2025 Wild Felid Legacy Scholarship Recipients

WFA received 12 exceptional scholarship applications for this funding cycle. The Scholarship Committee would like to thank all the outstanding applicants who took the time to apply and is pleased to announce 3 winners: Amaia Autor Cortes, María Lina Rinaldi García, and Morgan Hertel. Due to generous contributions from several WFA members and our monthly giving program (Evergreen), we were able to provide $2,000 awards to María and Morgan; Amaia received an additional $500 award in honor of Deanna Dawn, one of WFA's founding members. The Wild Felid Legacy Scholarship fund is supported entirely by donations.

Amaia Autor – PhD student
University: University of Montana (USA), *aautor002@gmail.com*
Co-Advisors: Hugh Robinson and Mark Hebblewhite
Dissertation Title: Assessing the im-pact of the Pan-American highway on Central American oncilla's population.
Objectives: Assess the effect of the Pan-American highway on the Central American oncilla and in-crease the general knowledge of their ecology. This study will use camera-traps and GPS collars to: 1) estimate population density; 2) assess whether the highway limits movement by evaluating frequency of oncilla crossings; 3) investigate characteristics at road crossing locations to predict crossing hotspots in the oncilla range; and 4) study habitat selection to evaluate oncilla habitat connectivity. This research will improve methodologies for studying small and rare or low detectable wild felid species.

María Lina Rinaldi García–PhD student
University: Universidad Nacional del Sur (Argentina), *lina.rinaldi@uns.edu.ar*
Advisor: Estela Maris Luengos Vidal
Dissertation Title: Livestock-predator conflict in southern Buenos Aires, Argentina: identifying hotspots of conflict and tools to contribute to a sustainable socio-ecological farming system.
Objectives: Identify spatially explicit hotspots of conflict between humans and carnivores, especially puma - *Puma concolor*, Geoffroy's cat - *Leopardus geoffroyi* and Pampas cat - *Leopardus colocolo*; test methods and protocols to monitor and mitigate conflicts at a landscape scale and contribute to decision making processes that are locally effective and promote long-term sustainability of farming.

Morgan-Rae Hertel – PhD student
University: Colorado State University (USA), *morgan.hertel@colostate.edu*
Advisor: Veronica Yovovich
Dissertation Title: Impacts of livestock-conflict mitigation tools on livestock behavior, rangeland ecology, and wildlife movement, with an additional chapter on the impacts of bobcat and mountain lion presence on Canada lynx in Colorado.

Objectives: 1) Determine livestock response to carnivore predation deterrents (e.g., fladry, motion-activated lights and speakers, etc.) on rangeland sites in Colorado. 2) Measure how changes in cattle behavioral responses might lead to changes in rangeland ecological health. 3) Develop an agent-based model to simulate the relationship between deterrent-induced changes in cattle behavior and consequences for rangeland ecology and subsequently wildlife populations like carnivores. 4) Generate a new strategic framework to minimize and mitigate unintended range management consequences of utilizing carnivore predation deterrents and extend the framework to livestock producers throughout Colorado and beyond. 5) Analyze ten years of occupancy data for lynx in Colorado with a focus on changes when potential felid competitors are present.