Beatrice Kyasiimire joins the IE SNRE doctoral program under the advisement of Dr. Mark Hostetler. Beatrice is from Uganda and holds a master’s degree in natural resources with a focus in environmental systems and management from University of Twente Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC), Netherlands. Beatrice also completed a master of science in natural resource management from Makerere University with a focus in land use planning. Beatrice worked with the Wildlife Conservation Society for more than twelve years. Her work focused on returning communities near protected areas to plan and sustainably use resources, building capacity for local government, private sector and government institutions in ecological spatial planning using GIS and participatory tools. In addition, she managed a Conservation Impact Mitigation and Biodiversity Offsets (COMBO+) project under WCS Uganda program, which aims to reconcile conservation and economic development, implemented in six countries.
These experiences taught Beatrice the importance of enhancing policy and institutional frameworks, tools in landscape planning, and establishing legal and financial mechanisms for better conservation of biodiversity. She is passionate about conservation and people, and looks forward to learning more about each during her PhD. Beatrice’s research discusses the ecological and socio-economic costs of linear infrastructure on biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services in protected areas (the Murchison Semliki landscape) in the western part of the country. Beatrice believes this research will teach her how to provide technical advice to project developers in the country, ensure that biodiversity is protected, and confirm businesses can support conservation; as Uganda is on a trajectory of achieving economic development and security for its citizens.

**Saneer Lamichhane** joins the IE SNRE doctorate program under the advisement of Dr. Madan K. Oli. Saneer completed his master’s and undergraduate degrees in environmental science at Kathmandu University and Tribhuvan University in 2008 and 2011, respectively. He is from Biratnagar, the Eastern city in Nepal, and has over seven years of wildlife experience in Nepal. Following graduation, Saneer worked for the Dhankuta District Development Committee for two years as an Environmental Officer. Subsequently, he worked as an Environmental Consultant at the District Technical Office for the Government of Nepal and the World Bank for nearly a year. In 2016, Saneer began working as a conservation officer with the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), Nepal’s leading wildlife conservation organization. He worked on a variety of programs at NTNC, including tiger monitoring, human wildlife conflict management, and wetland management.

Photo courtesy of Saneer Lamichhane.
In addition, Saneer was actively involved in wildlife research activities such as tiger, rhino, and gharial population estimation, tiger prey base monitoring, tiger/leopard/rhino rescue and radio collaring, occupancy and diet studies of leopards and tigers, and a high-altitude tiger survey. He currently has twelve peer-reviewed articles. Saneer is investigating how humans influence the predator-prey community dynamics. His graduate research examines tiger occupancy inside and outside of protected areas, the spatiotemporal pattern of interactions between tigers, human, prey, and sympatric carnivores, and whether human disturbance effects tiger and prey population dynamics. In his free time, Saneer enjoys playing guitar.

Photo courtesy of Monica Lasky.

**Monica Lasky** joins the WEC doctoral program under the advisement of Dr. Bob McCleery. Monica earned her bachelor’s degree in zoology from North Carolina State University in 2017. Afterwards, she moved to southwest Florida to become a research assistant studying Burmese python movement ecology in the broader Naples area. Additionally, she has experience working as a project manager for a large-scale citizen science project using camera traps to study North Carolina’s mammal communities before entering a master’s program at Colorado State University. During her master’s, Monica studied how experimental human presence modifies predator-prey interactions in Kruger National Park, South Africa. She enters the WEC department with an interest in behavioral ecology of African wildlife communities. When not in the field, Monica enjoys horseback riding, hiking, and traveling.
Morgan Manning joins the IE SNRE doctoral program under the advisement of Dr. Miguel Acevedo. She earned her bachelor’s degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Management from the University of Georgia in 2019, working as a loggerhead genetics lab manager after graduation. During her master’s at UGA, she focused on loggerhead sea turtle population dynamics. Her PhD research focuses on modeling mammal responses to disturbance and the potential for sustainable harvest in Amazonian indigenous territories. She’s passionate about the integration of computer science and ecology. Morgan also enjoys SCUBA diving, computer programming, and going on walks with her Great Dane, June, in her free time.

