2019 Wild Felid Legacy Scholarship Recipients

This year WFA received 10 scholarship applications, all of exceptional merit. The WFA Council is pleased to announce Raquel Bone Guzman, Alexandra Pineda Guerrero, and Samantha Zwicker as this year's recipients of the $1250 scholarship. Teri Jinks, Deanna Dawn's sister, has chosen Alexandra to receive the Deanna Dawn Legacy Scholarship, which provides an extra $250 in support. WFA was able to provide this year's scholarships because of the generous support from Teri Jinks, an anonymous donor, and WFA members. We thank all the applicants for their drive to understand, conserve and coexist with wild cats. We have provided information on the scholarship recipients' projects below.

Raquel Bone Guzmán, Master's candidate, University of Costa Rica; *raquelbone@gmail.com*
Advisor: Prof.Eduardo Chacón Madrigal, Ph.D; *edchacon@gmail.com*

Thesis: Landscape and management factors related to terrestrial mammal conservation in the Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve, Costa Rica
Objectives: Determine how the diverse management and landscape factors present in the Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve (GDFR) affect the distribution and conservation of threatened large and medium-sized mammals. Specifically: 1) Determine the occupancy probability of terrestrial mammals that act as conservation indicators (i.e., big and medium-sized cats and herbivores), according to different landscape and management factors in the GDFR. 2) Define which of these practices and landscape variables favor the presence and conservation of these mammal species, and those that negatively affect them. 3) Develop and communicate punctual recommendations to decision makers (property owners and governmental authorities) to improve management practices that benefit protection of large and medium-sized mammal in the GDFR. This includes providing a baseline methodology of monitoring mammals for the property owners and forest rangers, so the wildlife conservation objective of the Forest Reserve can be evaluated through time. Raquel explains that she chose the Osa Peninsula for her research because the region is known worldwide for its biodiversity, but it is also under great threats. These include illegal mining, hunting, logging and a continuous growth of tourism. Unlike the recognized Corcovado National Park, entirely dedicated to conservation and regulated tourism, GDFR has less restrictive conservation policies. Despite these pressures, large and medium-sized cats and herbivores still occur there, on private and governmental properties. Because of this, Raquel understands the need to find management practices in the Forest Reserve that are compatible with mammal protection and at the same time, with land owners' economic development. Raquel's mentor, Dr. Ronit Amit (Programa Gente y Fauna, Asociación Confraternidad Guanacasteca), says of Raquel, [she] "is optimistic, has excellent interpersonal skills and has demonstrated ability to collaborate and solve problems. I have no doubt that she will achieve her goals, innovating on how we know environmental characteristics shape wildlife distribution."
Completion date: field work by June 2020, thesis by December 2020.

Alicia Alexandra Pineda Guerrero, PhD candidate, University of Wisconsin, Madison; *pinedaguerre@wisc.edu*
Advisor: Adrian Treves; *atreves@wisc.edu*

*Dissertation***:** Coexisting with big cats: Testing light deterrents to protect domestic animals and reduce human-felid conflict in Colombia.

*Objectives***:** 1) to diminish or prevent domestic animals´ predation by jaguars and pumas in the Colombian Andes; 2) to test the effectiveness of Foxlights® (Deterrent) in San Luis as a solution to decrease jaguar and puma attacks on domestic animals.
Alexandra writes, "My interest in wild felid research is focused on ecology and conservation actions that allow people and cats to coexist. Additionally, I am interested in understanding people´s perceptions towards felids and testing non-lethal methods to prevent domestic animal predation in Colombia. People and felids live in common space and the long term protection of these endangered species will be successful only with community cooperation." Advisor Dr. Treves writes: "She has expressed her enthusiasm and commitment to conduct the best-ever field experiment on predator control. In my opinion, she is well positioned to do just that. Her work addresses Colombian societal goals of protecting nature, domestic animals and people's livelihoods. In addition, she will test a novel method of deterring predators, and thereby teach the USA and the world important lessons about experimental evaluation of non-lethal methods under difficult biophysical and socioeconomic conditions."
Completion date: August 2022

Samantha Zwicker, PhD candidate, University of Washington, Seattle; *szwicker@uw.edu*
Major Advisor: Beth Gardner; *bg43@uw.edu*
Dissertation: Increasing the resilience of both livelihoods and ecosystems: wild felid conservation in Madre de Dios, Peru
Objectives: to better understand the diversity and occurrence patterns of lowland tropical mammals; to investigate the relationship between predator and mesopredator sympatric felids; and to work with communities on conservation to support felid populations.
Samantha writes: "Wild felids and their habitats are facing complex, dedicated threats worldwide. Therefore our methods to conserve them need to be equally as swift and multifaceted. My efforts are focused along the Piedras River due to its biodiversity and location as a natural corridor between four protected parks, a connection that is vital to the existence of large mammals. Although I am passionate about my research, I'm just as passionate about the steps that come afterward - working with local communities and governments, and putting collective research into action. Only then will we be able to save what's left of our rainforests and their inhabitants." Advisor Dr. Gardner writes, "Sam has been carrying out field work in Peru for 6 years and has developed a good working relationship with the communities in her study region. [She] is dedicated to conservation work in Peru, motivated in large part by her fascination of the felid community and wanting to improve our understanding of their biology. The work she does with her non-profit is impressive, and she has done this while being a self-funded graduate student…. I expect Sam's work to contribute interesting new findings to the literature on jaguars, ocelots, and other species in the forests of Madre de Dios."

Completion date: June 2020