

Committee: **Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee**

Organization/Sector represented:

Name: **Brendon Samuels**

Occupation: **Graduate Student Research Scientist**

Work experience: **I am currently a graduate student / research scientist at the University of Western Ontario where I work at the Advanced Facility for Avian Research. I have worked previously in a variety of commercial settings. Prior to my enrolment at Western I worked for two years as a baker and lead cashier. I have previously worked in a grocery store, a pet store, a consumer electronic store, and a veterinarian office. I have also volunteered as a research assistant in the psychology department at York University, and for a non-profit organization which works to provide support to underprivileged youth in the Toronto District School Board. I have volunteered at three advanced living facilities. In my time at Western I have served on several institutional and student-run committees and have been actively involved in organizing events and planning. I have worked as a teaching assistant in the psychology and biology departments. I also do side work as a freelance graphic designer, mostly for small businesses and individuals.**

Education: **I received a Masters degree in neuroscience from the University of Western Ontario in 2018. I previously completed a Bachelor of Science in psychology at the University of Guelph (2014). My academic interests include topics in human psychology and cognition, animal behaviour, and applied ecology in the context of human-wildlife interactions in urban settings. I am currently working on my PhD in biology at Western studying bird-window collisions, with the goal of producing recommendations for mitigation strategies to reduce bird deaths. I have been fortunate to attend and present my research at many academic conferences, and through these experiences have amassed knowledge about additional topics outside of my own expertise.**

Skills: **I have received formal training in life sciences. I have a unique perspective in being able to synthesize my background in human psychology with an understanding of biological systems. Specifically, in my studies I have developed specialized knowledge about the behaviour and ecological significance of wild birds. I have strong capacities for critical thinking, analysis and planning. I have experience with reading, editing and producing technical documents. I have designed and executed numerous behavioural experiments with both human and animal subjects, and in the process have learned to pay close attention to methodology and analyses that are applied in research. I am generally knowledgeable about various topics that are pertinent to the work of the EEPAC, including biological systems, animal behaviour, protection of biodiversity, climate change and ethics. Personally, as a homeowner living in London, I have made efforts to re-naturalize my yard to support pollinators and other native species, and care deeply about preserving London's natural heritage. I am familiar with London's fauna and geography, as well as the city's culture and community programs.**

Interest reason: **I believe that scientists have an existential obligation to serve society, in capacities beyond just their work within institutions that is central to their careers. The work of scientists benefits everyone in a society only when it is communicated effectively and applied to solve problems. I am motivated to use my knowledge and skillset as a scientist to promote positive changes in society. The city of London has been generous to me as both a resident and a student, and I recognize the many benefits of living in a place that prioritizes its balance with nature. Because the natural heritage of London is important to me personally, I want to ensure that others may share in its enjoyment. I also believe that public awareness of threats to nature is fundamental to solving the complex challenges currently facing our ecosystems and wildlife.**

Contributions: **As human habitation in the London area continues to expand rapidly, important decisions must be made about how to best preserve and improve the city's natural heritage while supporting this growth. These decisions must consider various anthropogenic impacts on wildlife, which does not have its own representative voice in the city's operations and planning. I think that my knowledge about London's wildlife, including its basic needs, threats and ecological roles, will enable me to contribute meaningful ideas to the work of the committee. I believe that my critical thinking skills and eye for detail will be assets in the committee's review of proposals and other documents.**

Past contributions: **I have never been involved with a committee whose mandate focuses on**

**environmental or ecological policy. However, I have been involved with a variety of other committees in my 2.5 years at Western University. I am currently a graduate student representative on the University of Western Ontario's animal care committee (ACC). The committee reviews animal use protocols for research involving live animals and provides critical feedback for conducting research with utmost consideration of animal welfare. In the past I have sat on various committees for academic conferences, science outreach events, institutional and departmental affairs and student-run organizations. Although my role on these committees has varied, in general my expertise has lent itself to event planning, communication/social media/promotions, drafting and review of documents, and general brainstorming of ideas. I have personally been involved with the founding of two new groups at Western, the Society of Neuroscience Graduate Students and the (as of yet, unofficial) ornithological club. I am currently involved in an initiative called Bird Safe @ UWO which is working to address anthropogenic hazards posed to wild birds on campus, including windows.**

**Interpersonal: I have long history of collaborating with others in coordinated work on large-scale projects, the successes of which were built upon contributions from many individuals. My involvement in the groups described above has often required me to work closely with others. In most of this work I have relied on others for their feedback and support, and I frequently provided comments and assistance to others. As a research scientist/graduate student I frequently collaborate with peers on their projects, and their advice has certainly helped me with my own. My earlier time spent working in the retail sector granted me a lot of exposure to interacting with the public and helped me to develop my communication skills. I consider myself to be socially intuitive, respectful of others and capable of resolving interpersonal conflict. When differences of opinion may arise, I work past them by actively listening to each party, and where possible, finding compromise. I am able to receive and issue criticism constructively. I recognize diversity as a great strength when people work together, and I am gratified by opportunities to learn from the perspectives and experiences of others.**

**Interview interest: Yes**