

# Student Spotlight



## Karl Lang

PhD Student, Department of Earth and Space Sciences

Karl Lang speaks as if being a geologist was his destiny. “I’ve always been interested in geology,” says Lang, who as a child was fascinated by rocks and fossils. He went on to study Geology and Economics at the College of William and Mary in Virginia and is now a PhD student in the Department of Earth and Space Sciences at the UW College of the Environment. Drawn by the quality of faculty, and the strengths of his advisor—Assistant Professor Kate Huntington—Karl joined the Tectonics and Erosion research group, which applies novel geochemical tools to understand the complex relationship between erosion and landscape evolution across the globe.

“I have been very fortunate to have had opportunities to work on some great projects with fun people,” said Karl, reflecting upon his past fieldwork across the US, in India, and in New Zealand on landscape evolution. His current research projects include looking at the erosion of the eastern Southern Alps of New Zealand and how the eastern Himalaya were formed.

In winter 2012, Karl spent seven weeks in Arunachal Pradesh, India, where he did field work on the Brahmaputra River, “one of the largest sources of sediment to the world’s oceans.” Karl seeks to understand how the Brahmaputra watershed has developed over its 10

million year history by collecting rocks layered within the sediments exposed on the cliffs of the eastern Himalaya. Investigating the rocks that deposited when paleo-mountains—meaning, mountains that once existed in the past—were eroded, Karl is studying the processes by which erosion is recorded into the sedimentary layers.

Within Dr. Huntington’s lab, Karl’s work is funded by the National Science Foundation, Geological Society of America, Quaternary Research Center and the UW Earth and Space Science Department. He has also received a Harry Wheeler Graduate Student Research Fellowship, George Goodspeed Graduate Student Research Award, and Program on Climate Change Fellowship at the UW.

Along with executing outstanding research, Karl’s ultimate career goal is to “use research as a tool to teach, mentor, and share the enthusiasm of scientific research with students.” Aside from being a teaching assistant, Karl has led and helped design field courses at UW, operated the departmental out-reach group “Rockin’ Out”, and given a public talk at Town Hall, Seattle as part of the UW Engage Science Speakers Series. Through these endeavors, Karl hopes to continue teaching and inspiring younger geologists in years to come.

*Photos: Courtesy of Karl Lang*

