

Notes from the Field

SUMMER 2021

.....
**TODAY'S STUDENTS,
TOMORROW'S LEADERS**
.....

**HOW STREET DOGS BECOME
CHEETAH PROTECTORS**
.....

**FREEING COTTON-TOPS
FROM CAPTIVITY**



WCN

Wildlife Conservation Network

Today's Students, Tomorrow's Leaders



Jamal Galves is using his WCN scholarship to protect the endangered Antillean manatee in Belize.

Herdhanu Jayanto waved away another mosquito as he waded through the knee-high grass of Indonesia's freshwater wetlands. Since dawn, he had searched for signs of one of the world's rarest reptiles, the Critically Endangered Siamese crocodile. Herdhanu is one of the latest recipients of the WCN Scholarship Program, which empowers young conservationists in their home countries to become tomorrow's leaders in the field. The Siamese crocodile and the false gharial are just two of the crocodilians threatened by commercial hunting and habitat loss from large-scale farming that Herdhanu hopes to save from extinction. And he's not alone.

Across the world, other WCN Scholars are leading the way for local conservation efforts on behalf of threatened species.

WCN Scholars pursue degrees and conduct field research that will establish them as local conservation leaders who can effectively protect wildlife. WCN proudly supports the education of these bright scholars not only because it is an investment in the survival of wildlife, but because local conservationists have historically been excluded from leadership roles and sidelined by foreign organizations and individuals. By funding the development of these conservation and veterinary students, the

Scholarship Program is supporting the local people who will be in charge of shaping the future of conservation in their countries. This year's batch of WCN Scholars is our largest yet, with a total of \$354,000 in scholarships awarded to 26 conservationists around the globe. Some scholars also hail from countries supported by the program for the first time, such as Belize, the Central African Republic, Kazakhstan, and Myanmar.

One of these scholars, Jamal Galves of Belize, is focusing his work on establishing the endangered Antillean manatee as a flagship species to protect critical coastal habitats from unsustainable development. He plans to create a coalition of local marine groups to



Herdhanu Jayanto uses many methods, such as aerial drones, to search for rare crocodilians in Indonesia.

steer marine conservation efforts in Belize. Similarly, Tania Romero Bautista is using her scholarship to build sustainable strategies and

make conservation more accessible to Peru's Amazonian communities. By advocating for the rights of Amazonian communities in the formation of conservation policies, Tania is helping local people have more influence in freshwater management and direct involvement in the defense of vital species like the Amazon river dolphin.

On the other side of the world, Naing Lin is uniting local communities in Myanmar to conserve landscapes and the rich biodiversity found within. This includes charismatic species, like elephants and tigers, as well as elusive animals, like the fishing cat. Protecting Myanmar's wild spaces will benefit both these iconic species and the people who live alongside them. In India, Hasita Bhammar is undertaking an ambitious project to estimate the costs of human-wildlife conflict on local communities. Hasita's studies will identify activities that ensure the benefits of conserving wildlife will always outweigh the potential costs. This will incentivize community support for coexistence with species like elephants and big cats, thus reducing conflict and furthering Hasita's goal of establishing co-management of protected areas between local people and government.

By supporting the initiatives of these inspiring students, WCN is able to safeguard more diverse wildlife and encourage the growth of a new generation of local conservationists. From Indonesia to Nepal to Madagascar and beyond, the 26 WCN Scholars are reimagining how conservation can benefit wildlife and people. By investing in those who live in the same spaces as these amazing animals, we are building a future where conservation leaders reflect the landscapes in which they work. We can't wait to see what tomorrow brings for these scholars and the wildlife they protect. ■

THE FOLLOWING PAGES FEATURE THIS YEAR'S 26 WCN SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS. WE ARE PROUD TO SUPPORT THESE LOCAL CONSERVATIONISTS AS THEY STRIVE TO PROTECT ENDANGERED WILDLIFE.

