly thirty constituents, board members outlined the purpose of the working group and the previous year's accomplishments, which included a report to TWS Council, grant development, an increase in communications, and the membership survey. Attendees then engaged the board in a dialogue about desires for the working group's future. Attendees expressed interest in greater informational resource sharing, networking, and communication with Council, to name a few.



The ECPWG also hosted a conference workshop called "Communicating Your Science: Active Communication Skills for the Future of Wildlife Conservation," facilitated by personnel from Sharing Science (a program of the American Geophysical Union). Workshop participants engaged in activities and dialogue around perspective, audience identity, language, social media, and storytelling to further their science communication skills.

In addition to the members' meeting and workshop, ECPWG board members provided information about the ECPWG at a working group table in the exhibitor hall and networked with American Fisheries Society members during an off-site event organized by the AFS Early Career Professional Committee. The ECPWG also supported the "Out in the Field" LGBTQ+ lunch social, which was a great success.

We look forward to addressing members' concerns and needs in 2020, and to seeing you all at the 2020 annual meeting!

Looking Ahead

The 2020 annual conference will be held in **Louisville, Kentucky Sept 27-Oct 1**. Apply to our professional development grant (page 1) for support to travel to the conference!



UPDATES FROM RENO, CONT.

TWS Reaches Major Milestone Towards Formal Creation of Mentorship for Life Program

The Mentorship for Life (MFL) Ad-hoc Committee of Council, along with ECPWG and several other working groups, communities, chapters, and sections, asked TWS Council to consider adopting the MFL Strategic Plan to create a formal mentorship program for TWS.

One of the main paradigms of the MFL program is that it seeks to combine professional development and networking in a more engaging, synergistic, and unified way. By creating a ‘program’, rather than a ‘TWS Community’ or ‘Working Group’, MFL will become a defining aspect of TWS, engaging existing members, recruiting new members, and better educating our members to continue to be expert professionals in wildlife management while working towards the long-term sustainability of our wildlife resources.



At last year's meeting, TWS approved the creation of an Ad-hoc Committee, chaired by Paul DiSalvo, ECPWG board member.

The MFL Strategic Plan outlines the need for a formal mentorship program, lists the program's vision, mission, and core values, aligns those to specific program goals and objectives, and provides a proposed timeline for implementation. The “Goals and Objectives” section aligns with the core areas and goals in The Wildlife Society Strategic Plan 2019-2023. The “Proposed Timeline” section is an assessment of the possible activities, resources required, and implementation phases in an adaptable timeline for the first 9+ years of the program.

At the TWS Council meeting at this year's annual conference in Reno, Council reviewed the MFL Strategic Plan and recommendations of the Ad-hoc Committee. Council voted to staff to consider developing a “Mentorship for Life” program within TWS’ Professional Development program area that will be managed by TWS staff within existing operations plans and budgeting framework. As the dust settles from the 2019 conference, we will provide more details on Council's recommendations and how the MFL Strategic Plan will begin to be implemented.

Contact Paul Di Salvo for any questions about the Mentorship for Life Program at pdisalvo25@gmail.com.

Additionally, don't forget that you can find a mentor or mentee anytime on the TWS Members Portal (where you sign-in to renew your membership). You can use the Member's Directory to search people based on location, whether they are willing to be a mentor, and career focus. You can even message them directly through the website.

A reflection on my 2019 Leadership Institute experience

Julia Nawrocki, ECPWG board member

Before I jump into my experience about the Leadership Institute (LI), I think it's important to tell you a bit about where I was a year ago and what led me to apply to LI in the first place. I graduated with my master's degree in the spring of 2017 and had been working for a state agency as an annually renewing 11-month temporary. I liked the people I worked with but the job wasn't challenging or allowing for much professional growth. While I was thankful to have a position within weeks of graduating, I knew it was a temporary position that that couldn't be long-term and so almost immediately started applying for permanent jobs. But after two years, I felt stuck and discouraged by this career. I had applied, interviewed for, and been rejected from more jobs than I could count and each time the interview personnel had little advice. It would always be something like, "You're a great candidate, I can't think of much you can improve on. I encourage you to apply for other openings in our agency because we would love to have you..." These words usually seemed genuine, but they only made me more frustrated every time. Surely there was something I could work on improving otherwise you would have hired me! As I continued to work my temporary position and watch my bank account dwindle, I started to look into other careers. But it was no use and I always came back to the same conclusion: I simply have little desire to do anything else. This chosen career path is my life. That's when I turned my attention to opportunities that I could pursue outside of work that could perhaps set me apart from other interview candidates.

