

Together for Wildlife

Together for Wildlife HCTF Conservation Scholarship

Recipient 2026



Peter Baker

Peter Baker is a PhD student in Biology at the University of British Columbia's Okanagan campus, where he studies how wildfire risk reduction treatments influence mule deer habitat, behaviour, and physiology in central British Columbia. His research brings together movement ecology, nutritional ecology, and physiology to understand how wildfire risk can be reduced while maintaining healthy landscapes for wildlife.

Originally from Owen Sound, Ontario, Peter grew up exploring the forests and lakes of the Great Lakes region. He spent much of his childhood outdoors, developing a particular passion for fishing and an appreciation for the region's native salmonids. As he grew older, he watched salmonid populations change as invasive species spread throughout the Great Lakes. Seeing these changes firsthand sparked a lasting curiosity about how human activities reshape ecosystems and the consequences these changes can have for wildlife.

This interest led Peter to pursue an M.Sc. at Western University, where he investigated how invasive species and climate change interact to affect lake trout physiology. His research demonstrated how multiple environmental stressors can interact to influence wildlife and reinforced his interest in producing science that can inform practical conservation.

As his interests expanded from aquatic to terrestrial ecosystems, Peter developed a particular appreciation for deer and the landscapes they depend on. Through hunting, fieldwork, and professional experience in fisheries and wildlife management, he saw firsthand how logging, development, and other forms of landscape change can alter wildlife habitat and influence how animals move across the landscape. These experiences strengthened his interest in understanding how wildlife respond to changing environments and how science can support conservation. Working alongside Indigenous communities, land managers, and conservation practitioners has further shaped his commitment to collaborative approaches to wildlife conservation.

Peter's PhD research addresses a pressing challenge facing British Columbia: how to reduce wildfire risk while maintaining habitat for wildlife. Decades of wildfire suppression, combined with a changing climate, have increased the risk of severe wildfire across the province, while many forests targeted for wildfire risk reduction are also important mule deer habitat. Peter's research aims to provide the science needed to design wildfire risk reduction treatments that account for wildlife.

Through partnerships with First Nations governments, provincial agencies, and conservation organizations, Peter hopes to translate ecological understanding into practical management decisions. Ultimately, he aims to contribute to resilient landscapes that reduce wildfire risk while supporting healthy wildlife populations and the people and traditions that depend on them.