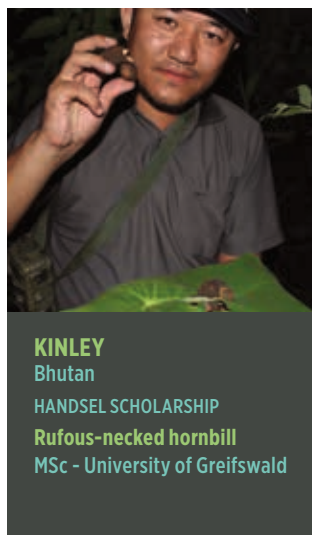
2021 Scholarship Recipients



HASITA BHAMMAR
India
SIDNEY BYERS SCHOLARSHIP
Elephant, big cats
PhD - University of Oxford



JUAN SEBASTIAN AYALA GIRALDO
Colombia
SIDNEY BYERS SCHOLARSHIP
Sea turtles
MSc - ICESI



KINLEY
Bhutan
HANDSEL SCHOLARSHIP
Rufous-necked hornbill
MSc - University of Greifswald



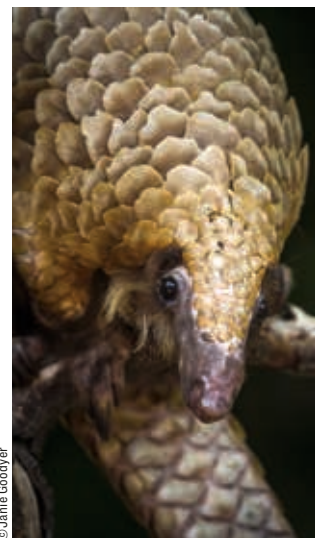
HERDHANU JAYANTO
Indonesia
PAT J. MILLER SCHOLARSHIP
Siamese crocodile
MSc - New Mexico Highlands University



JAMAL GALVES
Belize
HANDSEL SCHOLARSHIP
Antillean manatee
MSc - UC Santa Cruz



RAMA MISHRA
Nepal
PAT J. MILLER SCHOLARSHIP
Fishing cats
PhD - University of Antwerp



© Jamie Goodyer



MICHAEL AKRASI
Ghana
SIDNEY BYERS SCHOLARSHIP
White-bellied pangolin
MSc - Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology



FLORENCIA CHIAPERO
Argentina
SIDNEY BYERS SCHOLARSHIP
Andean cat
PhD - University TBD



MARIAM WESTON FLORES
Mexico
SIDNEY BYERS SCHOLARSHIP
Jaguarundi, margay, ocelot, jaguar
MSc - University of Cambridge



JEAN FERNANDO RANDRIAMIASAON
Madagascar
HANDSEL SCHOLARSHIP
Teatfish sea cucumber
Applied training - (school TBD)



NAING LIN
Myanmar
WCN-WCS JOINT SCHOLARSHIP
Tiger, elephant, ungulates, birds, Irrawaddy dolphin
MSc - University of Kent



© Wrangel



ALBERT SALEMGAREYEV
Kazakhstan
HANDSEL SCHOLARSHIP
Saiga antelope
MSc - Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

© Ondrej Prosimky

© Wrangel



**DR. HUGUETTE KAMAVU
GLODY**
DRC
VETERINARY SCHOLARSHIP
Lowland gorilla, chimpanzee
MSc - Consejo Superior de
Investigaciones Científicas, Spain



**DR. TONY NAMBININA
NATACHA RASOLOZAKA**
Madagascar
VETERINARY SCHOLARSHIP
Waterbirds
MSc - University of Edinburgh



CARINE UWAMAHORO
Rwanda
VETERINARY SCHOLARSHIP
Mountain gorilla
MSc - The Czech University of
Life Science



DR. ADIYA YADAMSUREN
Mongolia
VETERINARY SCHOLARSHIP
Wild camels
Applied training - Prague Zoo
in Czech Republic



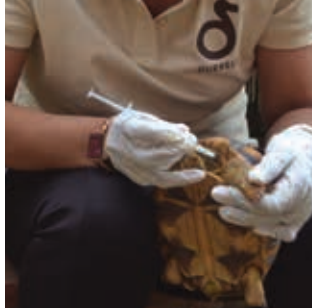
CHRISTOPHER MBISANA
Botswana
PAT J. MILLER SCHOLARSHIP
Cheetah
MSc - University of South
Africa



GRACE CHEPTOO
Kenya
HANDSEL SCHOLARSHIP
Leopards
MSc - University of Wisconsin
-Madison