One of the first places that came to mind was The Wildlife Society. As both an undergraduate and a graduate student, I had been active in the student chapters at my universities and I had gained so much, both professionally and personally, from the time I spent in the organization. But after I left university, I didn't know how I should get involved. I was hesitant to commit to a state chapter or regional section because, in my mind, I wasn't a "real" professional yet, so why would anyone care what I thought? Plus, I would be getting a permanent job sometime soon and might move out of the area, right? But when I saw an advertisement for the Leadership Institute, I knew that was something I could do. I saw it as a gateway into getting involved in TWS and knew that it was a program with lots of opportunity for self-improvement.

What is LI?

The Leadership Institute is a program targeted at ECPs providing a varied experience in leadership training. The program consists of independent readings, group discussions about issues pertinent to our field, and reflections on our past and present experiences in the wildlife field. The LI does not provide a template on how to be a good leader, but instead focuses on self-discovery and examining how you personally lead and adapt your style to best fit your team.

Applications for the Class of 2020 are due by March 16. Apply [here](#)—and don't hesitate to contact Julia at janawrocki907@gmail.com if you have any questions.

The LI application is a fairly straightforward process, but it does require letters of recommendation so it's important to not wait until the last minute to apply! It also requires a short essay highlighting what your definition of leadership is, your aspirations for being involved in TWS, and why you think you are a good candidate for participating in LI. You submit your essay along with your resume, transcripts, and a cover letter, then the waiting begins!

I was notified of my acceptance into LI at the end of April and the first assignment came in on the first of May, which began the whirlwind of the next five months. I will note that LI is a lot of work, especially over the spring and summer months, when we are often busiest with fieldwork. The program requires several readings and scheduling group discussions. At times it was tricky to find the time to do it all, but I do believe it was worth it. The Leadership Institute does not provide a template on how to be a good leader, but instead focuses on self-discovery and examining how you personally lead. It helps identify your strengths and skills you may need to work on, and really sheds light on how to cooperate with all different personality types. I think that the program caters to each individual so I can't tell you exactly what you might learn, but I can share some of my personal takeaways.

I learned how to encourage everyone to use their strengths and to navigate discussions where parties appear to have completely opposing viewpoints. I was able to interact with both peers and mentors. I found that many of my peers as well as the more seasoned professionals have faced the same challenges. We were able to discuss how to work through different scenarios and everyone was willing to share their stories of both failures and success. I identified how I could become a better leader through the program; however, the biggest reward of the program for me was reconnecting me to my TWS community.



LI Class of 2020. Credit: Molly O'Grady.

Through LI, I was able to interact with other wildlife professionals again and I finally felt a new sense of belonging. Everyone was so passionate about what they were doing and welcoming to offer a tidbit of advice or encouragement where needed, which I had realized was something I was missing from my days at university. Throughout the program, I had the opportunity to have meaningful conversations with members of the TWS staff and Council, mentors, and, of course, my LI cohort. Part of LI is developing relationships with matched mentors, which was one of my favorite components of the program. After the mentor pairing, there isn't much structure to this part of the program, so it is up to you and your mentor(s) to schedule time to get to know each other. I was paired with three different mentors all at different stages of their careers and I found that each one had a unique perspective to offer. They each took the time to get to know me on a personal level and were always willing to listen to my concerns and opinions. Over the months, I had several conversations with each. We talked about everything from career plans to issues impacting TWS to dogs (one of my personal favorite topics to talk about!). We then met in person at the annual meeting in Reno, and I hope that these relationships will persist throughout my career! The other relationships that I hope will last is those I built with my LI cohort. By the end of the LI experience, you will have spent many hours having discussions and getting to know your cohort. The 2019 LI cohort was an awesome group of individuals. Everyone had something to contribute to each discussion and were conscious of how they approached tough topics or differences in opinions. Our discussions always felt like a safe space to openly share our own experiences and I am thankful for the respect we gave each other. The topics our career field faces are not always easy to discuss, but it is important that we can find an environment to bring up these topics so we can work to find solutions. The Leadership Institute does a wonderful job of creating this environment, which brings me to the last component of LI that I would like to share.

