

COALITION WILD









Are you on a mission to implement your conservation project idea that positively impacts the health of the planet and grow your leadership skills?

We believe in the drive and ideas of youth and are backing young conservationists in their inception phase. Whether you just have an idea, or are in the early implementation stage, or perhaps you are more established and are looking to scale, we want to work with you to grow your project.

The EXCELerator is a rigorous six-month facilitated program to equip you with all the skills to implement a successful conservation project.

#### Organised by:

CoalitionWILD, with the financial support of our partners and donors.

**Duration:** 6 months, from January - June 2026

#### **Distribution of sessions:**

- 12 pre-recorded sessions, released biweekly on Fridays at 12:00 PM UTC.
- 13 live sessions, held every two weeks on Thursdays from 12:30 to 2:00 PM UTC (EXCELerator LIVE Program ONLY)

**Start date:** Thursday, January 8, 2026

End date: Thursday, July 2, 2026

**Language:** The program will be delivered entirely in English.

#### **Capacity:**

- 50 places for the EXCELerator FLEX program
- 30 places for the EXCELerator LIVE program

**Cost:** Free for all selected participants, thanks to the generous support of our partners and donors.





The ninth edition of the EXCELerator program will run for six months, from January to June 2026. Participation is 100% virtual and offered at no cost, thanks to the generous support of our partners and donors. Participants can choose between two learning pathways to complete the program based on their learning needs, expectations, and availability: the **EXCELerator LIVE program**, which includes biweekly (once every two weeks) live sessions, or the **EXCELerator FLEX program**, which is self-paced over the six months with no live sessions.

## What can be expected from the program?

- The program will be **facilitated through the Thinkific learning platform**, which will remain accessible to all participants throughout its duration **(from January to August 2026)**.
- Participants will gain access to 12 pre-recorded sessions led by young conservation experts, covering topics such as project development and management, fundraising and grant writing, effective communication, and more! Each session will be 45~60 minutes long, with presentation slides available for download on our learning platform. Additional follow-up resources will also be provided to support your learning.
- Participate in discussion forums and interact with fellow participants by sharing key concepts learned in each session, asking questions, and showcasing the work you're doing in your own country and with your projects.
- Participants will have access to downloadable toolkits and resources throughout
  the EXCELerator program. This includes a continually updated and curated list of
  resources that they can utilize to benefit themselves and their projects.
- Participants will have the opportunity to receive an official Certificate of Completion, showcasing their achievements throughout the six-month program.
- Gain access to global opportunities for funding and networking, and have your project highlighted on WILD Foundation's social media channels, with potential partners and our WILD Voices blog.

In last year's edition of the program, we had projects ranging from developing solutions for human-feline coexistence in Peru, to campaigning for the protection of ancient forests in the United Kingdom, to creating a comprehensive environment-based curriculum for schools in Kenya, and to combating deforestation by introducing eco-friendly charcoal briquettes made from waste biomass in South Sudan. Whatever your idea, if it addresses a clear environmental problem with a novel solution, ideally with a community-centered approach, the EXCELerator is here for you.

## **EXCELerator Alumni Testimonials**

"The **knowledge gained was extensive** ranging from the Conservation Standards, to **building my own brand** and pitching. Overall I have applied some of these [learnings] during my current applications for grants and, yes, I won a grant to push one of my projects in amphibian conservation from the Amphibian Survival Alliance!"

Abraham Mugoya Wayirawo, 2025 EXCELerator participant from Uganda

"The program has given me valuable insights into conservation strategies, Budget planning, and personal growth. It helped me reflect on my strengths and areas for improvement while introducing new ways of thinking, especially around inclusive leadership and effective communication. Working with diverse peers and engaging in real-world challenges expanded my perspective and encouraged me to approach problems more creatively. Overall, the program has positively influenced how I lead, work with others, and continue to grow professionally."

Marbet Aguilar, 2025 EXCELerator participant from Mexico

"Completing the EXCELerator program really **opened my eyes to how to turn my ideas into real, impactful projects**. It taught me how to plan step-by-step, work with people in my community, and manage funds better. I also learned how important storytelling is to get others excited about the cause. Most importantly, **the program boosted my confidence** and helped me see that with the right tools and mindset, I can make a difference. It was a valuable experience that changed how I approach my work and leadership."

