



## PAPUA NEW GUINEA PROGRAM

Box 277, Goroka, EHP, PAPUA NEW GUINEA  
Ph(675) 732-3836 Fax (675) 732-2461  
email: amack@global.net.pg

Letter of Recommendation

For: John Richardson, applicant to Ph. D. Program

From: Dr. Andrew L. Mack, Wildlife Conservation Society

Date: 3 November 2003

I am pleased to recommend John Richardson's application for admission to the UNH graduate program. I have no doubt he will make an outstanding student and prove an asset to your program. John is bright, hard-working, dedicated and a creative thinker.

John came to work as a volunteer research assistant with me at my main field site in Papua New Guinea. John excelled-- he quickly grasped the tasks required and carried them out independently and effectively. He was meticulous with data collection and careful to avoid errors. He solved problems on his own.

John shows great promise as a scientist in his own right. He looks into questions that interest him and quickly identifies the definitive science that needs to be done. His knowledge of how to do research was beyond that of most beginning graduate students I have worked with. This is perhaps due to his rather extensive practical experience on different field projects. I have no doubt he will identify interesting questions and design practical ways to test hypotheses.

John quickly grasped the tasks required in his position. He carried out his responsibilities independently and effectively. He was meticulous with data collection and careful to avoid errors. He solved problems on his own. These are traits that are prerequisites for a successful career in science and the minimum required for a good field assistant. However, John show promise to mature into a top notch scientist in his own right.

John has an inquisitive mind. He looks into questions that interest him and quickly identifies the definitive science that needs to be done. His knowledge of how to do research goes beyond that of most beginning graduate students I have worked with. This is due to his obvious innate abilities and his extensive practical experience on different field projects. I have no doubt he will identify interesting questions and design practical ways to test hypotheses.

While working with us in PNG, John became interested in treefall gap dynamics, a subject that has received a fair bit of research. However, John came up with some interesting new ideas and novel approaches to a field study. Indeed we would like to

see John come back to PNG to pursue these ideas and I would support his work from my research budget if he came back. But I am sure he will have many other new ideas since his tenure as my assistant and new opportunities at other field sites. I have no doubt whatever research he settles on; it will be innovative, significant and relevant to current environmental issues. John shows considerable promise to become a high caliber scientist. He is exactly the sort of student I would think merits a good fellowship so he can mature to his fullest potential.

I have not seen John teach, so cannot comment directly on his abilities as a teacher. However, he is well spoken, considerate and a good listener. He helped one of our PNG postgraduate students with her research and I know she appreciated his guidance when I was not in the field. In fact they are still in touch and he has been helping her with some of her essays. I expect he will make an excellent teacher. I have also not seen much that he has written, but again, what I have seen seems sophisticated for a beginning graduate student. I have seen him at work in the rainforest and know he is capable of doing high-quality research even under strenuous conditions.

John has a very easy-going personality and a good sense of humor. Combined with his broad interests and willingness to help others, John will make an excellent addition to any lab group. He will work well with other students and be a welcome student to even the busiest advisor's lab.

Our program is very selective about whom we invite to join us. Assistants must be motivated in the first place to travel to Papua New Guinea at their own expense. Once here, they face challenges and expectations beyond most challenges they could experience in the United States, from deep isolation to dealing with indigenous people in our study area. From this very small group of "elite" assistants, John is among the top performers. I would take him as my own student if given the chance. I hope UNH will support this very promising student with a fellowship, and give him the greatest opportunity to develop into a leading scientist.

Feel free to contact me if I can provide any further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew L. Mack". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "M".

Andrew L. Mack, Ph. D.  
Director, WCS-PNG Country Program