In LI, we work in small groups to give a presentation to Council on a topic that we face as an organization. My group selected the controversial topic of unpaid/underpaid labor. It's something that most of us have had to deal with and something I still find myself facing. As wildlife professionals, we are often not fully compensated. This can

limit diversity within our field and push those with other financial burdens out of the field, however with funding for ecological research and management being so limited how can organizations afford to pay their workers more? We knew going into the presentation it was a sensitive subject for many, but also one that we need to talk about in order to come up with solutions. I was nervous to give our presentation, especially since one of our group members had to unexpectedly leave due to a family emergency, but our audience respectfully listened to what we had to say. When we finished our presentation, the floor was opened for discussion and it was about what I expected. The room quickly became heated with points supporting and refuting each side. Despite the strong opinions that were present, I was pleasantly surprised by how everyone was kept in check from getting too carried away and it overall remained a civil conversation. While we didn't reach any major resolutions that afternoon, I believe it brought to light how important an issue this is especially to the student and early career professionals of TWS. It is an issue that our ECP working group will be pursuing alongside other working groups in the future.

While I have yet to obtain a permanent job, I greatly value my experience of participating in the 2019 Leadership Institute. It connected me with other passionate individuals and gave me hope not only for my own future but that of the wildlife profession. The experience shed light on the fact that The Wildlife Society does want to represent its membership. This means that we must have difficult conversations while remaining open and respectful to different opinions and that we must try and prepare future generations for the new challenges. The Leadership Institute does not provide scripted answers to tough questions but instead helps you develop skills to think about things from multiple perspectives and to try to come together to find those solutions. The relationships I forged and conversations I had will hopefully stick with me throughout my life and I realize that I can be a valued member of The Wildlife Society. On that note, I would encourage you to get more involved in TWS whether that being applying for this year's LI, with your local chapter or section, or in one of the many great working groups! ■

Interview: Dr. Auriel Fournier

What's your day-to-day like as a Research Director? What's the good and bad?

It really depends on the day! Most days I'm in the office working on budgets and grant applications. I've only been here 6 months so I don't have a leadership role in any of our fieldwork yet, but I'll be much more involved in the spring. Most people who get PhDs educate themselves into the office and that's definitely a big part of my job. Some parts of grant writing are unpleasant but some of it is really fun and fulfilling, like coming up with ideas and initiating collaborations. My least favorite part is probably dealing with budgets. It's such an important thing that you want to make sure you get right, whether you're submitting a grant or handling a budget for your month-to-month, but I don't think anybody enjoys it.

Your page on paper rejection is awesome. What spurred you to write it? Do you have anything specific you do after receiving a rejection?

I was probably lamenting a paper rejection on Twitter. I have a paper that can't seem to be accepted anywhere. Someone made a histogram on Twitter of their rejections and I thought it was a great idea. Now, when things get rejected, the first thing I do is update the website. I've done different things over time. In grad school, when papers got rejected it was an excuse to get a fancy lunch. As a post-doc, it was an excuse to buy plants. My friend Caitlin and I encourage each other to push ourselves and every year we set the goal of accumulating a certain number of rejections, and when one of us gets rejected we always tell the other one.. It's part of the process. If you're not getting rejected you're probably not trying hard enough. That's how I look at it. Everybody experiences it all the time. It does get a *little* bit easier as you go along, or at least easier to take it slightly less personally.

When working on your PhD, did you see yourself in this type of role? How did your application process differ from tenure-track roles?

I did my PhD with a co-op unit because I wanted to do applied research with federal and state scientists, and I wanted to keep doing that. Applications for non-tenure-track jobs are much more variable than for tenure track roles—non profits will involve your traditional cover letter/resume, federal jobs will use USAJobs. For my position I included a research statement; in that way it was similar to a tenure track job. I'm employed by the University of Illinois but I'm not on the main campus. Besides me, there are three other staff scientists, an administrative assistant, four grad students, and seasonal field and lab technicians.

You've been on the hiring side of things as well. Do you have any tips or advice for ECPs in the job application and interview process?

