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My plan, after graduating college, had been to enroll in graduate school, but I couldn't decide between programs in wildlife research or environmental policy. While I tried to decide, I worked as an environmental consultant and soon found that consulting satisfied both of those interests. My job was to design and perform various surveys in support of proposed projects and to turn the results of those surveys into actionable recommendations: Will an Endangered Species Act permit be required? Are there jurisdictional wetlands that should be avoided? What impacts to biological resources should be disclosed in an Environmental Assessment? The work was fascinating and fulfilling – here I could work at the interface between policy, management, science, and private industry. I put my plans for graduate school on hold and, eventually, set up my own company so that I could work as an independent consultant.

Working for myself provided flexibility, allowing me to continue participating in academic research. Every summer, I worked on a field crew studying Flammulated Owls (*Psiloscops flammeolus*), a U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Sensitive Species and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Species of Special Concern. These owls' lives are inextricably linked to old-growth ponderosa pine forests, making them a species that land managers are keen to understand. Our research took place in both baseline study sites and sites where the USFS was proposing mechanical forest thinning. I was proud of our research aims specifically intended to be useful to land managers. As a consultant, I found that truly useful research that could inform management and decision making about wildlife was still lacking. This need inspired me to return to school so that I could conduct research that helped answer practical questions about how best to manage wildlife resources.

Specifically, I'm interested in the effects of prescribed fire treatments on wildlife. Land managers use prescribed fire to reduce fuel loads and restore the historically-typical disturbance regimes to ecosystems. Yet, we know very little about how wildlife responds to these management actions. This information is critically needed by land managers who are, right now, making decisions about how to manage forests in the face of the growing threat of increasingly severe wildfires.

My current research aims to understand how the Flammulated Owl responds to prescribed fire. The Rio Grande National Forest is planning a prescribed burn of the Hot Creek Research Natural Area in southern Colorado. In collaboration with USFS, I am studying how the owls' prey responds to fire, how the distribution of nesting cavities changes following fire, and how fire influences the owls' habitat use patterns. I have worked collaboratively with forest leadership to ensure that my research produces information and tools that are immediately useful to them.

My future research will focus broadly on animal movement behavior and demography. I am also committed to ensuring the utility of my work by answering questions that lie in that interface between management, industry, science, and policy that I was so taken by in my first consulting job.