

Together for Wildlife

Together for Wildlife HCTF Conservation Fellowship Recipient 2024



Landon Birch

Landon Birch is a master's student at the University of British Columbia - Okanagan. Originally from New Brunswick, he moved to British Columbia in 2013 to pursue his interest in wildlife biology. After completing his BSc in Natural Resource Management - Fish and Wildlife at the University of Northern British Columbia, Landon worked for several years at a wildlife consulting company in Northern BC. This experience fostered his interest in wildlife nutrition, leading him to UBCO. His research focuses on the seasonal patterns of body condition in Stone's sheep, aiming to improve habitat management strategies for this globally unique species.

For many wildlife species, like ungulates, mortality rates are higher in late winter, leading to the widespread assumption that winter habitat (i.e., range quality) drives population growth. Recently, a growing body of research suggests that high quality forage in late summer/fall is necessary to create a 'nutritional carryover' effect that helps animals survive the winter.

The goal of Landon's project is to investigate nutritional limitations for Stone's sheep in the Finlay-Russel ranges in north-central British Columbia (BC), the southern extent of Stone's sheep distribution in the province. Stone's sheep are a genetically distinct subspecies of thinhorn sheep which exist almost entirely in BC, giving BC a global responsibility to manage this unique species.

Landon will collect data on sheep body condition, forage plant abundance, and forage quality. He will then compare measures of range conditions across areas that vary in sheep population density. Working closely with First Nations, the provincial government, and NGOs, his research will help inform efforts to prioritize and improve range conditions, and ultimately, improve the viability of this unique and culturally significant species.