It goes a long way to clearly articulate in your cover letter and your interview why you're interested in the position. I get a lot of cover letters where it's not clear they read the job description, and even if they have the appropriate skill set it's not clear that they're interested in the job. Spend a paragraph explaining why you're interested in the job. It could be a skill or a specific topic that the job would involve; it doesn't have to be the one true job for you, but be prepared to articulate why you're interested, especially in the interview. I've seen folks not be prepared to answer that, which surprised me. It can also be really good when you're writing a cover letter to look for required and preferred qualifications and make sure you're highlighting how you check those boxes in the cover letter. Not to say you should restate your resume, but look at it from the hiring person's perspective. Here at Forbes we have a spreadsheet and we score people on qualifications on the first pass. To make it easy, highlight those qualifications. For example, "I've operated a boat for 100 hours and have no safety violations." Make sure to tailor your cover letter to show how you fit that job.

Advisors tend to encourage folks to do their MS and PhD separately, although this seems to be shifting. Did you go straight to a PhD? Would you recommend it?

I did go straight to a PhD. If you talked to me the first year I would've said no, it's a horrible idea! I did a lot of research as an undergraduate, and was perhaps a little cocky. There are a lot of universities that are eliminating MS programs because they can make more money off of PhDs. It can be very financially motivated. I think to pursue a PhD you need to be really sure you want to do research. Committing to a PhD is very different - 4-6 years of your life is pretty significant part of a decade. Getting the right fit is important; not that it isn't for an MS, but at least if it isn't you can get out more easily. I had some friends that switched to a master's. Some programs don't allow that or treat it as failure, which I think it isn't. I think it's important to not just jump into a PhD. Sometimes it even shuts doors because you educate yourself out of some positions. I finished my education earlier, but that doesn't mean I wouldn't have had more skills or known more if I'd done my master's first. I also don't think there's anything wrong with doing your MS and PhD in the same place. There's a lot of value to getting to know a community and building professional relationships as well as not having to move all the time, but if you can't grow and learn new skills where you are, there are advantages to getting to know new places.



*Fournier conducting fieldwork.
Credit: Justin Lehman.*

Interview: Dr. Auriel Fournier (cont.)

A lot of our members are frustrated with the temporary or unpaid work trap. How can we address the issue for ECPs?

I myself have not experienced that much--I did seasonal field work as an undergraduate and had 2 seasonal positions before grad school. I knew I was going to grad school but I was employed in the meantime. My postdoc was the only temporary position I've had. At the end of my postdoc I didn't really want to take another postdoc, in part because I'm married and I didn't want to move

"It's valuable to be willing to be uncomfortable."

my husband and my dogs across the country for a temporary position. Moving is awful and his career is important too, and the more we move the more challenging it is. Needless to

say, the research we've done says that taking unpaid positions in general is not helpful. Overall, it results in lower persistence in STEM and lower salaries. I certainly understand why folks get really frustrated with it. I don't know what the answer is but the initial inertia to change how we view unpaid work has to come from a cultural conversation shift. We can't just pull money from the sky. I think having workshops and conversations in a variety of spaces and conversations is really helpful. I did the Leadership Institute this past year and my group presented on unpaid labor to TWS Council. One of the things that seemed to really resonate with Council is trying to start up conversations that come from TWS around unpaid labor and equity.

What's your advice for academics collaborating with managers and vice versa?

It requires academics to think differently. Remember that there is expertise on every side of the equation; you're going to learn as much and gain as much from them as they are going to gain from you. Most managers are interested in learning more about the places that they take care of. They may not have the bandwidth to do that on a day to day basis. Many of them are dealing with challenging situations in terms of staff and funding, but that doesn't mean they're not interested. Almost none of the managers I've worked with have the time to read or even have access to peer-reviewed journal publications. To make it relevant, you need to translate your papers into a product that will be useful for the management community. For my PhD, we distilled our results down into a management context that was very specific. We would go out to the managers and apply our research to their challenges in their wetland. We were working for

that *specific* wetland not a theoretical one. You can't just helicopter in and out and expect to have a meaningful interaction with folks--they need to be included, and you also have to find a way to get them credit for being included on your project. You need to figure out what you can do for them because authorship on your paper to most managers often isn't their end product. Sometimes it takes time to build trust. I worked with several managers in Missouri who had been really burnt in the past by grad students who had destroyed equipment or otherwise burnt bridges. You have to go in and do the work to show that you're going to be responsible and engage with them, and if you encounter resistance it may be justified. Unfortunately, the folks who came before you might not have done you any favors.

How do you practice inclusivity in the workplace? Did you learn from any specific sources?

