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### **Alumna Developed Research Skills in Science Labs at Gardner-Webb**

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# Alumna Developed Research Skills in Science Labs at Gardner-Webb

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Office of University  
Communications

September 7, 2017


## *Amber Bellamy '09 Works for Federal Agency to Protect Marine Mammals and Turtles*



Amber Bellamy received her  
doctorate in evolution, ecology and  
organismal biology.

As a student in the Department of Natural Sciences at Gardner-Webb University, Amber Bellamy '09 appreciated the various ways her professors gave her glimpses of her future career. Each class included several hands-on activities that sharpened her research skills and prepared her for graduate school. An environmental science major with a minor in biology, Bellamy took advantage of every learning opportunity.

“I remember all of the bizarre smells that were generated in organic chemistry lab, going outside and playing in ecology, tasting lots of fruits in botany, field trips to one of Duke’s power plants and a wastewater treatment facility for environmental chemistry, collecting salamanders and losing one of them in my dorm room, observing Key deer and snorkeling in the Florida Keys, and collecting insects for invertebrate zoology,” Bellamy reflected.



Amber Bellamy, left, studied aquatic  
insects while working on her doctorate.

She also learned the process of scientific research by conducting her own project with the encouragement and mentorship of Dr. Stefka Eddins. She received no academic credit for the work, but it was well worth the effort. “I spent many nights looking at pond scum and stream gunk through a microscope, comparing water quality and zooplankton assemblages across multiple water bodies on campus and in Shelby, N.C.,” Bellamy described. “From that experience, I understood firsthand how science was done, how things may not always pan out, and how you should always have a contingency plan.”

After graduation she worked for a year as a watershed coordinator through the AmeriCorps VISTA program in Haysi, a small community in southwest Virginia. The job involved monitoring water quality, securing grants and environmental education. She left Haysi to

attend graduate school at Ohio State University, earning her doctorate in evolution, ecology and organismal biology. Her research focused on aquatic insects, and she studied how land use impacts stream food webs.

Environmental education was part of her job  
when Amber Bellamy, center, worked with  
AmeriCorps VISTA in Haysi, Va.

Since receiving her doctorate, she has taken a job in the headquarters of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in Silver Spring, Md. She works for NOAA Fisheries in the Office of Science and Technology. “The primary goals of our office are to support the science centers that are located on the east and west coasts,” Bellamy offered. “My office and position specifically focus on ensuring that there is sound science supporting management decisions as they relate to marine mammals and sea turtles. I also have a couple of opportunities to assist some NOAA scientists with their field work with Southern Resident Killer Whales and sea turtles.”

In the future she would like to find a job that combines research and teaching. “I just enjoy doing research and playing outside, so I’m hoping to find a career that relates to extension with land- or sea-grant universities or with a non-government organization,” she pondered. “Who knows, maybe I’ll be a professor at a small, liberal arts college.”