

June 2018 Featured Expert: *Auriel Fournier*

I happily introduce Auriel Fournier who is a Postdoctoral Research Associate for Mississippi State University for the past year. She is studying birds in the Gulf of Mexico. Learn more about what she does below and help me welcome her to The People and Nature Connection. -- Kirsten



TPNC: What does a typical work day look like for someone in your position?

Fournier: My current job is mostly desk based, with a fair bit of travel involved as well. I'm a postdoc, which means that I have a PhD and am in a 2 year position where I do research and present on that research to help inform conversation work. The project I'm apart of is all about birds in the Gulf of Mexico, so I

spend a lot of time writing and editing conservation documents, and also traveling around to give talks about the project.

TPNC: What do you like about your job?

Fournier: Every day is different and presents a new set of things to learn and puzzles to solve. I get to work with smart, deeply knowledgeable people to help conserve birds and the ecosystems they live in and I get to travel and see new places.

TPNC: What do you find challenging about your job?

Fournier: There is never enough time to get everything



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done, and often it feels like we're running out of time in the face of so many conservation challenges. There is also not a lot of stability in this field at the beginning, you move around the country a lot chasing jobs, which is fun, but also stressful.

TPNC: What types of classes did you have to take in college to get your position?

Fournier: I have a undergraduate degree in wildlife ecology and management and a PhD in biology. I've taken classes in everything from advanced chemistry and statistics to biology and writing.



TPNC: What is your favorite aspect of nature?

Fournier: Bird migration. Its fascinated me for a long time and it still boggles my mind that birds are able to fly across thousands of miles year after year. I want to know everything about it.

TPNC: What is the biggest misconception you would like the public to know about what you do?

Fournier: Loving what you do doesn't mean that it isn't real work. Conservation

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work is hard, and often emotionally exhausting because you are so invested in what you do. Folks often tell me my job is so easy because I just play with birds all day, but its more complicated then that.

Thanks to Auriel for sharing your work!