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As I child, some of my fondest memories were spent outdoors: in the woods, on the beach, or up a tree. As I've grown older, I have realized that I want to use my intelligence to maintain the health of the natural places I love and from which I derive so much enjoyment. This fall, I had the opportunity to visit Volo Bog on a field trip in my forestry class. My professor, Glenn Adelson, described to us how bogs are formed, and how they create niches for rare, sensitive species. The larches were especially beautiful during our visit, and I decided that of all the trees we had learned, *Larix laricina* was my favorite.

Throughout high school, I volunteered at Elawa Farms in Lake Forest. The garden manager gave me my first lessons in ecology. He taught me how the interactions between the atmosphere, the soil, plants and animals are all interdependent and need to be appreciated in order to grow organic food. I remember that after one particular lesson, I left the farm and went on a run in the savannah behind Elawa. It was just beginning to snow and the whole landscape was quieting down. I scaled a tree and looked out over the autumnal landscape. In that moment, I was able to take in all of the peace and all of the life which dwelt within the preserve. I looked down and saw a doe making her way through the dead grass towards me. She didn't notice me and I got a chance to observe this animal totally within her element. I think it was at that moment that I knew I wanted to study biology in college. I wanted to be able to approach life with a scientific understanding. An understanding which would afford me the skills to be able to protect natural habitats and curb pollutant practices.

Before I began my college career, I took a course through the National Outdoor Leadership School: it was a powerful learning experience. For 31 days, I was taught how to travel in the backcountry of the North Cascades. I learned the history of the National Parks in the United States. I gained a greater appreciation for the immense beauty of nature and the struggle environmentalists face to keep nature "untrammelled by man."

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In San Diego, where I carried out the first year of my undergraduate education, I volunteered with a park ranger on the weekends. She taught me how the drought was affecting the local canyon ecosystems. She pointed out that most of the vegetation I saw was invasive and choking out the more sensitive native flora. On campus, I partnered with another student to run our campus garden. We expanded the garden's influence and were awarded an official Commendation from the school.

To build upon my interest in organic farming I worked full-time at Elawa Farms in the summer of 2015. I was given a great deal of responsibility and independence. I was in charge of the production of all of the organic produce. I was taught organic growing methods by my boss, Regina, who was formerly a horticulturist at the University of Georgia. I implemented some of my own ideas as well: to cut down on our use of landscape fabric, I used newspapers from our recycling center to prevent the growth of weeds.

Looking forward, I am going to work this summer as a research fellow at Horne Point lab in Maryland. I will be working with a biologist to quantify the health of the Chesapeake Bay using data from drones and satellites. I then plan to work for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to continue being taught how to carry out effective, meaningful research. Eventually, I want to use my knowledge, my leadership skills, and my appreciation for life to manage natural areas in a sustainable way.

Thank you for considering me for this scholarship.