Rachel Moore joins the WEC doctoral program under the advisement of Dr. Bridget Baker and Dr. Jason Byrd. Rachel earned her bachelor’s degree in anthropology with a focus in medical anthropology from UF in 2019. That Fall, she began her master of science in medical sciences with a concentration in forensic medicine. Throughout Rachel’s academic career, she experienced many amazing opportunities such as, internships, and field work. She completed two study abroad trips; she was a cultural exchange in China and completed a field school in mortuary archaeology. While at UF, Rachel was able to work on multiple archeology projects as well as with remains in the C.A. Pound Human Identification Lab. She also worked as a program assistant for the CSI Academy of Florida. While in this role, Rachel worked with Drs. Lerah Sutton and Jason Byrd on their research on the postmortem interval and the decomposition of porcine and canine remains.
Welcome to WEC!

This spurred Rachel’s interest in decomposition and forensic work involving animal remains. During her master’s, Rachel was given an opportunity to complete a pilot study that monitored the decomposition of a bottlenose dolphin. This study allowed her to work within the fields of forensic medicine, veterinary forensic science, and wildlife forensic science. Near the conclusion of her master’s degree, Rachel began working as the program assistant for the Maples Center for Forensic Medicine where she assisted with education courses in these same fields. In this position, she had the opportunity to meet numerous forensic professionals who do active casework in the fields of crime scene investigation, forensic science research, and animal crimes investigation. These opportunities have increased Rachel’s passion for forensic science and highlighted what she believes to be a gap in knowledge in what is known about animal decomposition. Rachel is thrilled to work with WEC throughout her PhD so that she can give better context to the research she started in her master’s program. Outside of research, Rachel enjoys reading, cooking, listening to music, traveling, and exploring around the Gainesville area with her boyfriend and two dogs. Her goals outside of education are to travel to all seven continents, every state, and every national park. So far, she has been to 5 continents, 29 countries, 38 states, and 29 national parks.

**Juan Restrepo** joins the WEC doctoral program under the advisement of Dr. Vanessa Hull. Juan earned a bachelor’s degree in biology from the Universidad de Caldas and an master’s degree in Biodiversity Conservation and Use from Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, both of which are universities in his home country of Colombia. During his studies, Juan established a passion for raptors and pursued a variety of research opportunities, including the ecology and conservation of the vulnerable andean condor, the endangered black-and-chestnut eagle, and a variety of owl species. Juan is also well connected with agencies such as the National Audubon Society and the Peregrine Fund throughout longtime collaborations. Furthermore, Juan has leadership experience through working as a consultant for conservation projects in Colombia and Chile, and, most recently, as the Scientific Coordinator of the Andean Condor Foundation (Ecuador). He has been interested in the biodiversity conservation and use, and in promoting decisions based on scientific evidence to prevent and mitigate human-wildlife conflicts.
Welcome to WEC!

Lydia Soifer joins the IE SNRE doctoral program under the advisement of Dr. Brett Scheffers. Lydia is originally from St. Louis, Missouri, and earned her bachelor’s degree from Davidson College in 2020 and an MPhil from Cambridge in 2022. As an undergraduate, Lydia’s research focused on environmental drivers of orchid distribution in North Carolina and Puerto Rico. After graduating, Lydia interned at the Missouri Botanical Garden, where she conducted research on urban prairie connectivity and helped maintain a native prairie and woodland reconstruction site. During her time at Cambridge, she focused on how three-dimensional microclimate gradients may influence changes in epiphyte distribution in response to climate change. Throughout these experiences, Lydia developed a keen interest in tropical ecology, biogeography, and conservation. For her graduate research, Lydia plans to study the influence of 3D microclimate gradients on biogeographical patterns of epiphyte communities in Madagascar and Florida.

Photo courtesy of Lydia Soifer.

MS students...

Arek Barkaszi joins the WEC master’s program under the advisement of Dr. Mark Hostetler. Arek earned his bachelor’s degree from Florida Atlantic University in 2020. During his undergraduate program, Arek participated in a variety of research opportunities including soil lead testing and habitat and exotic species management. A highlight of his research was participating in prescribed burns at Archbold Biological Station. After graduating, he joined private consulting groups that monitored protected species for development of offshore energy infrastructure. Arek’s master’s research will focus on measuring the biodiversity of rangelands with photo voltaic arrays in an effort to develop sustainable management practices.

Photo courtesy of Arek Barkaszi.
Welcome to WEC!

Sierra Barlow joins the WEC master’s program this Fall as a non-thesis student. Sierra is originally from Lakeland, Georgia. She graduated from Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia, with a bachelor’s degree in Biology. During her undergraduate career, she interned at Oxbow Meadows Environmental Learning Center. This placement involved caring for reptiles and amphibians, trail maintenance, and teaching education programs. She plans to enter public education and hopes to teach about conservation at a zoo.