This is one of the ways Twitter is really helpful to me. You hear about the experiences of a wide variety of people you might not be able to encounter in your day to day life. I've been able to broaden my view. Over the past 10 years my thinking has changed dramatically and I hope it continues to. The first thing to learn is how to be uncomfortable. Sometimes when people point out we're doing something wrong, our initial reaction is to be defensive. It's valuable to be willing to sit back and be uncomfortable. Say to yourself: "if that person is 100% correct, what does that mean?" Sit with that for a little while before you respond. Obviously, when you are face to face that's more challenging, but generally I try to listen more and not be defensive. Also, if you're not part of a marginalized group, maybe you have a friend who is, and maybe you inadvertently make them a touchstone—but that person doesn't speak for that whole group and there's going to be a diverse range of views in terms of equality and accessibility. It really depends on trying not to tokenize people.

I'm involved with the American Ornithological Society, and we're going about getting feedback in a different way than I do here at work. Change is never going to happen as fast as you want it to but when it does it's very exciting! With the Diversity & Inclusion Committee of AOS, we've reached out to some folks and we say "we'd love to have you but understand if you're not interested. Would you be able to review one or two things? We'd like to get your reaction." That was a small 30-minute ask of their time, and some of them decided they wanted to be part of the committee which is great. We had a couple of holes that we hadn't realized were there pointed out to us. We decided that finding ways to engage people with a small ask in a way that they can still contribute can be really effective. ■

Interview: Priya Nanjappa

You work for a non-profit organization. Tell me about the work you do!

Conservation Science Partners is headquartered in Truckee, CA which is right outside of Reno, but I am based out of our office in Fort Collins, CO, and I'm the lead in that office. CSP is a research organization; all of our staff are researchers in one form or another. They are conducting scientific research in ways that allow us to answer questions using data as well as technology, and I think that's what sets us apart—we are a data and technology driven organization. We're very interdisciplinary in our approaches to our questions and the projects that we take on, so we have a lot of interesting partnerships. Our work ranges from specific wildlife- and population- related ecology to modeling changes in systems due to climate change and drought to looking at land use change patterns over time. We try to be innovative in that whole process. We work towards new ways of approaching technology and try to stay at the cutting edge. We're somewhat unique in the conservation field in the way that we're using technology—some of our staff is essentially developing software.

What's the day-to-day life like as a Director of Operations?

It is different every day! A lot of my work involves overseeing projects, making sure that we're staying on track with respect to what we promised to the funders, and checking in with the staff to make sure that they feel comfortable with the workload. If they're feeling pinched, it's my job to decide if need to bring in additional help, like temporary contracts, additional grant funding or even hiring more people. I oversee budgets and let staff know how much time they have left on a project so they can manage their workloads. I make sure that everything is operating smoothly and help my staff to do their job.

“Leadership is being able to think about perspectives outside of your own, integrate ideas, and be decisive with that information.”

What's your advice for ECPs moving into management and leadership roles?

It's important to know your own strengths, but it's important to recognize that other people have strengths and experiences that are valuable as well. I love the saying “we rise by lifting others” (Robert Ingersoll). As a leader, you can incorporate the experiences of others in a way that is not co-opting their skills and knowledge without giving credit, and bring those people along as you address a problem and recognize the value of their contributions whether they're just starting out or your senior. You also help to promote other people's work; it's not always something I do consciously but I think it has helped in that people think of me as somebody who plays well with others. That's a really important part of being a leader. You can't just say “whatever I say goes and it doesn't matter what you think, I'm just going to go forward.”

That's not to say that in some instances you may have to go against what other people are advising, but you should be aware of where they're coming from and have good reasoning for why you might be countering. It's impossible to please everybody, but have you worked to bring in different perspectives to ensure that you've thought about the problem broadly? Thinking this way will help you continue to be seen favorably as a leader and continue to gain opportunities in leadership. For me, doing that came somewhat naturally because I was willing to bring people together. To be viewed favorably in terms of your ability to lead a team, you should be able to recognize that you are a part of the whole process, that you are facilitating the outcome with the help of many others. It's about being able to think about perspectives outside of your own, integrate ideas, and be decisive with that information. It may not be the most popular decision, but if you can feel good about how you arrived at that decision, that's what people will remember. An important piece of all of this is learning from your own mistakes, acknowledging when you could have done better, and also learning from other people's mistakes. I can't really say that I had a good mentor in the early part of my career, so I really try to be that for others, and I specifically try *not* to be the people I knew who were not even trying to consider another perspective.

