



...PRESENTS:

JOE SAPP

WHS SCIENTIST IN RESIDENCE, 2011-2012



Here I am collecting ants to identify their species... with my field assistants' help! We are working at the Sagehen Creek Field Station, a UC Berkeley Field station in the Tahoe National Forest.

[Pictured from left to right: Joe Sapp, Don Brown (WHS teacher), Mikayla Richter (UCSC undergrad), Hannah Nolan (UCSC undergrad)]

Some stuff about me:

- **Age:** 30
- **Where I grew up:** California and Illinois
- **High School:** University of Illinois Laboratory ("Uni") High School in Urbana, Illinois
- **Favorite subject in high school:** Biology
- **College (undergraduate):** UC Berkeley
- **Some of my favorite things:** Traveling, soccer, food, hammocks
- **Something weird about me:** I know more rap lyrics than you would think. The same goes for cartoon theme songs and commercials from my childhood!
- **What I think or do when I get frustrated:** I try to realize I'm frustrated and take a break if I can. Sometimes a break just means doing some other kind of work, but if I'm lucky it means taking a walk, talking to friends, or watching a movie.

These "slave-making" ants (*Polyergus breviceps*) steal brood (larvae and pupae) from other ant colonies!



Stolen ants (the silvery-black ants here, *Formica argentea*) grow up to be adult "slaves" that live and work with the "slave-makers" (the red ants) like members of the same family. They act like they don't know they were kidnapped.

What I study

I study ants that kidnap other ants when they are too young to realize they've been stolen. The kidnapped ants become workers in the colony that stole them. I want to understand how this affects the lives of both species. Are they more aggressive? How do they treat each other?

Being a scientist is great because I get to make up my own questions like those and then try to solve them. Also, I can choose questions that keep me doing things I love: Watching and learning about animals outdoors. Understanding how animals work helps us realize how valuable they are to our world and how we can protect them.

Teachers have had a big impact on me ever since kindergarten. I am inspired by how teachers can reveal new worlds to their students and give them skills to see things they previously didn't see. I am so glad the biological world was revealed to me by a series of enthusiastic teachers and I want to pass that gift on to more students.

