



## Staff Profile:

### Kevin Barrett

Forest Inventory Program  
Specialist

*“Well, I don’t think I’m an expert in anything for what it’s worth.”*

vation, restoration, and forestry. Throughout college, Kevin had summer jobs doing field work. He spent three years working for PhD student Liz Kalies at CFRI’s sister institute, the Ecological Restoration Institute, where he looked at the effects of forest restoration on wildlife communities. During his time in the field, Kevin learned a lot about how to drive big truck. One can only imagine the chagrin of his coworkers as he learned by experience, backing the truck into a tree and once taking out an unfortunate chain-link fence.

The research Kevin was involved with included setting and checking humane live traps for small mammals. “One time we trapped a fox,” Kevin recalls. “It was terrifying. It’s a fox, what if it had rabies or something? We also trapped a hawk one time.” Kalies later mentored Kevin through an independent research project about mesocarnivore (mid-size carnivores like weasels, raccoons, etc.) populations. Here he learned one of the fundamental lessons of scientific research in the natural world: sometimes all your effort amounts to nothing because your sample size is too small to say anything definitive about the question you’re trying to answer. Nevertheless, these experiences got Kevin excited about research and the scientific process.

## Kevin in a Nutshell

**Best part of the job:** Getting the opportunity to mentor students.

**Least favorite part of the job:** Presenting data, because public speaking is stressful—“I get worked up about it like three weeks ahead of time.”

**Hobbies:** Skiing—backcountry, downhill, cross-country—fly fishing, camping, backpacking, hiking, climbing 14ers, camping (again), and biking around town with friends. Kevin is also an active participant in two Fort Collins running clubs.

**Favorite Plant:** Ten-petal mentzelia in grasslands “cause it’s sticky and pretty. It has a big white showy flower, and it’s fun to touch.” Alpine springbeauty in the alpine: “succulent thing with flowers coming out of each of the artichoke leaf things.”

**Favorite Field Snack:** Radishes. They’re refreshing—especially if you put a little bit of salt on it. Then they’re refreshing and replenishing electrolytes. Basically just like Gatorade.



## Kevin’s Story

**When Kevin Barrett arrived at Northern Arizona University in 2006 in pursuit of his BS in “something natural resources related,” he was excited about “making things better.”** Kevin grew up in Colorado, and has always appreciated camping, hiking, and being outside, and he developed a strong interest in conser-



*Kevin learned to handle small mammals, and what to do when you trap an animal you didn’t mean to trap.*

**“I’m glad I don’t have to do field work all the time, but I miss it when I’m on a long streak in the office. But I don’t need to jump over any more barbed wire fences.”**

One of the impressive features of Kevin's resume is his master's degree in forest science from the Yale School of Forestry. He applied to the school under duress and pressure from Kalies, fully expecting to be rejected so he could, without guilt, pursue his dream of becoming a ski bum at Snowbird—an aspiration Kevin still hopes to one day attain. Given his intense conviction that he wouldn't be accepted, Kevin was of course accepted and headed off to New Haven to study with Os Schmitz and continue his research exploring relationships between forest management and wildlife communities.

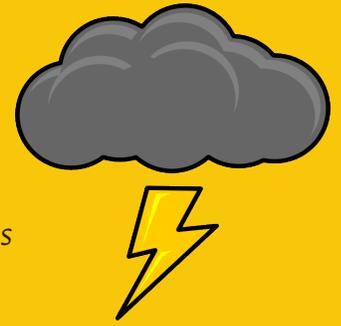
This time all of Kevin's work cross-country skiing to his sites during the winter to set up wildlife exclusion fencing in the snow and freezing rain, and summer work counting deer poop and number of munched-on twigs achieved an adequate sample size, and his thesis (*Effects of Deer Settling Stimulus and Deer Density on Regeneration in a Harvested Southern New England Forest*) was published in 2013. When I asked Kevin how he could bear to tear himself away from the East Coast to return to his home in the west, he responded promptly, "because I hated Connecticut. Plus the jobs I was offered were in Colorado." Always a plus, Kevin.

Kevin was snapped up by NEON not for his cross-country skiing or deer poop identification skills, but for his small mammal handling experience. This time, he worked in Rocky Mountain National Park trapping small mammals, anesthetizing them, and taking blood samples that were then analyzed for information about disease transmission. "That's why I don't do small mammals anymore. After that I was like, 'I wanna do plants.'" And indeed, Kevin transitioned to the tutelage of master gardeners at the Denver Botanic Gardens and spent the majority of the next three years botanizing in the grasslands and alpine.

After years of field work and jumping over barbed wire fences, Kevin wanted to be more involved with the data and not just the field work. His work at CFRI gives him the opportunity to do just that, and to create useful stories from data. Kevin doesn't see himself as a "scientist," because he doesn't come up with research questions. Instead, he enjoys the opportunity to facilitate managers and help them to use data constructively. For Kevin, the role of science in forest management is to listen to the concerns and questions of people implementing forestry on the ground, and come up with experimental designs that help address their questions.

### **Kevin's Scariest Field Story**

*It was my first field season ever, I was out with one or two professors and another student in the White Mountains of Arizona. We'd had to hike way in to the site, which was a burn site on top of a ridge. I remember seeing the clouds build and thinking, "we're gonna get nailed." But I didn't speak up, because I felt like I didn't have the authority. Turns out, we got nailed. It was so bad we all spread out and got into lightning positions, and something struck so close I'm pretty sure it was somewhere in between us all. That instilled the fear of God in me, and now I'm super conservative about lightning.*



### **What Kevin Wishes Everyone Knew about Forest Science:**

**Cutting down trees is not always a bad thing.**

*When I talk to people about what I do, they think I heal illegal trails or plant burn sites. When I tell them no, I think a lot about how to cut down trees in a way that restores structure and enhances resiliency, they're surprised. I take it for granted that this is the way forward on the Front Range, so I wish more people knew about that.*



*Kevin enjoys Colorado's outdoor pursuits, including climbing 14ers.*