Photo courtesy of Sierra Barlow.

Lara Elmquist joins the WEC master’s program under the advisement of Dr. Robert Fletcher. Lara earned her bachelor’s degree in Environmental Biology at Tulane University in 2017. Since then, Lara gained experience through a variety of field jobs. She worked with migrating raptor species in the western U.S., spotted owls in New Mexico, red-cockaded woodpeckers in Louisiana, and, most recently, snail kites across the state of Florida. For her master’s position, Lara is excited to explore the ecology of the endangered snail kite and has specific interests relating to breeding and foraging behavior. In her free time, Lara likes birding, spending time with friends, and enjoying the Florida sunshine.

Photo courtesy of Lara Elmquist.
Welcome to WEC!

**Alex Furst** joins the WEC master’s program under the advisement of Dr. Hance Ellington. Alex earned his bachelor’s degree from Muskingum University in 2019 where he studied Environmental Science with a minor in Biology. He spent a year at the Conservancy of Southwest Florida on the Burmese Python Research and Removal Project. Additionally, he assisted in tracking numerous scout snakes using radio telemetry, and aided in the capture and removal of invasive Burmese pythons. Alex has since spent time as a Nonnative Fish and Wildlife Biologist with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission assisting in management and removal projects for Argentine black and white tegus and Burmese pythons. For his master’s research, Alex will be assessing and studying the abundance of Argentine Black and White Tegus and their use of habitat. In his free time Alex enjoys hiking, camping, fishing, and herping.

![Photo courtesy of Alec Furst.](image)

**Alan Ivory** joins the WEC master’s program under the advisement of Dr. Steve Johnson. Alan earned his bachelor’s degree from WEC in 2019 before conducting NPS fisheries research in the Grand Canyon and sea turtle nesting counts at Loggerhead Marinelife Center. Alan’s partnership with Loggerhead began at the Thompson Earth Systems Institute (TESI) at the Florida Museum. TESI is the home to the Scientist in Every Florida School Program, allowing Alan the opportunity to teach K-12 students about sea turtle biology and how humans impact sea turtles. Currently, Alan is in charge of assisting with the life science curriculum in Marion and Levy Counties. Alan’s master’s research will work towards updating the Cuban tree frog range throughout the panhandle of Florida and how Cuban tree frog range is spread throughout the US via trade and other human transportation means. In Alan’s free time, he is found rock climbing, kayaking, and fishing.

![Photo courtesy of Alan Ivory.](image)
Welcome to WEC!

Storm Miller joins the WEC master’s program under the advisement of Dr. Robert McCleery. Storm completed his bachelor’s degree at Michigan State University in Fisheries and Wildlife with a concentration in conservation biology. During his undergraduate career, he studied a variety of subjects including black bears, Lyme disease ecology, and human hunting modes. Storm worked at a veterinary clinic throughout school and has a love for animals, especially his bulldog Murphy. Storm’s master’s research will focus on evaluating and developing novel approaches to attract and improve upon detection methods of the invasive Burmese Python. His hobbies include weightlifting, cycling, camping, and playing the guitar.

Nathan Rogers joins the WEC master’s program under the advisement of Dr. Bill Pine. Nathan earned his bachelor’s degree in Marine Science and Chemistry from the University of Miami. Since then, he has held positions as a lab technician for the UF Blueberry Breeding and Genomics lab, and as a field technician for the IFAS/NCBS Lone Cabbage Reef Restoration project. Continuing his work with Dr. Pine, his master’s program research focuses on the site occupancy of wild oyster reefs in Cedar Key, FL. In his free-time, Nathan enjoys traveling, camping, and live music.
Welcome to WEC!

**Ryan Sanders** joins the WEC master’s program under the advisement of Dr. Katie Sieving. Ryan earned his bachelor’s degree in cellular biology and physiology from Saint Louis University in 2018, and worked in drug discovery research. The lab Ryan worked in relocated from Washington University in St. Louis to UF in 2021. As a result, he decided to pursue his interests in ecology and wildlife conservation. Ryan’s specific wildlife conservation interests pertain to the management of big game species in the western U.S., particularly large carnivore species and how to resolve conflict with human activities.

Photo courtesy of Ryan Sanders.

