

Together for Wildlife

Together for Wildlife HCTF Conservation Scholarship

Recipient 2026

Lauren Mills



Lauren Mills (she/her) is a PhD student at the University of British Columbia working in the Quantitative Ecology Lab under the supervision of Dr. Michael Noonan. She holds a Master of Science in Biology from the University of British Columbia and a Bachelor of Environment, Resources, and Sustainability from the University of Waterloo.

During her undergraduate degree, Lauren became interested in understanding how environmental conditions influence animal ecology, leading her to complete a master's degree where she mapped the global spatial distribution of terrestrial microplastics. During her master's, she developed an interest in predictive modelling and how it can be used to support species conservation. This led her to pursue a PhD that integrates GPS telemetry data with statistical models to aid in proactive caribou management.

Lauren's research aims to predict how climate change will impact Canada's Northern Mountain Caribou (NMC), a culturally important and understudied ecotype of woodland caribou. Indigenous and Local Knowledge indicates that NMC are in decline, and while existing literature suggests that climate change may affect NMC survival and recruitment, the mechanisms underlying these effects remain poorly understood. This project aims to identify these mechanisms by modelling how climate change may influence NMC movement, energetics, habitat use, and predator-prey dynamics over the coming century.

By using telemetry data from NMC herds across their entire range, this project provides a unique opportunity to assess how climate change may affect NMC at a broad spatial scale. Working closely with Indigenous communities, non-profits, the Government of British Columbia, and the Government of Yukon, Lauren's work addresses long-standing data gaps that have limited NMC recovery planning. The results of this research will provide opportunities for proactive NMC conservation, supporting the long-term persistence of an ecologically and culturally important species.