

# 2014 AAAS PITTS FAMILY MINORITY SCIENCE WRITERS INTERN

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**DEGREE:** UNDERGRADUATE SENIOR, MARINE BIOLOGY

**SCHOOL:** UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ

**SPONSOR:** PITTS FAMILY FOUNDATION

**MEDIA SITE:** SCIENCE MAGAZINE

**Research Focus:** Energy density of fish from the Ross Sea, Antarctica

**Translation:** Weddell seals from the Ross Sea, Antarctica feast on a number of fish, including the Antarctic toothfish — unfortunately, humans also think this fish is delicious. Fisheries target these toothfish and market them as “Chilean sea bass.” I want to figure out what impact fishing pressure has on these seals by using bomb calorimetry. This tells me the energy density (in calories) of the Weddell seal’s prey. Simply put: how many calories does a seal get if it eats one kind of fish vs. another? By taking out the Antarctic toothfish or “Chilean sea bass” for ourselves, are we depriving the seals of a crucial food source?

### **What are your goals for the summer?**

I want to get very good at handling 1,000 things at breakneck pace and still churn out something engaging and new.

### **What are you most excited about?**

I really think I’m going to grow this summer, both as a science writer and as a writer in general. I’m excited to meet people who can take scientific research and turn it into artful prose. I also like the rapid-fire learning in many different fields that science writing affords me.

### **Why are you passionate about science communication?**

A lot of people in my literature classes seem almost afraid or put off by science. I think this is either because it seems too challenging or because they get bogged down in technical details. I love science communication because it makes even the most complicated physics or biology accessible and familiar, when people are telling themselves it’s “too hard” to understand or even “boring.”

### **Who is your favorite science communicator?**

Jad Abumrad, from Radiolab. He was a composer before hosting Radiolab with Robert Krulwich, and the way he combines music clips and sound effects with storytelling just blows my mind.



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### **Do you have a link to an article you’d like to share?**

My first published article with an outside source:

<http://www.santacruztechbeat.com/2014/04/28/techrising-2014-48-hours-innovation-ambition-collaboration/>

### **Describe your dream job.**

I would like to be a dragon, please. Failing that, I would love to be a story-teller, whether that’s as a science writer or novelist. I don’t want to exclude writing or science from my life, so I’m out to find a way to fuse them.

### **Tell us about something you do outside of the lab.**

I’m training right now to be a scientific skin diver (really intense snorkeling)! It’s physically demanding, but I like that it takes a certain amount of discipline and that it forces me to set aside time to exercise. I also love writing and reading fantasy, since I’m a daydreamer.

### **Anything else you’d like to share?**

My favorite dessert is the macaron. I have a star named after me. One of my good friends worked at an observatory and had connections, so for Christmas one year he named a star near the end of the Scorpius constellation (we’re both Scorpius) after me.