Writing Contest – How do Scientists Help their Communities?

Emma Thornburg

 Envision a world without animals, plants, trees, and wildlife in general. Pretty hard to think about isn’t it? You’re probably thinking of a world with factories, smoke, and plenty of cars. That place in your mind, is a place that we would never want to live in. That’s exactly why we need to realize how important nature and its inhabitants are. That’s why we need scientists.

 Sherri Lisius is a wildlife biologist for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). She studies sage grouse, habitat changes, vegetation, and a wide variety of animals. She attended college for 4 years at Humboldt State University in Arcata, California, and earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Science. Sherri says that, “For many people, when they go to college they have to sit in classes, and I did some of that, but I also got to go outside a lot and observe plants and animals to learn about them.” Before she began working in Bishop, Sherri worked in Yosemite as a bear biologist. As a biologist, she has to use surveys, maps, and tracking systems. A lot of her work includes plants too. Sherri looks at the amount of vegetation certain animals are used to, and determines if that vegetation is healthy and will be available for those animals in the future. Sherri has also done a great deal of animal captures in her job. Biologists do captures for many reasons. The animal could be hurt and in need of help. Scientists might also need to attach a tracking device to the animal to understand where that animal goes and what types of habitats the animal uses. Or, biologists may need information about the percentage of genders in a population of animals, such as deer, so that they can estimate the size of the population for the next year. Now, Sherri Lisius spends plenty of her time studying sage grouse. She started her research on this odd bird 8 years ago.

 Scientists do a lot to help the community. They know that nature can impact the way we live significantly if we don’t take care of it. As a wildlife biologist, Sherri makes sure that construction projects don’t interfere with the surrounding animals and plants. To make sure these projects are safe, she works with agencies like the Inyo National Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Cal Trans. For example, on a highway, drivers were having trouble with desert tortoise crossing the road. So, Sherri’s team put a short fence that the tortoise couldn’t go past on the side of the road, which benefited both the tortoises and the drivers. Most of us don’t realize how much we have changed the habitat of animals and plants in our area. Scientists like Sherri help us understand those changes and prevent changes that could be harmful to sensitive species.

 Scientists don’t just help us, they also help other scientists to achieve goals. They share their information, theories, and data with each other to try to get a solution to an issue they’ve run into. One example is bees. If you haven’t heard already, the bee populations are decreasing nationwide. This is a problem because bees pollinate food crops and wild plants. Communities depend on those food crops for survival, and wildlife depend on wild plants for survival. Once scientists realized the dilemma, they set to work on a solution to stop the decrease in the number of bees by sharing their observations, data, and theories. This helps the scientific community by finding a solution faster.  Have you ever had someone tell you, don’t feed the bears? That’s an example of a solution that scientists have created to prevent bears from breaking into cars and trash for food. Sherri Lisius helped track bears to keep them away from communities. Sherri doesn’t just protect animals, she also protects people’s property and safety. When people show gratitude for the scientists’ work it builds support for future projects.

 Scientists do a lot for our local community and our world. They’re always discovering new ways to improve things, and solve issues. Sherri Lisius is one example of a scientist who makes a difference. The work she does may seem small, but her work adds to other scientists’ work across the state and nation to make a bigger change. Scientists like Sherri understand the joy and importance of wildlife and do the best they can to help it thrive.