## Bimochan Pathak, 2025 EXCELerator participant from Nepal

"The program was a real opportunity to learn more about project management. It helped me better understand how to structure and implement a project from the ground up. I gained practical tools and frameworks that I can apply in real-life situations, especially when working on my project for instance budgeting, communication and branding. It also shifted my perspective on how to approach challenges and design solutions with clarity and purpose. Overall, it strengthened both my confidence and my capacity to lead impactful projects."

Nomena Andriantiana, 2025 EXCELerator participant from Madagascar

## Pathway 1: The EXCELerator FLEX program

- Six-month self-paced program to develop and implement your project idea.
- Fortnightly pre-recorded sessions led by young conservation experts.
- Engage in active **discussion forums** on our learning platform to ask questions, collaborate, and network with peers.
- No live sessions required: solidify your learning through short **multiple- choice quizzes** and **feedback surveys** at the end of each program phase.
- Ideal for young conservation leaders who have a project idea and want to acquire the skills needed to implement or scale their conservation efforts..

## What did our previous EXCELerator FLEX cohort get up to?



## Sarah Mshanga

Sarah is a 2025 EXCELerator alumni working in wildlife conservation in Tanzania. Her project focuses on reducing human-elephant conflict around Maswa Game Reserve in the Simiyu region. Through her project, Sarah seeks to protect both community livelihoods and elephant populations by promoting conservation-centered solutions. She is working with local communities to raise awareness, strengthen food security, and explore alternative livelihoods, while also supporting community-led mitigation and monitoring efforts conflict reduce and that foster long-term coexistence.

Talking about her experience, Sarah said:

"This program has truly been a **transformative experience** for me. It has **equipped me with practical skills and knowledge** in areas such as project planning, stakeholder engagement, project management, monitoring project progress, fundraising, planning and budgeting, grant writing, public speaking, storytelling, and even brand strategy...

What has stood out most for me is how the program has shifted the way I think about project management. I now feel more confident and prepared to take initiative, work with different groups, and communicate ideas clearly and effectively. I've also appreciated how thoughtfully the content has been delivered—it has felt relevant, practical, and empowering...

Beyond just the skills, **the program has given me a strong sense of clarity and direction**, and I feel more connected to a global network of like-minded changemakers. It's an experience I'll carry forward, both personally and professionally."

## Success Uwhuseba Ogheneruona

Success is a 2025 EXCELerator alumni from Nigeria immersed in aquatic restoration, with a particular focus on youth and coastal communities. His project seeks to combat water deoxygenation, ocean pollution, and biodiversity loss in riverine and coastal communities leading to the South Atlantic Ocean. By engaging youth and empowering populations, the initiative promotes local sustainable community-led practices, and pollution reduction along conservation. waterways. Through environmental education, capacity-building workshops, and collaborative cleanup efforts, success's initiative aims to help restore aquatic ecosystems, improve livelihoods, and create a healthier environment for future generations.



Talking about his experience, Success said:

"This program has improved my perspective and understanding about conservation. Not just the [Conservation] Standards but also the requisites in managing a conservation project; from community interactions to project allocation, budgeting and branding (something I was really poor at). This will really shape my applications for other grants and the implementation of the funds."

## Pathway 2: The EXCELerator LIVE program

- **Six-month** cohort-based program centered around virtual live sessions, facilitated by the CoalitionWILD team with participation from young conservation leaders.
- Access **pre-recorded sessions** led by young conservation experts, published fortnightly on our learning platform.
- Commit to attending 13 live sessions, held fortnightly on <u>Thursdays from 12:30</u> to 14:00 UTC. These sessions provide a collaborative space to apply what you learn from the pre-recorded sessions to your own project. Attendance of 80% of live sessions is required for graduation, as it supports the successful implementation of your project.
- The live sessions also offer opportunities to connect with peers, share progress, ask questions, and gain different perspectives.

## What did our former EXCELerator LIVE cohort get up to?



### **Aayush Dhungana**

Aayush is a 2025 EXCELerator alumni who works in community-based turtle conservation in Nepal. His project focuses on protecting threatened turtles in the Ghodaghodi Lake Complex through education, awareness, and capacity-building initiatives. By engaging the local Tharu community and law enforcement agencies, the project addresses key threats such as illegal hunting, trade, and road mortality resulting from turtle-vehicle collisions.

