

# STEM Career Interviews

*School Leadership in Urban Runoff Reduction Project*

*"So many people just have jobs to make a living and while there is nothing wrong with that, I am lucky enough to have one that gives me satisfaction on a deep level."*

**-Genevieve LaRouche**



*Introducing...*

## **Genevieve LaRouche**

**Field Office Supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Chesapeake Bay Field Office**

Meet Genevieve LaRouche. She is the Field Office Supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Chesapeake Bay Field Office in Annapolis, MD. Genevieve provides leadership and supervision to 25 Wildlife Biologists and support staff.

Genevieve grew up in Long Island, NY in a middle class family. Genevieve lived in the suburbs on a freshwater pond with lots of bird life. She recalls always loving to be outside and in nature, but her family was not "into" science. "I didn't know the names of birds or most other wildlife. I was around 17 when I looked up my first bird in a field guide, a great blue heron."

Genevieve felt as if she were a mediocre student, but she always loved reading and was curious about all things – nature and otherwise.

As an undergraduate in college, Genevieve studied political science because of her pre-existing interest in politics. “Around this time, I started noticing that where I grew up was getting more and more developed and that there was less and less wildlife. I became interested in conservation and wanted to find a job where I could help conserve wildlife habitat. To get a professional job in conservation (one that pays a decent amount)”

Genevieve continues, “I had to do lots of internships and seasonal work that does not pay that much and be willing to move around. I did internships on Sanibel Island, Cape Cod and protected beach nesting birds for two summers on Long Island. These internships provided housing so it was possible to get-by although I didn’t have much extra money. In the off-season, I worked in bookstores.”

When Genevieve turned 26 years old, she determined she needed a Master’s degree to get a good paying, year-round job. She decided to apply to graduate school at the University of Maine, where she was living at the time. She accepted a job as a Research Assistant that helped paid for her tuition. Three years later, Genevieve acquired her Master’s of Science in Resource Economics and had her first full time job at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Northern Virginia by age 30.

“What I love about my job is that there is no typical day, I might go out in the field and help band osprey, I might attend partnership meetings with non-profits like LCF in Baltimore and brainstorm about how to improve peoples’ access to parks and wildlife viewing. I also spend a lot of time on phone calls and paperwork and while that can be boring, it is easily worth the price of having a job I love. I also work with great, smart people who care a lot about what they do. It makes a big difference when you care about and respect your colleagues.”

Genevieve brings attention to the challenge of acquiring the job you want if you don’t have experience. “I was not even eligible to get low-paying seasonal work because I didn’t study wildlife as an undergraduate. To overcome this, I volunteered a few hours a week at a wildlife rehabilitation center over the summer after college. This was hard to squeeze in because I was already working but it allowed me to get the seasonal work that led to other opportunities.”

Grateful for her achievements and passionate about her work, Genevieve is happy to be in a career that interests her. “So many people just have jobs to make a living and while there is nothing wrong with that, I am lucky enough to have one that gives me satisfaction on a deep level.”

Genevieve has been at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for 22 years and continues working in conservation. She would like to take her knowledge and experience to help empower the next generation of conservation professionals to get done what they started:

“to protect and conserve as much wildlife habitat as possible and to provide as many possibilities, for all people, to experience nature”

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