

This wildlife coordinator manages threatened species in Hawaii

When Sarah Knox (B.S. Wildlife Ecology 2003) goes to work in the morning, she has a long commute. That's because she manages threatened and endangered species on the remote 130,000-acre Pohakuloa Training Area (PTA) on the Island of Hawaii, about an hour and a half drive from her home. Sarah's duties are to coordinate and implement monitoring and management of the federally listed wildlife in the PTA. "We mainly deal with surveying for birds and conducting threat control of their habitat," says Sarah. She also is involved with an investigation of the Hawaiian hoary bat to discover its habitat preferences as well as reasons for population fluctuations of the species.

Carrying out these responsibilities involves a lot of GIS mapping as well as report writing, says Sarah. Sarah's employer is actually Colorado State University's Center for Environmental Management of Military Land. The Army contracts with the Center to manage the threatened and endangered species on the PTA property in Hawaii.

Sarah enjoys the variety of tasks that her work affords her. "I get to deal with birds and mammals, their habitats and threats over a fairly large scale, so my daily tasks have a lot of variety and change seasonally as well," says Sarah.

While an undergraduate at the UW-Madison, Sarah recalls working for a graduate student who was conducting research on grassland bird nesting. She says this experience "set the tone" for subsequent positions. "In addition to learning nest searching and bird handling skills, I had the chance to work closely with a large crew in rough field conditions, an invaluable experience for all of my future positions," says Sarah. "That opportunity helped build my confidence for conducting fieldwork and jump started my enthusiasm for employment possibilities after graduation." And no doubt that same experience made Sarah a standout when she applied for her current position in a highly desirable location.

The photo below shows Pohakuloa Training Area (Hawaii) Natural Resources staff covering an endangered species of mint with emergency fencing to protect it from feral ungulates.