Regarding his experience as a LIVE participant, Aayush wrote:

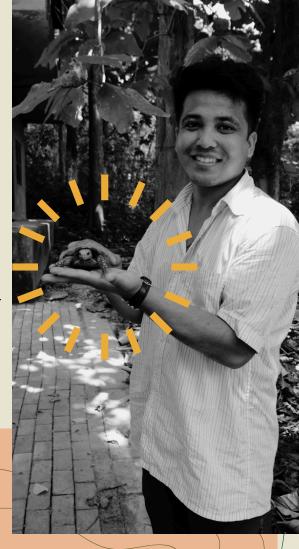
"The EXCELerator LIVE program offered valuable insights into leadership, communication, and project planning. It helped me shift from task-based thinking to strategic goal-setting, and I now approach conservation work with a clearer, impact-driven mindset."

#### Nishan Limbu

Nishan is a 2025 EXCELerator alumni from Nepal concerned with the Conservation of Freshwater Turtles in Eastern Nepal's Wetlands. He understands the crucial role wetlands play in turtle conservation and recognizes the threats posed by habitat encroachment, poaching, and lack of awareness, which are rapidly endangering turtle populations and the delicate balance of wetland ecosystems. To address these challenges, Nishan's project seeks to empower local communities by combining scientific research with the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples to promote conservation of these endangered species and their habitats.

Reflecting on his experience as a LIVE participant, Nishan notes:

"I learned far more than I ever imagined possible. The program systematically walked me through every dimension critical to a successful conservation project, from establishing clear standards and priorities around management and administration to improving communication and securing funding.



Although these topics can seem daunting in isolation, **EXCELerator LIVE broke them down into approachable, actionable modules**, as well as having excellent and really thoughtful facilitators for each topic. In particular, gaining a solid grounding in the core Conservation Standards gave me a framework for all subsequent lessons: rather than feeling overwhelmed by project planning, I now see it as my greatest ally in achieving our conservation goals."

## What will I get out of the EXCELerator program (both pathways)?

Participating in the EXCELerator program is an opportunity to gain knowledge and skills in all aspects behind planning and implementing a successful conservation project, with a youth focus. Based on the internationally recognised Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation, the program will start by giving you a framework with which to approach a conservation problem and address the solution, using a theory of change to make a **Project plan**. The Conservations Standards are a widely adopted set of adaptive tools and guidance to help plan and run effective conservation projects. We firmly believe incorporating them into your work will empower you to take your conservation idea to the next level.

As you complete the program, you will develop your skill set and add budgeting and stakeholder engagement to your project plan. We'll then dive into storytelling and communicating your project to various audiences (e.g. funders, building a community, or communities you're working with) and you'll leave the EXCELerator armed with a cohesive project plan that will give you a robust step-by-step strategy to turn your idea into action to make a real difference for our planet!

## **Program Map**

## START HERE:

## **Kick-off session**

To kick off the EXCELerator LIVE journey, program selected participants are invited to join our welcome session a opportunity for them to meet the CoalitionWILD team and connect with the peers they'll be collaborating with over the next six months. During this session, the participants will dive deeper into the phases of the EXCELerator program, introduce their project ideas to their cohort, and get answers to any questions they may have. It's the perfect way to start the journey, build connections, and set their projects up for success!



## Phase 2: Building Partnerships and Genuine Stakeholder Engagement

This phase will focus on the people and communities involved in, and affected by, your project. We'll begin by exploring case studies to understand what effective stakeholder engagement looks like, when it works, and common pitfalls in conservation projects. Participants will learn how to map their stakeholders and analyze the different relationships they have with each. A key component of this phase will also cover project management and progress monitoring, providing tools to stay on track throughout both the planning and implementation phases — during and beyond the EXCELerator program.





## Phase 1: Preparing and Planning Your Project for Success

The first phase of the EXCELerator program is one of the most intensive and exciting stages, designed to equip participants with the principles and methods needed to bring their project ideas to life. Delivered in collaboration with Alcedo Conservation, Phase 1 centers on the internationally recognized **Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation** (Conservation Standards), guiding participants on how to apply these standards to theorize and plan their projects. The phase kicks off by defining the problem participants are addressing, before guiding them through a step-by-step approach to implementing their solution. Its goal is to help participants truly 'fall in love' with their problem while using sequential thinking to stay on track, ambitious yet strategic, in their implementation. Participants will also be introduced to Theory of Change and SMART goals, creating a solid foundation for the skills they will continue to develop throughout the EXCELerator program.

