



Bio Sketch for Jennifer Brown

What area of maths do you mostly work in?

I am an ecological statistician, which means I do research on statistical techniques that are used in ecology and environmental science. For example, in Christchurch we are concerned about air pollution, and collect samples to test the quality of the air. My work is in designing how to do sampling, question like how often should we take samples, how much air should be in each sample, what locations should the samples be taken from? If there is only a limited amount of money to spend on air sampling then the survey must be well designed to give as much information as possible.

What areas of maths do you follow from a purely interest standpoint?

My research for purely interest is more in the ecology side than in the mathematics, so I have a few experiments underway looking at plant growth rates and studying Hector's dolphins.

What were your best and worst subjects at school?

My best was biology and mathematics, and my worst - Latin!

When you decided you wanted to be a mathematician and why

I actually started off studying forestry at University and worked as a forester, and then ecologist, for about 8 years. I ended up in the Department of Conservation working with marine mammals and coastal studies. It was only when I was a forester that I realised how important statistics was and started studying it extramurally. After 6 year of taking a few statistics courses a year, while working full time, I decided to concentrate all my time on statistics. I left my wonderful job at Department of Conservation and went back to University and did a 3-year PhD.

What training (degrees and subjects) you've done

My degrees are BForSc(hons) - thats a forestry degree, and then, as an extramural student, PGDipSc in statistics, and then PhD in statistics. All from NZ Universities: forestry was University of Canterbury, PGDipSc was from Massey University, and PhD from Otago University.

Most interesting place you've travelled with your research

I have been to a number of overseas countries on research visits, but probably the most interesting places have been here in NZ when I have been doing fieldwork - getting out into the NZ bush and measuring plants and looking for animal sign, or being on a boat in Akaroa Harbour watching the dolphins.

If you follow sport, what sport, and which team - if not, why not!?

I don't just follow sport - I do it! I play ice-hockey midweek, and when the weather is right, I take my children tramping, and in winter, ski.