

Personal Statement (David Nollens)

1. Why you want to study your field? I am interested in graduate school.
2. What makes you unique, different, or exceptional?
3. Why you are qualified?

My addiction began fifteen years ago when the seventeen-year cicadas emerged. Hundreds of brown larvae climbed up onto the playground equipment, ready to split their shells. Crispy white adults slowly crawled out from their wings. As they dried, their bodies turned an iridescent black. An hour passed; more of the cicadas molted right into the trees, leaving various-dried brown backs behind. That day it I was hooked on science.

Encouraged by my parents, I fed my initial curiosity for knowledge with books. The insects, snakes and other animal life indigenous to the park behind our house fascinated me. Frequently, I could be found in our backyard collecting specimens in jars for observation, always careful to let them go when I was done. A trip to the library was next to follow.

As my education progressed, what started out as the previousness insatiableness of a tree year old expanded. These boyish habits, developed early in life, stayed with me. Because of my pets, my interests turned from insects to vertebrates. Through books and observation, I became intimately familiar with the care of all of the animals we kept: dragonflies, chickens, to snakes, to guinea pigs, to dogs, as well as their means of behavior. In eighth grade, when one of our guinea pigs began running his head at almost a 90-degree angle and stumbling, we immediately rushed her to the Veterinary Hospital. My Mother brought the patient and I brought questions. The doctor quickly diagnosed our pet with an inner ear infection and prescribed antibiotics. Interestingly, I wanted to know what kind of bacteria it was, what kind of antibiotic was prescribed and why, the side effects, and why she was tipping her head. Armed with the information I hit the books. A few weeks later our guinea pig was back to her normal especially well. The disseminating process I witnessed fascinated me, as did all the biological knowledge I had gained through my research.

In high school I concentrated my studies as much as possible into biology related courses, which culminated on into college. While at Saint Louis College I had a chance to put background knowledge to work in an experimental setting. In Ecology my freshman year I did a project on Aggressive spiders and their strike speed. This was a project fraught with problems, the first of which was getting the spiders to build webs. I finally got them in the window frames of almost every window in the entire Biology department. Spiders built between the sashes and the glass the spiders would build a pretty web. I dropped slightly uncoordinated themselves in from the top and tried the spider's web. Unfortunately, the experimental methods were slightly flawed, and the data greatly made unusable however, my interest in the process hasn't waned. I am looking forward to attending grad school and continuing to explore biology through experimentation.