

# Strive to land a job that you feel passionate about

Jeff Knetter (B.S. 1997, M.S. 2001 Wildlife Ecology) knew he wanted a career that involved both natural resources and working with the public. He came to that conclusion as a graduate student conducting field-work on piping plovers in rural north-western North Dakota and northeastern Montana. “I needed to get permission to gain access to private lands in that area. As a result, I met with a lot of private landowners and discussed pertinent issues with them. This was the point where I really gained my passion for working with both the public AND natural resources,” says Jeff.

Today Jeff is the Upland Game and Waterfowl Staff Biologist for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) where he is responsible for statewide development and coordination of the upland game and waterfowl programs. He also serves as IDFG’s technical representative on the Pacific Flyway Study Committee that makes decisions having an impact on the entire Flyway.

Jeff held several “stepping stone” positions prior to his current one at IDFG. Besides working many seasonal jobs while he was an undergraduate, Jeff was the Long Term Ecological Research Program Field Coordinator for the UW Center for Limnology, a Conservation Specialist for the Aldo Leopold Foundation, and the Northern Panhandle Habitat Biologist for the IDFG. In the latter two positions, Jeff worked extensively with private landowners and credits these positions for confirming his choice of a career that involves working with private landowners.



*In the photo above Jeff Knetter prepares to band a mallard in association with the North American Bird Banding Program.*

Jeff suggests students not only focus on their academic performance, but accumulate as much field experience as they can in a wide variety of positions. This will help them narrow down what it is they are truly passionate about. As a former student who is now on the hiring side of the table, Jeff says he always looks for desire and passion in his job applicants. “I also think its important for students to introduce themselves to faculty, graduate students, and professionals in the field. Ask them what drives them and why they are interested in their field,” says Jeff. “It’s fascinating to learn how folks have gotten into their field and may lend insight into whether you would enjoy working in a similar position.”