

Together for Wildlife

Together for Wildlife HCTF Conservation Scholarship Recipient 2025

Zoe Konaz



Zoe (she/her) is a master's student at the University of British Columbia in the Wildlife Coexistence Lab, co-supervised by Dr. William Nikolakis and Dr. Cole Burton. Her work is in collaboration with Yunesit'in Qwen (Fire) Stewardship program, where she works closely with the community and collaborators to support Yunesit'in-led questions and priorities.

Zoe grew up in the Okanagan Valley on Syilx territory, exploring grasslands and ponderosa pine forests with her father, who instilled in her a deep respect for the land and sustainable land use through the lens of a hunter and a camper. During her undergraduate degree in UBC's Faculty of Forestry, majoring in Natural Resource Conservation, Zoe spent three years with the WildCo Lab as a research assistant supporting graduate projects across the province, eventually moving into a lab manager position.

Through this experience, Zoe built a relationship with Gathering Voices Society and Yunesit'in, working as a researcher for nine months prior to starting her master's degree. During this time, she helped deploy wildlife cameras and supported the community during their seasonal burns. Working alongside Yunesit'in for her graduate research is a dream come true for Zoe, as it brings together her passion for wildlife, fire, and community-centered conservation.

The revitalization of Yunesit'in Qwen (fire) Stewardship emerged in response to the 2017 wildfires that surrounded the community. Fire stewards are now working on restoring 'good fire' to their territory, healing the land for the benefit of the community, future generations, and wildlife. One of the program's key goals is to improve habitat conditions for key harvest species, including mus (moose) and nists'i (deer).

Zoe's research supports that vision by investigating two key questions:

1. How do mus (moose) and nists'i (deer) forage quality and quantity respond to cultural burns?
2. How does wildlife habitat use change following treatment?

To answer these questions, Zoe is using a mixed-method approach, combining camera traps, vegetation sampling, forage quality analyses, and near-ground phenology monitoring. By integrating scientific tools with Indigenous-led knowledge and priorities, her study aims to support Yunesit'in's stewardship goals while contributing to a broader understanding of Indigenous Fire Stewardship and its role in shaping ecosystems



HABITAT CONSERVATION
TRUST FOUNDATION



BRITISH
COLUMBIA