JUSTINE ROBERT
Tanzania
SIDNEY BYERS SCHOLARSHIP
Lion
MSc - The Nelson Mandela
African Institution of Science
and Technology



FENRICK MSIGWA
Tanzania
SIDNEY BYERS SCHOLARSHIP
Lion and large carnivores
MSc - Sokoine University of
Agriculture



**DR. NY AINA TIANA
RAKOTOARISOA**
Madagascar
VETERINARY SCHOLARSHIP
Lemurs
MSc - University of Edinburgh



© Anna Artamonova



TANIA ROMERO BAUTISTA
Peru
SIDNEY BYERS SCHOLARSHIP
Amazon river dolphin
PhD - Florida International
University



**DR. FRÉDÉRIC STÉPHANE
SINGA NIATOU**
Central African Republic
VETERINARY SCHOLARSHIP
Great apes
Applied training - Lwiro Pri-
mates Rehabilitation Center



**ANTSO
RAZAKAFAMANTANANTSOA**
Madagascar
PAT J. MILLER SCHOLARSHIP
Verreaux's sifaka
MSc - University of Mahajanga,
Madagascar



DENNIS MINJA
Tanzania
SIDNEY BYERS SCHOLARSHIP
Cheetah
PhD - University of Glasgow



DR. ASMA BILEH HERSI
Somalia
VETERINARY SCHOLARSHIP
Cheetah and other large cats
Applied training - Oxford
University

How Street Dogs Become Cheetah Protectors



Tswana dogs are trained from a young age on CCB's demonstration farm, where they grow to think of their livestock herds as family.

The dogs were already barking when his truck pulled up to the Ghanzi camp. As he left the vehicle, desert dust bloomed from a dozen rushing paws and Max Seele spied tails frantically wagging behind the wooden fence slats. He had arrived at Cheetah Conservation Botswana's (CCB) demonstration farm, where their livestock guarding dog (LGD) training facility prepares these canines to protect farmers' livestock and prevent human-cheetah conflict. Max reached over the fence to greet a young Tswana dog, a local variety with a bright future in the program thanks to CCB's intensive research.

The LGD program creates goodwill with farmers and eliminates the primary threat to cheetahs—retaliatory killings for lost livestock. Half of LGD owners are no longer hostile toward cheetahs and conflict is decreasing where LGDs are deployed. Since 2013, CCB has placed 146 dogs with farmers

across Botswana, who have seen an 85% reduction in livestock losses. As the Ghanzi Camp Coordinator, Max manages the demonstration farm where LGDs are trained, and historically, imported Anatolian shepherds have been the preferred breed in similar programs from CCB's peers. But CCB's findings from a decade-long study indicate that local landrace dogs—dogs that haven't received any formal breeding but have adapted to living in human environments—known as Tswana dogs are better suited for the job.

Although CCB's Farming for Conservation team has always championed Tswana dogs, some farmers in Botswana did not share their confidence. Unlike the imposing Anatolian shepherds, Tswana dogs are smaller in size, so farmers doubted their ability to scare away large carnivores. Anatolian shepherds also carried an air of quality, being expensive pure-breds, and farmers didn't trust that the local dogs

roaming their streets would be up to the task. Some even declined CCB's LGD program because they didn't use Anatolians and the farmers didn't want a Tswana dog. So CCB set out to prove the worth of Tswana dogs and discovered that these landrace pups were far cheaper, much better behaved, and easier to train than the Anatolians. Being natives, the Tswana dogs also handled the extreme heat and rough terrain of Botswana's Kalahari region far better than imported Anatolians, which often sought shade on the hottest days. Their smaller size also didn't hinder their ability to successfully guard livestock from cheetahs, jackals, and even leopards.

Informed by this impressive data, CCB has been validated for making Tswana dogs the stars of their LGD program. Max and his team source unwanted puppies from local villages to train with adult LGDs at their facility, which helps the young dogs learn quicker. CCB's research shows that each LGD can save up to six cheetahs every year from retaliatory killings and save farmers an annual



Max Seele (left) administers vaccinations to Tswana dogs at their training facility, ensuring that each dog is healthy before and after placement with a farmer.

average of \$1,300 in livestock losses, and Tswana dogs will only bolster these numbers as the program continues. These dogs are effective, accessible, and happy protecting their herds, which they treat as family. Their devotion and aptitude for the work will ensure that more cheetahs are saved, farmers' attitude toward cheetahs improves, and that Tswana dogs get the credit they deserve. ■



Freeing Cotton-Tops from Captivity

Proyecto Tití engages directly with cotton-top pet owners via social media to teach them why cotton-tops do not belong in captivity. Their educational programs also teach thousands of students each year about cotton-top conservation.