**Alexis Trosclair** joins the WEC master’s program under the advisement of Dr. Katie Sieving. Alexis is from New Iberia, Louisiana, a rural area about 15 minutes from the Gulf of Mexico. She graduated from Northwestern State University with a bachelor’s degree in biology with a concentration in natural science and minors in wildlife management and art. As part of the NASA-JOVE Scholar Research Program, Alexis worked with two research labs, Survey of Antibiotic Resistance of Aeromonas hydrophila ss. in the Local Waterways of Natchitoches, Louisiana and Development of an Economic and Simplified Colloidal Chitin Preparation Protocol. After graduation, Alexis worked full time in animal rescue. Alexis enjoys photography, swimming, and cooking.

Photo courtesy of Alexis Trosclair.
Welcome to WEC!

Peter Xiong joins the WEC master’s program under the advisement of Dr. Christina Romagosa. Peter earned his bachelor’s degree from the University of Minnesota in 2016. Since graduating, Peter volunteered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a Crazy Ant Strike Team crew member on an eradication project on Johnston Atoll National Wildlife Refuge. Additionally, he worked as a contracted field biologist on Guam with the USGS Brown Treesnake Project. Peter’s master’s research will focus on the Argentine black and white tegu, *Salvator merianae*, assessing different baits/lures to improve upon current management efforts. In his free time, Peter enjoys wildlife photography, fishing, and diving.

Faculty...

Please join us in welcoming Dr. Carolina Baruzzi to the WEC faculty as a tenure-track Assistant Professor! Dr. Carolina Baruzzi will join the faculty at the North Florida Research and Education Center in Spring 2023. Her lab will focus on fire ecology and game species habitat management. Carolina received her Ph.D. from Mississippi State University where she studied the effects of mass mortality events on scavenger behavior and plant communities. After her Ph.D., she joined Dr. Raelene Crandall’s Lab at UF where she focused her research on responses of understory plant communities to fire regimes in longleaf pine savannas. She recently joined the Dr. Marcus Lashley’s lab (UF D.E.E.R. Lab) investigating the effects of large-scale disturbances on ecosystem functions.
Welcome to WEC!

Please join us in welcoming Dr. Corey Callaghan to the WEC faculty as a tenure-track Assistant Professor at the Ft. Lauderdale Research and Education Center in November 2022. Corey is originally from western New York where he did his undergraduate degrees in environmental science and mathematics & statistics. He completed his master’s degree studying exotic purple swamphens in south Florida. He then moved to Sydney, Australia and studied how biodiversity responds to urban environments for his PhD. His research broadly encompasses global change ecology, with a focus on using big biodiversity data to understand ecological and biological patterns and processes in space and time ranging from local to global spatial scales. His work tends to focus on urban ecology, asking fundamental questions such as how species traits influence a species’ ability to persist in urban ecosystems as well as applied questions such as how to better preserve biodiversity in urban greenspaces. While he is partial to birds, his research cuts across different taxa including birds, amphibians, butterflies, and mutli-taxon compilations. In his free time, he enjoys birding and naturalisting.

Achievements...

Congratulations to Dr. Steve Johnson on his promotion to WEC Professor!

Congratulations to Dr. Brett Scheffers on receiving tenure and his promotion to WEC Associate Professor!
Achievements...

Jamie Casteel authored a paper, published in *Ichthyology & Herpetology*, from research she completed with Jerry Johnson at Santa Fe College during her time as a WEC undergraduate student. This is a great example of undergraduate research experience leading to a peer-reviewed paper. In this paper, Jamie and her co-authors document trends in river cooter populations in the Santa Fe River from Jerry Johnson’s long-term sampling efforts. They used simulation to identify ways to improve the sampling to increase the precision of abundance estimates.

Dr. Emily Khazan (SNRE PhD ’22) accepted a position as an Inventory and Monitoring Ecologist with the US Fish and Wildlife in the division of National Wildlife Refuges. In this position she works with a suite of national wildlife refuges to standardize and improve their inventory. This position also provides her an opportunity to monitor programs, working in tandem with refuge biologists, researchers, and private landowners.

Photo courtesy of Thomas Smith.

Doctoral Student Thomas Smith won the award for Best Student Presentation at the 2022 meeting of the International Association for Landscape Ecology-North America (IALE-NA). Thomas is advised by Rob Fletcher and Emilio Bruna.

Diane Episcopio-Sturgeon passed her qualifying exam on Aug 15 2022. Diane is a SNRE PhD student, advised by Dr. Vanessa Hull. Diane’s dissertation Title, at this time, is “Pressing Issues within the Human Dimensions of Big Cat Conservation.” Diane is now a IE/ SNRE PhD candidate.
Congratulations to the UF graduating class of 2022!

PhD graduates...

Dr. Renata Diaz, advised by Dr. Morgan Ernest.

