



## Biz Turnell

### Researcher Background:

Biz Turnell is an evolutionary biologist and behavioral ecologist. Their doctoral and postdoctoral research focused on postcopulatory sexual selection, especially the patterns and mechanisms of sperm allocation, storage, and use. They now work as a science editor.

### Q: Why did you become a biologist?

A: I have always loved nature and am especially fascinated by animal behavior. When I found out you could watch animals behave for a living, I was sold!

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

A: I love to be active outside, whether I'm running, hiking, biking, or just taking a walk. I also like to read (mainly fiction) and watch independent and foreign films, ideally in a theater.

### Q: What is your favorite thing about hiking?

A: I chose hiking because it combines two of my biggest loves: being physically active and being in nature. Spending time in nature clears my mind, gets me in touch with my surroundings, and helps me cultivate gratitude and awe. I always come back from a hike feeling refreshed both mentally and emotionally.

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

A: Having hobbies is important for everyone. Hobbies help us to explore our interests outside of work, maintain a balanced lifestyle, and meet new people. Scientists in particular can be very single-minded when it comes to their work; there is always pressure to finish that experiment, write that



paper, submit that grant. As scientists, we can benefit from having hobbies that keep us grounded, bring us joy, and remind us that there's more to life than our research.

**Q: Tell us about an obstacle you faced related to/during your STEM career.**

A: "During my second year of graduate school, I was diagnosed with Hashimoto's disease, an autoimmune disorder that affects the thyroid gland. The disease caused dramatic weight loss, followed by dramatic weight gain. As a result, the gender dysphoria I had experienced as an adolescent resurfaced, and I entered a period of depression. Although I did not take a leave of absence, my ability to focus on my research was negatively impacted for several semesters. It ended up taking me eight years to earn my PhD, which is somewhat longer than average in the life sciences [1].

[1] National Science Foundation, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics. 2018. Doctorate Recipients from U.S. Universities: 2016. Special Report NSF 18-304. Alexandria, VA.  
<https://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2018/nsf18304/report/what-influences-the-path-to-the-doctorate/time-to-degree.cfm> "

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

A: There are so many directions to follow in biology that it can be a challenge to figure out your options. Talk to as many people as possible and get some hands-on experience to develop your interests. If you can, volunteer, intern, or do a research project for credit at a local museum or college/university. Finding a good mentor is also really helpful, so don't be afraid to reach out to teachers and professors. Finally, failure is part of the process. If something doesn't work out the first time, keep trying!

