

CHRISTOPHER BLACKFORD

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Toronto, Canada

EDUCATION



MSc. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. University of Toronto

2015 - 2018

Thesis title: "Connectivity coarse filter approach for Marine Protected Area Network Design"
Supervisors: Marie-Josée Fortin, Martin Krkošek.



BSc. Honours (with high distinction). University of Toronto

2010 - 2014

Double major in Environmental Biology and Psychology.

Thesis title: "Effects of germination segregation between two native Californian grasses on competitive ability and fitness." Supervisor: Benjamin Gilbert.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Forest Geoinformatics Research Analyst, Natural Resources Canada

October 2018 – Present

Using machine learning to understand relationships between environmental variables and important soil traits (moisture, texture etc.) across a large spatial extent in Ontario, Canada. Duties include developing an automated and reproducible workflow; testing effects of different environmental variables and data structure; and comparing performance of different machine learning approaches to develop standards for digital soil mapping.

Field Assistant, University of British Columbia

April 2015 – August 2015

Assisted in a project testing the effects of tributary loss and riparian vegetation on downstream river ecosystems. Duties included field equipment construction, flow measurement, invertebrate collection, water quality analysis (with probe), and sediment analysis.

Research Assistant, University of Toronto

May 2013 – August 2013, May 2014 – December 2014

Predicted boreal tree species range shifts under climate change. Duties included governmental data collection, data processing, data analysis, mapping, and report writing.

Research Assistant, University of Toronto

September 2014 – December 2014

In collaboration with NESCent research group (<https://www.nescent.org>), investigated cultural evolution using language diversity as a proxy. Duties included spatial analysis in ArcGIS as well as data processing in Microsoft Excel and R.

Greenhouse Assistant, University of Toronto

January 2013 – May 2013

Helped run an experiment on phylogenetic community assembly in plants. Duties included greenhouse maintenance, experimental design, planting, soil mixing, and biomass analysis.

Work-study Student, University of Toronto

September 2012 – April 2013

Helped run undergraduate participants through environmental psychology experiments investigating how people frame environmental issues in a local vs a global context and how they perceive "whistle-blowers".

TEACHING

Teaching Assistant, University of Toronto

2015 – 2018

BIO120 – Adaptation and Biodiversity. First year undergraduate course that introduces core concepts of ecology and evolution.

ENV234 - Environmental Biology. Second year undergraduate course that draws on elements from geology, soil science, biology and ecology to understand past and present environments and human impacts on landscapes and ecosystems.

ENV334 - Environmental Biology: Applied Ecology. Third year undergraduate course that focuses on human-managed ecosystems (e.g. agro-ecosystems), bio-indicators of anthropogenic impacts, ecosystem restoration, adaptive management, and local management/restoration issues.

In addition to the typical duties of a teaching assistant (teaching labs, grading lab reports, meeting with students for academic advice), I developed and delivered a TA feedback survey to the students at the end of the semester to identify my strengths and how to improve as an educator.

Undergraduate Mentor, University of Toronto

July 2017

Assisted in the design and implementation of an undergraduate research project that studied parasite (sea lice) preference for different salmon species. This field work was conducted on a boat in the Broughton Archipelago (British Columbia coast).

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Board Member, Society for Conservation Biology – Toronto chapter

October 2015 – Present

Former Treasurer, Communications Manager and current Vice-President of SCB-Toronto (www.scbtoronto.com). Specific contributions include organizing events, managing finances, and assisting in running social media (website, Facebook, Twitter).

Lead Organizer, North American Congress for Conservation Biology 2018

December 2015 – July 2018

Involved in many tasks including venue selection, promoting conference to local academic institutions, estimating environmental cost of participants travel for carbon offset calculations, and organizing volunteers for the conference.

Volunteer facilitator, Royal Ontario Museum

2015 – 2016, Sept. 2017 – June 2018

Volunteer facilitator in the “Hands on Biodiversity” gallery at the ROM. Educated and excited visitors about biodiversity; using a Socratic approach to guide children to the right answers without outright lecturing them.

Fundraising chair, University of Toronto’s Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Graduate Student Association (EGSA)

September 2016 – May 2017

Ran the annual charity drive for the EGSA. Helped the department select preferred charity, raising \$565 for the selected charity (Against Malaria Foundation).

Social Media/IT coordinator, Ontario Ecology, Ethology, and Evolution Colloquium 2016 (OE3C2016)

September 2015 – May 2016

Designed and ran OE3C2016 website (<https://oe3c2016blog.wordpress.com/>) using a wordpress template, set up the Paypal payment system for the colloquium, and helped design the online registration process.

ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS (*presenting author)

- Blackford, C.***, Fortin, M.J. & Krkošek, M. (July 2018). Coarse Filter Approach for Marine Protected Area Network Design under Current and Future Climate Scenarios [Talk]. *North American Congress for Conservation Biology 2018*. Toronto, Canada.
- Blackford, C.*** & Fortin, M.J. (May 2017). Protected areas: How to design resilient networks using connectivity. [Talk]. *Canadian Society for Ecology & Evolution Meeting 2017*. Victoria, Canada.
- Blackford, C.*** & Fortin, M.J. (May 2016) Working towards an optimal Marine Protected Area network design in the Canadian Pacific Ocean. [Talk] *The 46th Ontario Ecology, Ethology, and Evolution Colloquium (OE3C)*. Toronto, Canada.
- Blackford, C.*** & Gilbert, B. (May 2014). Effects of germination segregation between two native Californian grasses on competitive ability and fitness. [Talk]. *The 44th Ontario Ecology, Ethology, and Evolution Colloquium (OE3C)*. Guelph, Canada.
- Blackford, C.*** & Gilbert, B. (April 2014). Effects of germination segregation between two native Californian grasses on competitive ability and fitness. [Poster]. *University of Toronto undergraduate research fair*. Toronto, Canada.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Proficient in:

- > R statistical software including automated data organization/manipulation, machine learning models, and spatial/statistical analysis.
- > GIS software (e.g. ArcGIS, QGIS, SAGA GIS)
- > Microsoft office programs including: Word, Excel, PowerPoint
- > Ontario tree identification

Familiar with:

- > Freshwater sediment sampling
- > Freshwater invertebrate sampling methods
- > Freshwater flow measurement

Certifications:

- > Workplace Hazardous Material Information System (WHIMIS) (2018)