

# Megan Baldissara

 [megan.baldissara.for@gmail.com](mailto:megan.baldissara.for@gmail.com)

 [www.linkedin.com/in/megan-baldissara](http://www.linkedin.com/in/megan-baldissara)

## PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

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Research ecologist passionate about conservation, with a PhD specialising in applied ecology and wildlife–habitat relationships. Extensive experience analysing large ecological and spatial datasets using R, GIS and Google Earth Engine to support conservation decision-making. Proven track record of peer-reviewed publications, collaborative research with conservation agencies, and applied ecological research relevant to diverse species of birds in multiple environments.

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## EDUCATION

### Ph.D. in Natural Resource Sciences – Applied Ecology Specialisation

University of Nebraska – Lincoln, USA; 2021 –2025

- **Dissertation:** “[Detecting Prescribed Fire, Haying and Grazing Events via Remote Sensing to Create Grassland Disturbance Landcovers for the Ring-necked Pheasant \(\*Phasianus colchicus\*\)](#)”. **Goal:** Developed landcover maps of grassland disturbances (fire, haying and grazing) to detect pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) nesting, brood rearing and winter habitat and guide management through an ArcGIS based decision-support tool.
  - Managed, analysed, and interpreted large habitat datasets in R and Google Earth Engine, and developed and implement statistical and spatial analysis approaches (e.g. Random Forest) to remotely detect habitat.
  - Managed the research project, shaped research questions and assessed different methodologies.
  - Collaborated within a team and with state wildlife agencies, participating in regular meetings and producing reports.
- **Landscape ecology course:** conducted spatial analysis such as distance metrics, KDE, RSFs for researching species-habitat associations. Grade A.

### Master of Science in Conservation and Biodiversity; University of Exeter, UK; 2019 - 2020

Distinction (GPA: 4.0/4.0)

- **Thesis:** “Environmental challenges not affecting problem-solving capacity and behaviour in blue tits (*Cyanistes caeruleus*)”.
  - Managed, prepared, analysed and interpreted hundreds of datapoints to explore bird-habitat suitability using Generalised Linear Mixed Models (GLMMs) modelling in R.
  - Independently managed the research project, developed research questions and assessed various methodologies.

### Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences; University of Plymouth, UK; 2015 - 2019

First class honours (GPA: 4.0/4.0)

- **Thesis:** “Chew cards as an improved grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) detection method”. Tested a novel squirrel monitoring approach in collaboration with landowners; successfully detected squirrels using this method.
  - Managed the research project, developed research questions and assessed methodologies, analysing data in R.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### Postdoctoral Research Associate, University of Nebraska – Lincoln, USA; January 2026 – April 2026

- Managing, preparing, analysing and interpreting large spatial datasets (thousands of data points of habitat information) using R, ArcGIS and Google Earth Engine to quantify habitat disturbance in relation to pheasants.
- Developing and implementing statistical and spatial analysis approaches to support applied conservation research.
- Leading the preparation of peer-reviewed manuscripts and technical reports, collaborating with internal project teams and stakeholders to translate research outputs into conservation-relevant insights.

### Academic Support Roles, University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UNL), USA; August 2021 – December 2025

- **Technician coordinator** for field and analytical departments evaluating pheasant habitat at multiple scales.
- **Undergraduate thesis mentor** on red fox and coyote spatiotemporal patterns research in Wilderness Park (Lincoln).

### **Squirrel Research Assistant; The Lancashire Wildlife Trust, UK; November 2020 – July 2021**

- Synthesised grey squirrel geospatial data in QGIS, informing control strategies and supporting funding proposals.

### **Project Coordinator Assistant, Made in the Wild, UK; February 2021 – July 2021**

- Coordinated a conservation field course for aspiring professionals; participants reported lasting career benefits.

### **Summer Field Biologist; The Painted Dog Research Trust, Zimbabwe; August 2019**

- Administered, collected, and analysed camera trap data in Hwange National Park (area: 14,651 km<sup>2</sup>) in collaboration with local researchers to track painted dog (*Lycaon pictus*) movements, leading to poaching prevention.
- Launched an ongoing project on knobthorn tree (*Acacia nigrescens*) population dynamics.

### **Geographical Information Science (GIS) and Predation Research Student Placement; The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT), UK; September 2017– September 2018**

- Developed and implemented statistical and spatial analysis of predator–prey interactions using large ecological datasets (>60,000 records).
- Collaborated with internal project teams, and participated stakeholder meetings, producing project reports.
- Analysed spatial data in ArcGIS to support various habitat assessments, such as those for upland bird conservation.

### **Research Assistant; Operation Wallacea, Romania; July 2016**

- Quantified spatial changes in wildlife in Transylvania (Romania) using ecological monitoring, including vegetation identification; data demonstrated the site's unique conservation value and vulnerability to agricultural expansion.

### **PEER – REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS (Full list available on request)**

- **Baldissara, M.**, A. Barg, A. Little, Z. Tang, B. Wardlow, and D.R. Uden. 2025. Remote Sensing and Landcover in Ring-Necked Pheasant Research: A Review of Data Sources and Scales. *Ecology and Evolution*. 15(6), e71576. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.71576>.
- Barg, A., M. **Baldissara**, D.R. Uden, J. P. Carroll, and A. Little. 2025. Pheasants 365: A Review of Seasonal Ring-Necked Pheasant Habitat in Central North America. *Ecology and Evolution*. 15(8), e71867. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.71867>.
- **Baldissara, M.**, A. Barg, A. Little, Z. Tang, B. Wardlow, J. Carrol, L. Powell, and D.R. Uden. 2026. Remote Sensing-based Detection of Prescribed Fires in Nebraska. Publication in preparation.

### **ORAL RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS (Full list available on request)**

- **Baldissara, M.**, A. Barg, D.R. Uden, and A. Little. 2024. Remotely sensed grassland disturbance detection for ring-necked pheasant vegetation management. The Wildlife Society Conference. Oct. 19–23. Baltimore, MD, USA. Poster.
- **Baldissara, M.**, A. Barg, D.R. Uden, and A. Little. 2023. The scale of pheasant habitat research in the North American Great Plains. International Galliformes/WPA Conference. Oct. 9–13, East Java, Indonesia. Poster.

### **HONORS AND AWARDS**

- [The Pheasants Forever, Quail Forever scholarship](#) - \$2,500.00 (2024).
- Added to Dean's list for exemplary performance in each year of the undergraduate course (2015-2019).

### **CERTIFICATIONS:**

- STOP the bleed certificate (2024),
- Science communication training certificate (2022),

**TECHNICAL SKILLS:** Google Earth Engine, Python, R, GIS, Satellite image processing, Microsoft Office Suite.

**MULTILINGUAL:** Proficient in spoken and written English and Italian and basic skills in French and Spanish.