

The 20th Annual Wildlife Society Conference Research Presentation

October 8th marked a momentous day in my early development as a professional ecologist and collaborative member of the science community. A senior Environmental Science major at the University of Notre Dame, personal research experience on the University of Notre Dame Environmental Research Center (UNDERC), had afforded me a pristine environmental location, capable faculty mentorship by mammologist Dr. Michael Cramer, and 3 months to develop independent research. I submitted my UNDERC research project, titled "*Preferential foraging behavior of forest deer mice (*Peromyscus maniculatus gracilis*) on native and non-native *Picea* seeds*", to the Wildlife Society for their 20th Annual Conference and was thrilled to be accepted as a Student Presenter for the Milwaukee Venue.

My experience sharing my work to mitigate invasive flora through ecological understanding, networking with passionate researchers from around the nation, and attending various animal behavior and conservation seminars left me inspired and excited to continue on my professional journey in wildlife ecology. On Tuesday morning I awoke early to enjoy a cup of hot complimentary coffee and set-up my poster presentation. I was soon greeted by enthused wildlife professionals highly interested in my research and findings, hoping to apply my data for future research and conservation management. After a wonderful lunch with my research mentor, Dr. Michael Cramer, I returned to the Wisconsin Conference Center to sit-in on several Animal Behavior and Integrative Conservation seminars and panel discussions. Both piqued my interests in Integrative Wildlife Conservation and revealed to me the complexities and joy inherent in my chosen career path. My day at The Wildlife Society Conference ended with a Student-