How did you find your last few jobs when applying?

LinkedIn is a good place to learn of non-profit jobs. There are also various job boards like the Texas A&M job board; I highly recommend looking for postings there. I was looking fairly casually when I was in my previous job. It's a good idea to build LinkedIn profile because people can potentially contact you and express interest in your skills through that site. For a while when I was actively looking for a job I had it configured so I would get notified when people were looking at my profile, and in some instances there were organizations or positions I didn't previously know about that I looked up and kept on my radar.

Interview: Priya Nanjappa (cont.)

Do you have any advice for ECPs applying to non-profit roles in the application process?

What I find most interesting with applicants for positions in non-profit or government jobs is that most people, especially if they have their doctorate, put their teaching and research experience up front. I have to weed through two pages before I get to the part that explains their experience that is relevant to what I'm looking for. You should put relevant experience up front, and you should customize your CV each time. For example, if you were doing population surveys and analyzing data in your previous work and the job posting says "conducting monitoring of wildlife, entering data and performing analyses." That's essentially the same thing you were doing, so rewrite it on your CV in their words. Sometimes people who are not the actual hiring officials make the first cuts, so it's helpful to match the language of the job description to the extent that you can. Customize your resume, put the experience that's most relevant up front. If what I did four years ago was the most relevant, I put that at the top even if it wasn't the most recent. Include specific skills like being able to use Google Suite, coding, or language skills, if they are relevant to the job. Include leadership type skills or classes that you've taken, and things that make you interesting. I took an improv class in Chicago and put that on my resume because that shows I can think on my feet! I played rugby in college and I ended up being captain,

which is leadership. Anybody who has ever gotten a grant has managed a budget and a project because you've had to get your work done on time, you've had to provide materials in a way that the grants were accepted, and you had to ensure you spent the money correctly. Those are important soft skills for nonprofit and government jobs—how did you keep track of the budget? Do you think you can manage a budget effectively? Additionally, a shorter CV is better—condense it to the most key points. After working for 20 years my CV is two pages, sometimes three when I apply to jobs. I could fill more pages but I don't because it's not always relevant. I include pertinent publications but not all of them. You can have a line at the bottom that says "additional experience available upon request." When you're early career you're putting most of your work on there but the more you can condense your experience to salient pieces for that position, the better off you're going to be because you're helping the person who's sifting through to see how you're qualified for the job. In

your cover letter, don't regurgitate and summarize your CV. Say "I am interested in this position and I believe I can help you do what you're trying to do because I have these skills and experiences. Here's why this role is exciting to me or why I can be a good fit for this organization." Highlight your key experiences that are the most salient that will make them want to look at your CV.

You have an MSc. Did you always plan to pursue graduate school? What would you say is the most useful part of that degree in your work now?

When I was coming out of undergrad, most people I spoke to said that some sort of advanced degree was important. I didn't know what direction I was going to go. I knew I wanted to work outside and I was comfortable with surveys and research techniques, but I didn't really know what my options were. Even as a junior in college I still wasn't sure beyond a park ranger what my options were! I slowly started to find different examples. I spent a summer at a field school taking field courses. I volunteered for a county-level organization while I was in undergrad, which led me to start looking more broadly at what was out there beyond academia. I was universally told I would need at least a Master's. I knew early on I didn't want to teach and it seemed like that was the only thing you would do if you got a PhD. Later, I found out there were other types of jobs involving a doctorate, so I was still thinking about it. I'm glad I

had the grad school experiences. Being exposed to other scientists, thinking about their fields of work and the types of research that they were doing and being able to bounce ideas and questions off each other was such a cool and valuable experience. Managing my graduate research project, applying for grants and writing publications have come in handy as I've moved on in my career. I have gone back and forth and wondered if I should've gotten a doctorate. I've had colleagues who did get their PhD who've made comments asking why I didn't, which has given me insecurity complexes from time to time. I was able to determine that I didn't really need it and I was able to keep a foot in the research realm. I've maintained a fairly steady stream of publications over the years. Overall, I think the experience in grad school was valuable. If I went back at this point, I might get an MBA or a JD. I still consider some of those, but at this point I'm happy where I am.



Nanjappa with her daughter, Maya.