## Phase 3: Achieving Financial Sustainability and Using Resources Efficiently



Often one of the most challenging areas for aspiring young conservationists, the penultimate phase of the EXCELerator program is designed to demystify fundraising, budgeting, and grant writing. Phase 3 equips participants with the confidence and skills to understand the basics of fundraising, diversify income sources, and recognize what funders look for in grant applications. Through real-world case studies, participants will explore budgeting in conservation projects, learn practical tips for grant writing, and see how to link these tools with the Conservation Standards covered in Phase 1. By the end of the phase, participants will understand how efficient financial planning can ensure their project's long-term sustainability.

## Phase 4: Storytelling and Effective Communications



The final phase of the EXCELerator program is perhaps the most fun, bringing together all the elements that make your project uniquely yours. The success of any conservation initiative ultimately depends on how its mission, values, and impact are communicated to its audience. This phase helps participants identify the unique qualities and character of their projects and learn how to convey them effectively. We'll explore storytelling techniques for social media and outreach campaigns, develop a winning communications plan, and learn how to reach target audiences. The program culminates in a simulated pitching event, where participants will distill everything they've learned over six months into a powerful five-minute pitch: showcasing their leadership and preparing them for real-world project presentations.

## **END**

## **Wrap-up and Celebration session**

The **Wrap-up and Celebration session** is a special opportunity to celebrate participants' personal and professional growth over the six months of the program. Focusing on the leadership skills they've developed, this session provides time to reflect on progress made and to envision aspirations for the future beyond the program.

## **Program Calendar**

- **Live sessions:** Please note that all live sessions will be held fortnightly on Thursdays from 12:30 14:00 UTC (exclusively for EXCELerator LIVE participants).
- **Pre-recorded sessions:** Pre-recorded sessions will be published every two weeks for both EXCELerator FLEX and LIVE program participants on Fridays on our online learning platform.

2026 January

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**2026** March

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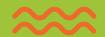
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**2026** May

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# Who can apply to the program?

We are looking forward to reviewing your application if you are interested in being part of this journey with us. In order to be eligible for the program, you need to:

- Be 35 years of age or younger at the start of the program (January 8, 2026).
- Have a project idea, a project in its early implementation stage, or a project with the potential to scale up within the conservation field.
- Have the energy and availability to dedicate your time to develop your project idea. For EXCELerator FLEX participants be prepared to commit two hours of your time per week, and EXCELerator LIVE participants are expected to work on their project for four to five hours per week. Please bear in mind that this program is intensive and time-demanding when applying.
- Have a computer and reliable internet connection throughout the course of the program to access the program's learning platform and be able to watch the recorded sessions (as well as the live sessions, if you are applying for the EXCELerator LIVE program).
- For the EXCELerator LIVE program pathway: Availability to virtually participate in the fortnightly live sessions throughout the six months of the program, happening on <a href="https://doi.org/10.1001/journal.org/">Thursdays between 12.30 to 2.00 PM UTC</a>.





## What is the application timeline?

The call for participants in the program will open on October 27, 2025 and close on November 24, 2025.

The application form is available and ready to complete:

**HERE** 

For creating a successful application, we recommend copying the application questions into a separate document, answering them carefully, and pasting them back into the application form once you're satisfied. Only applications in English will be considered.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS** 

## **EXCELerator LIVE Program applicants: Recording yourself!**

To be considered for the EXCELerator LIVE program pathway, you will need to prepare and share a **90-second self-recorded** video answering the following questions:

- What motivates you to be part of the EXCELerator LIVE program?
- Where do you envision yourself and/or your project in the next one to three years?
- How will the EXCELerator help you achieve your goals?

To help you prepare your video, please follow these guidelines:

- **Recording options:** Have someone record you, or use the selfie mode on your phone.
  - On a computer: use Microsoft Stream (Windows) or QuickTime Player (Mac).
  - Zoom is also an option: start a meeting with only yourself, record your 90second video, then stop recording. Zoom will automatically save the file to your computer.

**Environment:** Choose a quiet location with minimal background noise and interruptions.

**Sharing:** Upload your video to Google Drive, OneDrive, or any other cloud storage platform, and share the link.

Since it's a 90-second video, aim to answer all three questions, spending about **Content guidance:** 30 seconds on each. Make sure you:

- Introduce yourself and describe your project idea. Explain how your project would benefit from the EXCELerator Program.
- Keep it personal, but clearly show the connection between your project idea, CoalitionWILD, and how your project addresses a conservation challenge.
- Demonstrate your commitment to: 1. Watching the recorded sessions and participating in live sessions (if applying to the LIVE program), 2. Doing the program work and 3. Working towards the implementation of your project over the six months of the EXCELerator program.
- Be specific, concise, and practice before sending your final recording!



