Most Exciting Discovery
I have noted that a drought-tolerant type of Acacia koa tree has a completely different leaf type. This change in appearance (its morphology) is likely a new adaptation, or response, to climate change never before recorded in this species.

When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?
I have always loved science, the outdoors, and being active. In middle and high school, I played softball, basketball, and field hockey, was in student government, and in ALL of the school bands. As a scientist, I combine my love of the outdoors with writing and defending my research results.

Important Scientist Characteristics:
Patience, enthusiasm, good record-keeping, and good writing skills are most beneficial to my research. These skills are important because I spend some time in the field, but the majority of my time is spent doing computer work and data analysis. It’s tedious, but the rewards are worth it!

Example of a simple research question I have tried to answer:
Why can some Acacia koa trees survive cold temperatures or droughts? I work with a tropical hardwood tree in Hawai’i called Acacia koa. I want to know which genes are responsible for temperature and precipitation-related adaptations. I use this information to understand why some of these trees are able to survive cold temperatures and drought.

Technology or equipment used in research:
I often work with liquid nitrogen to freeze and preserve my samples immediately after collection. Similar to the browning of apples after you bite them, plant tissues can change color or texture. Freezing samples while in the field preserves them until I return to the laboratory.