

2023 Wild Felid Legacy Scholarship Recipient

This year, WFA received six scholarship applications. The Scholarship Committee is pleased to announce Bárbara Isabela Escobar Anleu as this year's recipient. Bárbara received a \$1,500 award. Generous donations by Teri Jinks (sister of WFA founding member Deanna Dawn), and by WFA members through one-time contributions and our monthly giving program (Evergreen) have allowed WFA to continue to provide this scholarship. These generous donations are critical for continuing the Wild Felid Legacy Scholarship as this fund is supported entirely by donations and not by membership dues.

Name: Bárbara Isabela Escobar Anleu – PhD candidate

University: Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza (CATIE), Barbara.escobar@catie.ac.cr

Advisor: Bryan Finegan, bfinegan@catie.ac.cr

Dissertation Title: Evaluation of the diet and connectivity of five wild cat species in a critical biological corridor in eastern Guatemala

Objectives: To determine if the poaching events in one core zone of Sierra Caral Water and Forest Reserve, a crucial protected area for the connectivity of wild cats, have decreased over the years since we implemented a joint monitoring approach using SMART patrols and passive acoustic monitoring; to explore if there is a diet overlap between the three smallest cat species present in Guatemala (ocelot, jaguarondi and margay); and to determine the level of genetic connectivity for jaguars and pumas in eastern Guatemala.

Bárbara writes: *“Considering that Guatemala is a deeply unequal country, my interests in wild felid research have been focused on procuring projects that allow us to learn more about the five species in the country (jaguar, puma, ocelot, jaguarundi and margay) and how to conserve them...with promoting opportunities for human populations in these sites. My career goals are to obtain my PhD, continue working with Panthera in a full-time position...and keep promoting conservation projects with a focus on wild felids in Guatemala. Another of my goals is to support and encourage more people in Guatemala to do research on wild cats and enroll in regional postgraduate programs...”*

Dr. Howard Quigley, a leader in wild cat research and conservation, was recently added to the list of names which honors the Wild Felid Legacy Scholarship. For this reason, winning the scholarship had additional meaning for Bárbara, who writes: *“...my main motivation to apply to this scholarship is that it would be a privilege for me to win it and dedicate this achievement to him (Howard), one of the main promoters of my enrolling in a doctoral program.”*

Concerning Bárbara's qualifications for this scholarship, Roberto Salom Pérez, Mesoamerica Director for Panthera, writes: *“Under her supervision, the Panthera Guatemala program has grown significantly and we've improved our knowledge of the situation of wild cats in the southeastern portion of the country. Additionally, she has successfully led a binational project that included training park rangers, coordination of patrols, and collaboration with the government, local NGOs, and local people. Bárbara's research... will be fundamental to making management recommendations for the conservation of these species in the country.”*