Dr. Bonginkosi Gumbi, advised by Dr. James Austin.

Dr. Kimberly Ledger, advised by Dr. Samantha Wisely.
Congratulations to the UF graduating class of 2022!

**PhD graduates...**

Dr. Haqiqurahman Rahmani, advised by Dr. Robert Fletcher.

Dr. Christian Rivera, advised by Dr. Vanessa Hull.

**MS graduates...**

Jamie Casteel, advised by Dr. Bill Pine.

Jenna Cole, advised by Dr. Frank Mazzotti.

Brittany Mason, advised by Dr. Frank Mazzotti.

Laura Nicholson, advised by Dr. Holly Ober.

Peter Keene, advised by Dr. Kathryn Sieving.
Moving on...

BS graduates...

Cole Baker
Karissa Beloyan
Ava Blanc
Sydney Brandt
Jason Edelkind
Catherine Fonseca
Tyler Garrell
Isla Hession
Audrey Jordon
Alexandra Marra
Enrique Ribas
Valerie Spradlin
Kallie Stafford
Erik Van Dyke
Haley Welsh
Valerie Kwong

WEC minor...

Noah Barguez-Arias
Makenzie Griffin
Vasilios Kosmakos
Kayla Mageau
Sarah Mathews
Armani Nguyen
2022-2022 Doris and Earl Lowe and Verna Lowe Scholarship - Graduate Student recipients:

Orlando Acevedo-Charry
Keara Clancy
Tyler Coleman
Rebecca McKee
Fátima Ramis

2022-2022 Doris and Earl Lowe and Verna Lowe Scholarship - Undergraduate Student recipients:

Chloe Arbogast
Nathan Bryan
Sarah Dill
Maya Encinosa

Hannah Henry
Lily Maxwell
Owen McCool
Ava Mingrone

Alex Nelson
Megan Sanford
Elijah Smith
Charisse Sproha

Will Welsh III

CALS Scholarship - Undergraduate Student Recipients:

Kylie Mendoza
Emily Richards

Vanessa Serrato
Anna Vasana

Florida Rural Rehabilitation Corporation Scholarship - Undergraduate Student recipients:

Brandon Dodge
MacKenzie Wirick
Undergraduate Program Coordinator...

Please join us in giving a warm welcome and congratulations to Dr. Christina Romagosa who will be taking over the position as WEC undergraduate coordinator from Dr. Steve Johnson. Dr. Johnson is stepping down as undergraduate coordinator after 4 years of service. We are very grateful for all Dr. Johnson has done for the department as undergraduate coordinator and what he continues to do even after transitioning from the role. Dr. Johnson is still available and is always willing to advise students if help is needed. Thank you, Dr. Johnson!

Dr. Christina Romagosa will begin her duties as the new undergraduate coordinator in August 2022. She is a WEC graduate (BS and MS), completed her PhD at Auburn University, and joined the WEC faculty in 2013. Dr. Romagosa teaches Wildlife Colloquium (WIS 2920); this course is an introduction to the WEC major and the field of Wildlife Ecology. She also teaches Wildlife Techniques and Everglades Natural History, Management, and Restoration. Dr. Romagosa enjoys working with undergraduates and currently serves as a faculty advisor for the Natural Resources Diversity Initiative (NRDI), the UF Chapter of the Wildlife Society, and is a faculty mentor for the Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program. Her research is on biological invasions. There are always opportunities to work with Dr. Romagosa and her graduate students, or participate in internships in the Everglades. She will be setting up office hours this fall semester, so stay tuned!

Photo courtesy of Christina Romagosa.
A group of WEC/SNRE PhD students (Diego Juarez, Christian Rivera, Vanessa Luna, Robinson Botero) and recent alumni (Thomas Smith, Natalie Claunch) organized an International River Ecology and Conservation Workshop in Guatemala from June 27 to July 1, 2022. They trained Guatemalan undergraduate students and early career professionals in the biological sciences and related fields about wildlife monitoring and conservation. Thanks to UF’s Tropical Ecology and Conservation program and ARCAS Wildlife Rescue Conservation Association for their support. See their website for this year and previous years' workshops by clicking here.
About this issue...

This issue of the WEC Spotlight was edited and produced by Maddie Magrino and Kelley Graff.

The next issue will be produced and released in November. Please send entries by October 15th to kelleygraff@ufl.edu

Want to promote your new research, field work, internship, or alumni news on WEC’s social media platforms? Please send submissions to mmagrino@ufl.edu

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