

2017 Department of Biology Awards

JOSEPH E. GREAVES ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

Sylvia Kinosian, Doctoral Candidate



I have been fascinated with the natural world since I was a young child. Both of my parents are avid nature lovers and no weekend was complete without a hike or canoe trip. Learning bird songs, examining rock veins, and dissecting scat to guess what the animal had eaten were typical activities during these outings. At home, my sister and I spent hours playing imaginary games inspired by what we had learned from school, documentaries, and books about animals and their ecosystems.

In my early teens I developed a passion for mountain climbing and backpacking at a summer camp in the Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York. I was fortunate enough to fuel this interest through two 5-week backpacking trips in Spain and New England and numerous independent trips throughout my teenage years. It took until a dendrology course my sophomore

year of college, however, for me to channel this biophilia towards a scientific career. Identifying and learning about the species that comprised the forests of the mountains I loved was very exciting to me. I began to notice more patterns and anomalies with every trip I took, and the more I learned about ecology and botany the more I wanted to know. That's when I began considering a career in academic science.

In May of 2015, I graduated from UVM *summa cum laude* with a degree in Forestry. I worked for the next year in Burlington as laboratory technician in the Plant Biology department at UVM, as well as in the Pringle Herbarium. During that time, I applied and was accepted as a PhD student to the Wolf Lab at Utah State University, as well as the Graduate Research Fellowship Program from the National Science Foundation. I was incredibly honored and excited to start my graduate career at USU, and have the funding and support from the NSF.

For my dissertation project, I am working on the fern genus *Ceratopteris*. The first part of this project is to create a world-wide phylogeny of the group. Once we can better understand the evolutionary relationships within the genus, future studies focusing on population genetics or cryptic species could be designed. I hope to ultimately create a product that not only satisfies my own intellectual curiosities, but can meaningfully contribute to the field as well. After completing my PhD, I hope to get a post-doctoral position, continuing to work in teaching, research, or both.

About two years ago I started cycling and quickly fell in love with the sport. I've raced two seasons of cyclocross, and last year completed the Lotoja classic: a 202 mile bike race from Logan, UT to Jackson Hole, WY. I've signed up for Lotoja again this year and hope to beat my time from last year. I also enjoy mountain biking, and have had a wonderful first year in Utah exploring the trails from Cache Valley to Moab. Starting this summer, I will take over duties as the vice president of the Utah State University Cycling Club. In addition to racing, I will be helping to budget the team, lead rides and workouts, and also recruit new members to the team.