



Annabelle McCarthy

Q: What is your current position and academic focus?

A: I am a graduate student in the Haddad Lab at Michigan State University's Kellogg Biological Station. I research butterflies that use restored prairie in agricultural lands. I study how we can optimize working lands (farms and ranches) to support biodiversity.

Q: Why did you become a biologist?

A: I became a biologist because I really love science! Science was always my favorite subject in school, and I used to want to be a science teacher. Once I started college, I found out that anyone could be a scientist, including me! As much as I still love teaching, I realized that I really love asking (and trying to answer) questions, so I ended up deciding to become a researcher. As a researcher, I still get lots of opportunities to teach, which is a big bonus!

Q: Do you have any aspects of your identity that you feel are underrepresented, marginalized, or minoritized in STEM or society?

A: I'm Latina, my mom's side of the family is Mexican. I'm a woman, I'm bisexual, and I have ADHD.



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**Q: What is an obstacle you faced related to/during your STEM career?**

A: All of my science teachers growing up were men, all the way until my second year in college. They were all fantastic teachers, but I didn't realize how much this affected my ability to see myself as a scientist, until I finally met a woman biologist. It wasn't until I met her that I actually seriously started to consider going into research.

**Q: What are hobbies and/or interests that you have outside of your research?**

A: I love knitting, reading, rock climbing, cooking, hiking, and camping!

**Q: What is your favorite thing about camping?**

A: I love being outside and exploring new places. Camping usually gives me an opportunity to do my other favorite hobby (hiking). One of the things I love about camping is how uncomfortable it can be! It's way harder to make meals, wash dishes, and get ready for bed when you aren't at home. I really like how camping reminds me to be grateful for things like running water and my cozy bed, things that can be really easy to take for granted.

**Q: How did you get into this hobby?**

A: I first went camping with my best friend and her family, when I was in the 5th grade. My parents aren't very big fans of the outdoors, so I've actually never been camping with my family. I've gone camping with my friends and their families throughout my childhood, and I finally planned my own camping trip when I was 22! At first, I was nervous that something would go wrong when I started camping without "real adults" around (i.e. parents), but once I had a few trips under my belt I was addicted! If I can find some camping sites that are close enough to home, I have even been known to go camping two weekends in a row.

**Q: Why is it important for scientists to have hobbies?**

My hobbies give me an opportunity to relax, hang out with friends, and have fun! Like any job, being a researcher can be stressful. I find that it's important for me to take time in the day to stop thinking about work and do something fun. I go rock climbing twice a week with friends, and that time is really important because it's a time for me to be silly!

**Q: What advice do you have for aspiring biologists?**

A: Biologists are not just serious, scary geniuses in lab coats. I used to think that I wasn't smart enough or serious enough to be a scientist, but those things aren't true. If you are curious and you like trying to learn more about the world, then you are already on track to be a scientist!