In the application form, you will be able to choose the **version of the EXCELerator you would like to be part of**. Please, when making your decision, make a thorough reflection of your time availability. As stated previously, this is a very time-intensive program, particularly for the EXCELerator LIVE program, with an expected time commitment of around four to five hours per week **(16 ~ 20 hours monthly)** over six months (compared to **two to three hours per week** for the EXCELerator FLEX program).

#### The application timeline will be as follows:

- <u>Application period</u>: Applications will remain open from October 27 to November 24, 2025. Once the application period is closed, on November 25, we will send an email to all applicants to confirm we have received their application.
- <u>Review period:</u> Applications will be carefully reviewed by CoalitionWILD's team from **November 25 to December 16, 2025**.
- <u>Selection period</u>: We will let you know whether you have been selected by email on **December 16, 2025**. Selected participants will need to confirm their participation by **December 19, 2025**.
- <u>Start of the program</u>: The program will officially start in January 2026. Participants on the EXCELerator LIVE program will be invited to participate in the live kick-off session scheduled on **Thursday, January 8, 2026, at 12.30 pm UTC**.

#### Do you have any questions about the program?

If you have any questions about the application process, the structure of the program, or any other doubts about the EXCELerator program, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at <a href="info@coalitionwild.org">info@coalitionwild.org</a>. We will be more than happy to answer all your questions!

"CoalitionWILD identifies and supports young leaders on the brink of making a real impact for nature, empowering them to reach their full potential as changemakers — today and for the future of our planet."

## **OUR STORY**

CoalitionWILD was born in 2013 at the 10th World Wilderness Congress, emerging from the recognition that youth leadership in conservation is an untapped source of positive change. The initiative was originally launched as a volunteer movement to connect rising leaders passionate about the planet. However, it quickly became clear that to drive meaningful impact, young people needed not just connections, but also the skills, knowledge, and opportunities to take action where it is needed most — starting at home.

Since 2015, CoalitionWILD has taken an action-focused approach to youth development. CoalitionWILD connects and equips the world's young change-makers to tackle the planet's greatest conservation challenges through mentorship, capacity-building opportunities, and upskilling programs, while amplifying the voices of youth through network connections and storytelling.

CoalitionWILD's evolution is guided by listening to the needs of the youth it works with and shaped by the personal experiences of its youth team, youth board, and youth organizational partners. The vision is a world where younger generations are respected, valued, included, and supported to be active leaders and agents of change, creating a better future for the planet.

CoalitionWILD is proud to be an official program of the WILD Foundation (WILD), a 501(c)3 organization that has worked internationally to connect and protect people, wildlife, and wild places for over 40 years. WILD's mission is to protect and restore at least half of Earth's wild nature to help create the best world possible. It does that by following an approach to conservation that counters the root causes harming nature, which include a lack of respect for Earth's wildlife and wilderness, and lack of coordination for their protection.



## **CoalitionWILD team**

Meet the passionate team behind the EXCELerator program, who will be supporting you in bringing your projects to life!



## Fátima D. Gigante

Program Director, Spain and Portugal

Fátima is passionate about participatory and community-based biodiversity conservation. She excels at connecting people and fostering meaningful relationships. At CoalitionWILD, she works behind the scenes on the EXCELerator and Global Mentorship programs, focusing on community engagement and capacity-building strategies in virtual spaces. With a background in biology and a Master's in Forest and Nature Conservation from Wageningen University, Fátima has worked with urban and rural communities on human-wildlife coexistence, community forestry, and environmental education. She aims to further develop her skills in facilitation, conflict management, mediation, and experiential learning to reconnect humans with the natural world.