© Juliette Gonzalez

Paula stared at the small fingers wrapped around the bars of the cage and the shiny eyes peering out from behind them. The cotton-top tamarin looked past her toward the forest far beyond the window of her family's living room. This rare monkey, who her grandparents named Amenir, had been their pet for almost five years, a gift from relatives who live near his natural habitat in northern Colombia. With their snow-white head of fur and tiny size, many people find cotton-top tamarins cute and appealing as pets, but these endangered primates do not belong in captivity. Paula Andrea started researching cotton-tops online, and after learning how detrimental it is to

keep them as pets, she began looking for someone to help convince her family to free Amenir.

Her search led her to Proyecto Tití (PT), whose extensive campaigns against the illegal cotton-top pet trade caught Paula's attention. Paula lives 18 miles south of PT's reserve in San Juan Nepomuceno, where wild cotton-tops thrive in 3,120 acres of protected forest. Fewer than 7,000 cotton-top tamarins remain in the wild, yet in the last six years, PT and their partners have documented over 130 cases of cotton-tops kept as pets by local families. This is likely a conservative number, as authorities don't cover all regions and this estimate relies on

anecdotal reports from locals. But the rising trend of reports could indicate that cotton-top trafficking is increasing, spurring PT to intensify their awareness campaigns and encourage those with pet cotton-tops to turn them over to authorities.

PT regularly uses social media to explain how keeping cotton-tops as pets reduces their populations and threatens the survival of the species. Paula responded to one such post and shared her desire to free Amenir. Delighted by her compassion, PT provided Paula with educational materials about the impact of the illegal cotton-top trade to sway her family into releasing their pet. It took time, but it worked.

After agreeing that this would be best for Amenir, PT connected Paula's family with CARDIQUE, the regional environmental authority. They received Amenir and placed him with one of their "friend of wildlife" participants—kind-hearted citizens who



Yasiris Español

Amenir in his cage prior to being rescued from life as a family pet.

house rescued cotton-tops in semi-captivity on private land. While it is unlikely that Amenir can fully return to the wild after years of captivity, his new home allows him to experience life in conditions more closely related to his natural habitat. He may also get to socialize with other rescued cotton-tops.



Yasiris Español

Paula Andrea and her family have become supporters of Proyecto Tití and their campaign against the illegal cotton-top pet trade.

Proyecto Tití plans to recruit more caring Colombians to convince others not to keep cotton-tops as pets. **To date, thanks to PT's positive reputation and successful community outreach, 68 people have contacted them in the hopes of turning over captive cotton-tops.** A growing number of online supporters are alerting them about other pet cotton-tops, and PT hopes to one day found a rehabilitation center specifically for recovered tamarins. With help from people like Paula Andrea and her family, PT will continue changing attitudes about cotton-tops in Colombia and teaching admirers of this rare species to keep them in their hearts, not their homes. ■



Please join us at
our fall **Expo** on
October 2 and 9.
Visit **wcnexpo.org**
for details.

WCN protects endangered wildlife by supporting conservationists who ensure wildlife and people coexist and thrive.

Invest In Wildlife Conservation

We greatly appreciate your dedication to protecting wildlife. Your kind support is vital to our Partners' heroic and enduring work in conservation.

WAYS TO GIVE

- ▶ Donate by mail, phone, fax, or online
- ▶ Become a monthly donor
- ▶ Give a gift on behalf of someone else
- ▶ Include WCN in your estate plans
- ▶ Donate stock or other securities

WCN maintains Charity Navigator's highest possible 4-star rating. Charity Navigator is America's leading independent charity evaluator, and rates over 8,000 charities on their Financial Health and Accountability & Transparency.



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WCN
Wildlife Conservation Network
209 Mississippi Street
San Francisco, CA 94107, USA
Ph. (415) 202-6380
wildnet.org

