

A Message for Potential Graduate Students from Daniel Beck
Department of Biological Sciences, Central Washington University, Ellensburg, WA

In advising graduate students, I tend to encourage independent thinking and independent projects. I encourage each student to develop his or her own individual thesis research that will likely be successful and meaningful for the student and, most importantly, in which they have the greatest interest and motivation. Students have the most success when they have a sense of ownership in their projects!

My research focuses on ecology and behavior of vertebrates, especially reptiles and amphibians in the Pacific Northwest, Southwestern USA, and Western Mexico. If you look at my publications, you'll see I have a particular interest in *Heloderma* (and other lizards) and rattlesnakes. My graduate students have worked on a variety of topics in vertebrate ecology with amphibians, reptiles, mammals and birds. I welcome students who are interested in my own research (e.g. Northern Pacific rattlesnakes, *Heloderma*, or tropical dry forest ecology), but I also welcome students who investigate topics outside my specific study system of reptile ecology. My current projects involve work in the Pacific Northwest (ecology of Northern Pacific rattlesnakes, horned lizards, alligator lizards), and Mexico (tropical deciduous forest ecology). As of 2015, I am currently focusing on the ecology and behavior of the Northern Pacific rattlesnake in Washington State, and encourage potential students with an interest in snake ecology to consider working on that system with me. I am hoping in the near future to also offer more opportunities for graduate research in the tropical dry forests of western Mexico.

Here is a list of my past and present CWU graduate students, and titles of their MS theses:

- Amanda Stegen -- Nest-site characteristics of Red-naped sapsuckers (*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*) in Central Washington. Now teaching high school in southern Washington.
- Daphne Sewing -- The effects of forest fires on northern spotted owls in Washington's Eastern Cascade Mountains. Now doing environmental education work in Tennessee.
- Erik Stenehjem -- Seasonal body temperature fluctuations in the yellow-bellied marmot (*Marmota flaviventris*). Now lead wildlife biologist for Barry M. Goldwater Range, Arizona.
- Heather Simmons -- A field study of the northern leopard frog (*Rana pipiens*) in the potholes reservoir area, Washington. Now teaching in southern Washington
- Casey Newman -- Forest thinning in Central Washington: effects on deer mice (*Peromyscus maniculatus*) and yellow pine chipmunk (*Tamias amoenus*) abundance and microhabitat use. Now teaching in Portland, Oregon.
- Megan Lahti -- Seasonal variation of habitat use and movement by the pygmy short horned lizard (*Phrynosoma douglasi*). Now a biology professor at Arizona Western College in Yuma, Arizona finishing a PhD at Utah State University.
- Aja Woodrow -- Long-term effects of fire and salvage logging on cavity-nesting birds in Washington's Eastern Cascade Mountains. Now a wildlife biologist for the U.S Forest Service in central Washington.
- Patrick Emblidge -- Distribution, habitat use, and status of Gila monster populations in southwestern Utah. Now a biologist for USGS, Las Vegas, NV.

- Ray Geruso, Fall 2008 to Fall 2014 (co-advised with Dr. Bob Hickey, Geography Dept.), Thesis topic = Rattlesnake ecology in the Methow valley of Washington
- Adam Hanuksela – Fall 2009 to fall 2011: Thesis topic = Bird communities in Pitayal forests of Southern Sonora Mexico. Now Director, Navopatio Field Station, Sonora Mexico
- James Meidell – Fall 2009 to fall 2011: Thesis topic = Ecology and Habitat Use of the Northern Alligator Lizard. Now working for the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources.
- Melissa (Reitz) Babik – Fall 2009 to summer 2011: Thesis topic = Maternal and Environmental Effects on Hatchling Western Pond Turtles in Washington. Now a project manager for the Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group in White Salmon, WA.
- Kerry Holomb – Fall 2010 to present: Thesis topic = Temperature and Water Regulation by the Mexican Beaded Lizard: Coping with Intense Seasonality in a Tropical Deciduous Forest. Now working as a biologist for the USGS in Las Vegas, NV.
- Caleb Loughran – Fall 2012 to Summer 2014: Thesis topic = Thermal Biology of the Northern Pacific Rattlesnake in Central Washington. Now a PhD student at the University of New Mexico under Blair Wolf.
- Lewis Meyers – Winter 2014 to present: Thesis topic = Seasonal Movements and Ecology of Adult Bull Elk in the Colockum Herd
- Taggart Butterfield – Fall 2014 to present. Thesis topic = Ecology of Wood Turtles *Rhinoclemmys rubida* and *R. pulcherrmima* in a Tropical Deciduous Forest of Chamela, Jalisco, Mexico
- Samantha Tidd (co-advised with Dr. Jason Irwin, Biology) – Fall 2014 to present. Temperature Effects on Digestion in the Northern Pacific Rattlesnake (*Crotalus oreganus*)
- Joseph Chase – starting in Fall 2015....

Why Pursue a Masters Degree?

While many universities discourage students from seeking a master's degree, and prefer them to concentrate their efforts on pursuit of a Ph.D., CWU has developed a strong program at the master's level. Why do we believe so strongly in master's degrees? A master's program can provide training and expertise for those needing a terminal degree for entry-level positions in government, industry, and education. It serves other students by preparing them for the Ph.D. degree. Obtaining a master's degree before a Ph.D. broadens your perspective by diversifying your exposure to new ideas, provides experience in research and writing, and provides what is likely your first opportunity to publish a paper.

What to do if you're thinking of applying to graduate school at CWU -- If you are interested in applying to graduate school at CWU, first check out the information and links at CWU's Graduate Studies and Research webpage <http://www.cwu.edu/~masters/>. As you consider an application, first find faculty in our department with whom you might be interested in working (see <http://www.cwu.edu/~biology/faculty/currentFaculty/index.html>) then contact them via email to see if they are interested in taking new students. Students are seldom accepted into our graduate program without first connecting with a faculty member who is willing to take them on as a student. New students are usually accepted for entry in the fall of our academic year (mid September) and are expected to

complete their graduate program in two years (although many good students have continued into a third year). Most of our graduate students use teaching assistantships as an important source of financial assistance and that support is normally guaranteed for two years, so long as the student does a satisfactory job as a teaching assistantship. Research assistantships and summer stipends are occasionally available on a competitive basis, as are other sources of funds related to specific externally-funded projects.