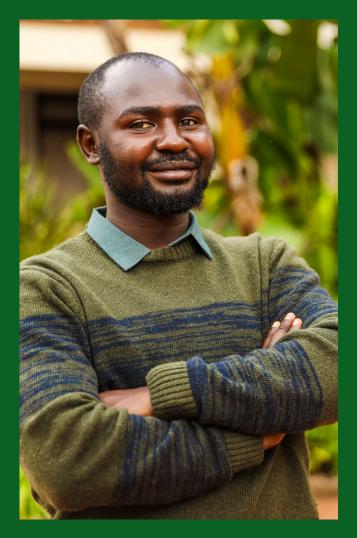
## **Alyssa Kardos Loera**

Peer Learning Lead, Cambodia and the United States

Alyssa Erin Kardos Loera is a sustainability and social impact leader who brings together environmental health and artistic expression to strengthen communities. She is the CEO and Co-Founder of ReMade in Cambodia, where she leads strategy, partnerships, and advocacy through upcycled fashion and creative community building. She also runs a kombucha venture that reuses recycled bottles, carrying her passion for circular design into everyday life. Originally from California, Alyssa is a Fulbright Scholar and advisor for the Iris Project. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Global Health with a minor in Theology from Georgetown University. She is passionate about using the arts to make environmental issues more accessible, amplify local voices, and reimagine waste as a resource. Outside of work, Alyssa loves running, kickboxing, and trekking - activities that fuel her creativity and keep her connected to the outdoors. She enjoys sharing her journey of building environmental startups and looks forward to connecting with changemakers worldwide who are working to bridge inequities and create a more just, sustainable future.



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#### Veronica Dandzo-Adzagudu Intergenerational Learning Lead, Ghana

Veronica Dandzo-Adzagudu holds a master's degree in Environmental Management (Conservation) from the University of Stirling, UK and a bachelor's degree in Natural Resources Management from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Ghana. With her budding passion in conservation, she volunteered at A Rocha Ghana during her 4-years undergraduate program in KNUST, and supported the implementation of several projects including the Climate Stewards Program and Collaborative Ecosystem Conservation of the Lake Bosomtwe Catchment. Veronica has been engaging in conservation research and working with conservation NGOs and local communities in implementing community-based natural resources management projects across Ghana. Naturally, she loves to inspire, encourage and mentor her peers and younger people by supporting them with resources for personal and career development. Veronica is an ardent believer that effective mentorship is needed to bridge the generational gap in all sectors as she recognizes that mentorship has had a significant positive impact on her career development. At CoalitionWILD, Veronica leads the Global Mentorship Program and is looking forward to an exciting journey of learning with the program's mentees and mentors.

#### **Zacharia Mutinda Muteti**

Curriculum Lead, Kenya

Zak is a Kenyan Wildlife Ecologist and Ethnoecologist committed to advancing community-centred wildlife conservation that honours both cultural heritage and ecological integrity. He holds a BSc in Wildlife Management (University of Eldoret) and a MSc in Environmental Studies (Karatina University), where his recently published research examined the spatial and seasonal patterns of African savannah elephant habitat use in East Africa. Zak is the Curriculum Lead of CoalitionWILD's EXCELerator Program, mentoring the next generation of global conservation leaders. He is also the Founder and Program Lead of the Eco-Jipe Program, which safeguards the Lake Jipe ecosystem, a transboundary biodiversity hotspot home to the endangered Jipe Tilapia (Oreochromis jipe) and a dry season refuge for African savannah elephants. His experience spans human-elephant coexistence in Tsavo and the Maasai Mara, elephant communication in Laikipia, and predator-community dynamics in Central Kenya. An alumnus of CoalitionWILD's Excelerator and Excel\_Intensive BeVisioneers Fellow and scholarship recipient, Keystone Species Alliance Fellow, and recipient of several small conservation grants, including the Rufford Foundation, Elephant Crisis Fund, Zak blends scientific research, indigenous knowledge, and grassroots action to ensure people and wildlife thrive together.



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## COMMUNICATIONS & RESOURCES

- www.instagram.com/wildfoundation/
- www.linkedin.com/company/the-wild-foundation/
- www.facebook.com/wildfoundation/
- www.x.com/wildfoundation

## **WILD VOICES**

WILD Voices is CoalitionWILD's online blog used to share the stories of young people taking action for the planet around the world.

Visit to learn more about our work and alumni's impact: <a href="https://wild.org/coalitionwild/wild-voices-blog/">https://wild.org/coalitionwild/wild-voices-blog/</a>

## **RESOURCES**

We provide a space to host toolkits designed by CoalitionWILD and our partners to support users in creating impact in their community. **You can access them at:** <a href="https://wild.org/coalitionwild/resources">https://wild.org/coalitionwild/resources</a>



wild.org/coalitionwild