Together for Wildlife HCTF Conservation Scholarship
Recipient 2025

Nathan Earley

Nathan Earley (he/him) is a PhD student in the School of Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria, supervised by Dr. Brian Starzomski. He holds a Master of Science in Biology and a Bachelor of Science in Zoology from the University of British Columbia Okanagan. Nathan's work blends ecology, conservation science, and data mobilization, with a particular focus on improving the ways biodiversity information is collected, shared, and applied in Canada.

Originally from Guelph, Ontario, Nathan spent his summers exploring the forests, wetlands, and lakes in and around Algonquin Provincial Park. He worked in Algonquin for four seasons as a Park Naturalist, sharing the park's natural history through public programs like interpretive talks, guided hikes, and children's programs. His love of Community (a.k.a. Citizen) Science began in Ontario while taking part in Christmas Bird Counts, Breeding Bird Atlas surveys, and dragonfly and butterfly counts with his father. Early in his career, he collected species-occurrence data on Species-at-Risk reptiles on unprotected Crown land and witnessed firsthand how these data can shape conservation decisions.

During his undergraduate and master's research, he studied cryptic parasitoid wasps in the Okanagan Valley, documenting the diversity of both the wasps and their hosts. His MSc research revealed a significant gap in basic knowledge about where many species occur, a shortfall that can hinder applied biological research and conservation planning. This insight now drives his doctoral work.

Nathan's PhD research focuses on mobilizing species-occurrence data to inform conservation action in Canada. He is investigating the availability, quality, and usability of biodiversity datasets in Canada, where information on species diversity and distribution is often sparse, inconsistently collected, poorly maintained, and difficult to access. His work compares key biodiversity datasets—particularly the popular community science platform iNaturalist—to assess their value for answering pressing conservation questions. He works in collaboration with the BC Biodiversity Program, collecting species-occurrence records of popular species (like Orcas) and underreported species (like tiny wasps) to improve our understanding of one of the most basic questions we can ask for species in BC and across Canada: Where do they occur?

A keen supporter of sharing biodiversity knowledge, Nathan actively publishes natural history notes documenting novel behaviours and new regional records. Through his PhD, he aims to show how community science platforms like iNaturalist can be integrated into conservation initiatives to better detect and respond to biodiversity change. More about Nathan's work can be found at https://earley-birder.github.io/.

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