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## Groves '11 Receives National Research Fellowship

April 18, 2013

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois Wesleyan University alumna Anna Groves of Naperville, Ill., class of 2011, has received a prestigious National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship. Groves is currently a graduate student pursuing a Ph.D. in plant biology at Michigan State University.

According to the National Science Foundation, only 2,000 Graduate Research Fellowships were awarded from over 13,000 applications. The program recognizes and supports outstanding graduate students in NSF-supported science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines. The Fellowship will cover Groves' tuition for three years of her doctoral program at Michigan State, along with a stipend.

An environmental studies major at Illinois Wesleyan, Groves is now a graduate student at Michigan State's Brudvig lab in plant biology. The lab's central research uses basic ecological concepts to inform restoration practices, while using restoration as a system to learn more about ecology.

"I'm broadly interested in why restoration projects don't always turn out the way we want them to," said Groves. "If we can't rebuild an ecosystem, then we don't know enough about its ecology."

More specifically, Groves' research questions consider whether the establishment phase of a restoration (clearing existing vegetation and then seeding a prairie, for example) or the later ongoing management (burning or manual brush removal in the prairie) has a greater impact on restoration outcomes.

"Both are known to be important, but sorting out the effects of each and the interaction between the two will have important implications for land managers with limited resources," said Groves.

As an undergraduate at Illinois Wesleyan, Groves conducted a research project analyzing population levels of red-tailed hawks and American kestrels and their relation to latitude using five years of winter raptor survey data. R. Given Harper, George C. and Ella Beach Lewis Endowed Chair of Biology at IWU, served as her undergraduate research advisor. Groves was named the outstanding student in environmental studies in 2011.

"Anna is a very impressive student and she is very deserving of this prestigious fellowship," said Harper. "I am confident she has the potential to make significant contributions in restoration ecology."

Prior to entering graduate school, Groves also worked four seasons in Illinois and Nevada as a research technician or field assistant.

"My summer work with the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory has had the strongest influence in bringing me to where I am today," said Groves. "My inspiration for my current research questions definitely stems from the patterns I saw in the natural areas in Illinois that we were surveying."

After completing her Ph.D., Groves would like to continue doing research for a nonprofit or perhaps a government agency.



*Anna Groves '11 conducts field research.*

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