

What I used to do, and what I do now as a Wildlife Biologist

They say you can tell a lot about a person by the things in their office, guess I fall into that category. Of course there are work papers scattered across my desk at any given time, the computer displays the list of emails demanding my attention, and the phone is within easy reach. But the most important things are the photos of my family and the memento's of my life with them. There is a painting, a baseball, and framed quotes that define who I am, but there is one thing that hangs on the wall that is a little unique. It is tattered and torn because I've had it taped in place for a bunch of years. That eight and a half by 11 sheet of paper is the image with my blog and sort of follows my professional journey in a comical, yet fairly accurate way.

Wow, how things have changed over the years. My wall hanging illustrates some of the many responses I get from people when they hear I am/was a Wildlife Biologist. I have been called a "turtle herder", "an environmentalist/tree hugger", "a bugs and bunny lover", and other descriptive names, some pretty funny, others not so nice, but mostly in good fun. I have always loved the outdoors and still get a rush seeing and studying wildlife. My family laughs at me when we take road trips and I happen to spot wildlife and get all excited about it.

Early in my career, I did what I consider lots of cool Wildlife Biologist things, like tracking desert tortoises with transmitters at the Nevada Test Site, catching small mammals and clipping their toes or placing ear tags to do capture/recapture studies, snowshoeing in Grand Teton National Park looking for Canada Lynx and other furbearers, mist-netting for bats at the openings of mine shafts and adits, and calling for owls and northern goshawks in the forest. Good memories. For me, those were the good ole, Wildlife Biologist days.

Nowadays, I rarely (ok never) get to do those types of cool field studies and surveys. Still, I have been truly blessed to have opportunities to move up in my career, first at JBR Environmental and now at Stantec, where I have taken on more responsibilities and diversified my consulting experience. Way back when I graduated from college, I thought I wanted to be a game warden in some podunk town in rural Nevada, but the photo with the caption "What I actually do" more accurately describes my current role.

My time is spent mainly reviewing other biologist's and specialist's reports and write-ups and/or performing Project Management activities for large permitting projects. Now I only get to dream about the photo and caption of "What I think I do," but that's ok. I really enjoy my current role as a Project Manager because I get to meet with great clients and have the opportunity to interact with so many of our amazing technical staff on large projects. Every once in a while, I still make it out in the field for a project kick-off meeting or field trip and although it may not be snowshoeing through a National Park, I always relish that touch of where it all began.