Interview: Priya Nanjappa (cont.)

What's your advice for collaboration between managers, policy-makers, and academics?

I hate to make generalizations, but I think there was a past tendency of researchers approaching others with the mentality of “here’s what I’m doing and here’s what you need from me. Here’s what I see you are doing wrong.” The better approach that I’ve found over the years, especially working in partnership building, is approaching people by saying “what are your needs? What questions are you seeking to answer? Let’s discuss if there are ways that our work might help support your needs or achieve your goals.” That is the message that I try to communicate. You have to understand the challenges that people who are making the decisions that affect how the land and wildlife is managed face. In other cases, we take information or publications and try to translate it and create a broader forum like a workshop or a conference where we bring different facets of a problem together. Recently, people have become more creative in translating scientific findings in ways that are easier to contextualize. Think about who and what areas are impacted by the research, and who or what is being impacted by the problems or challenges that are trying to be fixed. Look at it from a broader perspective to try to bring in different partners, even when their philosophies differ, and try to find common ground. That is a key element that has been an important lesson for me: there’s almost always some area of common ground. Sometimes it’s very narrow, but if you can find that and start there then you have a way to start speaking from the same perspective. The root of it is rather than approaching them saying “I have something that can help you,” and this relates to career searches as well, try “what do you need and how can I help you?” People tend to think, especially from research looking at management, “I just don’t understand why they aren’t doing ‘x.’” From the manager’s perspective, it may be that they don’t have the permission to do something, and that can be as simple as their boss won’t let them do it or as complex as there isn’t a law that gives them authority to do that type of work.

How do you practice inclusivity in the workplace? Did you learn from any specific sources?

In the early part of my career when I encountered other people of color in equivalent or higher roles they were mostly men. I grew up in the Midwest in a very white area where I didn’t really think of myself as different from anybody else, but I considered my parents to be different—they were the ones with the accent and who didn’t understand pop culture. My dad for the longest time was trying to get me into medicine or computers because he didn’t understand what this wildlife biology thing was. It was a while before I really grasped that other people saw me as different from the majority. That ignorance was bliss. When you don’t know that people think of you differently, you don’t act differently, and you continue to occupy spaces as if you’re the same. In a weird way, that was kind of what gave me an advantage. I just let my voice be louder and never thought about it from the perspective of trying to blend in or be quiet. I definitely recognized as people started pointing it out to me, or I just started to notice on my own, that I was the only brown person in the room. When I moved from a research oriented position into a non-profit and conservation-related position where I was surrounded by a predominantly white male field, I did start to really look for other examples of women and people of color.

My advice is to do what you can in your sphere of influence to help other people who look like you and who are otherwise marginalized to feel like they’ve got someone they can talk to. Again, we rise by lifting others. That’s the approach I started to take—as I’ve gained some prominence in the field, I have begun to recognize that I’m someone that people look up to or look to as an example of someone who’s successful. I’m trying to what I can to help others as I go along. If there’s something I can do in a small way whether it’s introductions, help with resumes, or ideas on what they can do to gain experience, I try to help. In this current job I’m helping with the hiring of new staff. We’ve built in some language in our job applications which I was able to influence so that we are actively recruiting people who are from marginalized communities or at least have really given some thought about these issues of inclusivity, equity, diversity. It doesn’t mean that we will only look at marginalized applicants, but we want to bring people who will continue to support our goals and intents toward creating an inclusive environment. It’s important to recognize that someone’s skills on paper may not reflect what they may be capable of doing or learning. A lack of certain skills may just be a reflection of their lack of opportunities. It’s important to be open minded and to try to ask more probing questions, like asking their ability to pick up skills quickly or their interests in certain techniques or topics. That’s what I’m trying to bring to the next set of people we hire, and I’m sharing these ideas and approaches with colleagues who may want to try these approaches in their roles. I think about my work with reptiles and amphibians when I think about equity. They’re kind of an overlooked group. When you create policies and processes and efforts that consider systems more wholly, you get a better outcome because you’re not approaching the problem one-dimensionally. A fully functioning ecosystem has many different parts and dynamics working together, whether it’s predator-prey interactions or availability of different types of habitat; it’s a thriving system. In the same vein, we can think about how we can make our work environments more inviting, more equipped with the spaces and resources for anyone to function at their best, and in turn, diversity will begin to increase when the components of a healthy system are present. ■

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