

FLORIDA CHAPTER THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY



Courtney A. Tye Memorial Graduate Student Scholarship

We are pleased to announce that **Laura Nicholson** is the 2021 recipient of the annual scholarship for graduate studies, administered by the Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society. Laura is expected to graduate with her MS in in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation from University of Florida in May 2022.

Laura earned her BS degree in 2018 from Rice University in Houston, TX. She has worked on a number of field projects involving pollinators and bats, including a fruit bat clinic in Australia, acoustic bat monitoring at Lassen Volcanic NP, and a Wagoner Fellowship to study land-use change effects on pollinators in the lowlands of Ecuador. Her thesis research focuses on the impacts of hydrologic restoration on the foraging habits of the bat community of southwest Florida, with particular focus on the endangered Florida bonneted bat (FBB). Little is known about the foraging habits and requirements of FBBs. Previous acoustic surveys examined the distribution and habitat associations but did not incorporated hydrology as a potential factor. Laura's research involves an array of 97 acoustic monitoring sites spanning the restoration gradient, including reference sites, with supplemental insect sampling, vegetation mapping and use of game cameras. Research on fine-scale habitat preferences and response to hydrologic restoration will inform decisions regarding critical habitat and management for bat communities in south Florida.

Laura has a strong history of mentoring others. As an undergrad, she served as both a teaching assistant and a research lab assistant. Despite her grueling schedule of field data collection, she has found time in the past year to mentor two Doris Duke Conservation Scholars and nine undergraduate student volunteers. Following her master's research, Laura plans to continue her career development by pursuing a Ph.D. on land-use changes and climate change impacts on bat communities.

The FLTWS Graduate Student Scholarship was established in 2012 to recognize and financially assist graduate students pursuing a career in wildlife biology at a 4-year school in Florida. In 2014, the scholarship was renamed the Courtney A. Tye Memorial Graduate Student Scholarship in honor of a respected FFWCC employee and graduate student scholarship applicant, who was tragically lost to the conservation community. Applicants for the scholarship are judged based on career interest, research relevance, contribution to Florida wildlife, demonstrated leadership, professional potential, TWS involvement, financial need, and recommendation from a professor. The Florida Wildlife Federation co-sponsors the scholarship. As this year's recipient, **Laura** will receive a check for \$2,000 and be recognized at the FLTWS VIRTUAL Spring Meeting on March 23 at 9am.

To join the March 23rd Zoom Meeting:

<https://ucf.zoom.us/j/95533672097?pwd=SmM1K052bzM3b2MwakFKc3dpd1JqQT09>

Meeting ID: 955 3367 2097

Passcode: 913106

Monica Folk

Chair, FLTWS Scholarship Committee