

Interview with Dr. Heidi Steltzer by Louise Lap - Gender CC



In college, Heidi took a course on the 'analysis of global change'. The level and rate of the environmental changes she began to learn about felt wrong to her. This led her to study the impacts of environmental change in high mountain and Arctic regions. Through science, Heidi is able to explore how snow affects the ebbs and flows of our world and their link to our well-being. Through Homeward Bound, Heidi met women from around the world who have similar purpose - "we learned we have much in common that unites us and can unite others".

LL: What has been your greatest achievement so far?

HS: My greatest achievement is hearing from women who have been in my class and been involved in research with me that I inspire them by sharing with them ways I'm involved in connecting science to society, encouraging them to pursue what they love most about science, and sharing myself including what disappoints me and what gives me hope.

LL: What barriers have you faced working in climate science?

HS: Life-work balance, it is easy to always feel the need to do more and not allow enough time for myself and family. Needing to understand how to have difficult conversations. In any field, they are incredibly critical towards finding common ground.

LL: Why should more women and girls work in climate science?

HS: So many reasons. We are underrepresented, especially as leaders in climate science. We are essential to communicate climate science, sharing our experiences and our concerns for future generations.

LL: What difference would it make if women were adequately represented in climate science?

HS: Lots. We might take different approaches to how the science gets done, how it is communicated, and how people interact. Science is currently a very competitive system, we compete with each other for funds, for recognition, and for many other opportunities. What could we achieve in science if we collaborated more on common goals, as we share many of the same goals, rather than competing?

LL: What do you feel women can bring to the fight for climate action?

HS: See above, but also: inclusiveness, collaboration, legacy mindset, trusted with wealth of our planet, all traits of women leaders

LL: Is there another woman in the climate sciences who inspires you?

HS: Many. Jane Lubchenco and Sylvia Earle for their commitment to share science with the public.

LL: What would you say to encourage more women and girls to work in climate science?

HS: Science is about discovery and this requires creativity. Doing science is much different than how it is typically taught. Take a chance to participate in a science program that allows you to experience this. There are many, but only some schools have these types of programs, so it might be through a local museum, zoo, or science centre that you can find an opportunity like this.