My interest in geospatial concepts dates back to high school when I got into geocaching, courtesy of my sister, and started my own geocaching club at school. I loved how maps and the pursuit of a geocache could bring you to unexpected and amazing places. It was also around this time that I joined my mom and became a member of the local chapter of the Audubon Society. Though I was, by far, the youngest person at every meeting and excursion, I had great fun learning to appreciate the rare beauty of birds, and the complex and sometimes funny ways in which they interact with their environments.

Birds, due to their wide geographic ranges and niche behaviors, are particularly sensitive to the environmental changes occurring in the 21st century, perhaps the most notable of which is climate change. Climate change is causing the surface of the earth to change faster than birds can adapt – affecting the quality of important habitats, decreasing the availability of preferred foods, and altering the timing of seasonal indicators that birds rely for migration. They suffer additionally from habitat fragmentation and pollution resulting from ignorant human activities. The potential for geospatial analysis to monitor, analyze, and predict how birds are affected by these stresses is enormous, and by focusing my MSGA studies on this topic, I believe that I will be well positioned to work in the field of avian conservation.

Nearly every aspect of geospatial analysis technology lends itself perfectly to the study of birds. The tracking capabilities of GPS and satellite telemetry have been invaluable in collecting information about migration routes and seasonal ranges. Maps and statistical analysis provide a more comprehensive understanding of the interactions between birds and various environmental factors. The power of geospatial technology to study and represent the plight of birds provides an opportunity for development of more effective bird conservation strategies. The MSGA program excites me because I want nothing more than to enter the field of bird conservation with a well-

rounded and reliable skill set that will allow me to do more than just work a job, but to contribute innovations of my own. With each class on the course list, I see yet another angle which I could take to pursue my passion and make a real difference. The way I see it, geospatial analysis is for the birds – literally.

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