



Don McCubbing HCTF Scholarship Recipient 2026



Rebecca McCracken

Rebecca is an undergraduate student supervised by Dr. Morgan Piczak in the Faculty of Forestry and Environmental Stewardship at the University of British Columbia. She is in her fourth year of a dual degree in Natural Resources Conservation and Secondary Science Education.

Growing up in British Columbia, she spent much of her youth exploring the province's coastlines and rivers by canoe, which sparked an early interest in aquatic ecosystems. Alongside her studies, Rebecca works as a

Teaching Assistant at UBC and for the Army Cadet program, and volunteers with multiple local science outreach initiatives, delivering hands-on workshops to youth in elementary and high school classrooms across Vancouver.

Rebecca's route into fisheries research is shaped just as much by hands-on mentoring and field leadership as by the classroom. Leading multi-day youth expeditions through backcountry terrain taught her how dynamic landscapes and watersheds connect. At the same time, her academic work in ecological modelling and spatial analysis showed her the strength of using quantitative tools to answer ecological questions. Rebecca is driven to work in both complex conservation science and accessible community education, and wants to help protect BC's native fish while encouraging students to take pride in stewarding their local ecosystems.

Rebecca's undergraduate thesis research examines the coastal movements and environmental drivers of ocean entry in White Sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*). While White Sturgeon are traditionally managed as freshwater and estuarine residents, episodic marine entries expose them to novel environmental conditions, physiological demands, and unmonitored human pressures. Rebecca is conducting a regional synthesis of acoustic telemetry data across the west coast of North America, from the Fraser River watershed to regional coastal arrays in British Columbia and the United States, to quantify how frequently sturgeon enter marine environments and identify the cues that trigger these movements. By integrating multi-agency acoustic receiver networks and telemetry metadata, Rebecca will evaluate depth preferences, duration of marine residency, and the thresholds associated with coastal movement. Her project provides baseline data on a life-history strategy for this culturally and ecologically vital species.



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