

My PhD advisor had us write yearly self-evaluations. In retrospect, now that I have my own students, I suspect that this was for his own amusement as wallowing in self-pity is a defining feature of being a graduate student. And indeed, in retrospect, these progress reports are very funny. This is mine from my 4th year in graduate school. My advisor was Peter Kareiva mentioned in the report. This report was given to him, and I guess I was making a joke by referring to him using his academic title - I don't know why this is so funny, but it still makes me laugh. For some reason that I can't recall, the lab got pink t-shirts emblazoned with "Think Pink" that year. Perhaps it was some play on our advisor's initials. Anyhow, many of us wore pink much of the year, and we probably came across as total dorks to the rest of the department. Getting roasted by and trying to roast our advisor was a big part of public speaking. Since he tended to say outlandish things it wasn't too hard to roast him, but getting roasted by him often involved having some incredibly embarrassing e-mail that your wrote read to the audience or having a bunch of mortifying pictures shown right before trying to give a scientific talk. It was good practice, I suppose, for staying composed.
EE Holmes (2006)

1993 PROGRESS REPORT, Eli Holmes

----Winter 1993----

I spent most of this entire quarter building two prototype radio transmitters, and attempting to build an automatic flea trap for woodrat nests. I also attended an advanced ecology class by Dr. Peter Kareiva, and this took a great deal of my time. Furthermore I gave a lecture in this class and spent a lot of time recovering from this traumatic experience. Dr. Kareiva's spirited introduction will always be cherished and remembered.

Productivity:

Draft NSF proposal (1), new gadgets of engineering genius (2), lecture (1), talks at student conferences (1), informative e-mails to lab mates (5), scientific discussions with lab mates (136).

---Spring 1993---

A large part of this quarter was spent working on a paper, "Partial differential equations in ecology", which I co-authored with Mark Lewis, John Banks and Dick Veit. This paper will appear in Ecology in January 1994. I also attended another seminar by the eminent Dr. Kareiva on ecostatistics. My performance in this class was fairly appalling (I did nothing but show up), but I was on time which was an improvement over the previous quarter. I began my fieldwork reconnaissance in late spring and located the exact site and sub-population of woodrats on which I would work during the next six months. The end of this quarter was interrupted by a two trip to Alaska which had nothing to do with ecology or productivity - to the contrary, in fact.

Productivity:

Papers submitted (1), informative e-mails to lab mates (3), scientific discussions with lab mates (46), lab picnics organized (1)

---Summer 1993---

I finished the Ecology paper in early summer and shortly after submitted a NSF dissertation improvement grant. As usual the grant was prepared with great haste and lacked the polish evident in the proposals of a more responsible graduate student. However, I viewed the experience as preparation for the tremendous pressure which awaits those who aspire to enter the academic realm.

During the summer, I began my fieldwork in earnest and spent the rest of the summer working with woodrats and fleas. I ear-tagged approximately 30 woodrats and mapped approximately 20 nests. I trapped biweekly (more or less) from August through October for my survey of seasonal tick and flea loads. I radio-collared 7 woodrats and followed their movements from dusk to dawn on 5 nights spaced over a 3 month period. I am particularly grateful to my lab mates and the undergraduate assistants who cheerfully - if naively - helped me with nocturnal work that was exhausting, cold, and boring. I conducted two mark release experiments of fleas on woodrats. The first experiment showed possible transfers of fleas from one rat to another. I haven't analyzed the second experiment. The end of the summer was interrupted by another two week trip - this time to California - and it is indicative of my advisor's magnanimity that he did not strangle me on my return.

Productivity:

Grants (1), new gadgets (1), informative e-mails (1), scientific discussions (41)

---Fall 1993---

In early fall, I finished up my fieldwork for the season, and then began working in earnest on a paper, "Critical population size, social structure and sex-ratio variability". Since I should have gotten this out a year and a half ago, I can't really call this productivity (although I will). I suppose its more like working against negative productivity. I am also auditing a class on epidemiology. My performance in the class is only moderately abysmal. I read at least 1/4 of the assignments and manage to stick my foot in my mouth at least twice during each class. Two papers will come out near the end of this year, the Ecology paper and a paper on the telegraph equation in the American Naturalist. Also, and quite astoundingly, my NSF dissertation improvement grant was recommended for funding. This is all terrifically exciting and is proof that I have managed to produce something tangible in the past 4 years and 3 months - not counting all my gadgets. I also wrote this progress report, but I think that counts as procrastination not productivity.

Productivity:

Papers published (2), papers in progress - but really (1), real data - hopefully - collected, informative e-mails (5), scientific discussions (15)

---Summary---

I am happy that this year I can count some real outputs and do not have to list "personal growth" as my sole accomplishment. In fact, I'm not sure I did much personal growing this year, although I have gained a greater appreciation for pink.