

SUMMER 2018

# **WILD** EXPECTATIONS

A woman with dark hair, wearing a dark tank top, is shown from the chest up. She is holding a piece of animal pelt, possibly a raccoon or similar mammal, in front of her. She has a tool belt around her waist, with various tools visible. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows and highlights, creating a moody atmosphere. The background is dark.

**CONSERVATION MATRIARCHS**  
*SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA*

# WILD EXPECTATIONS

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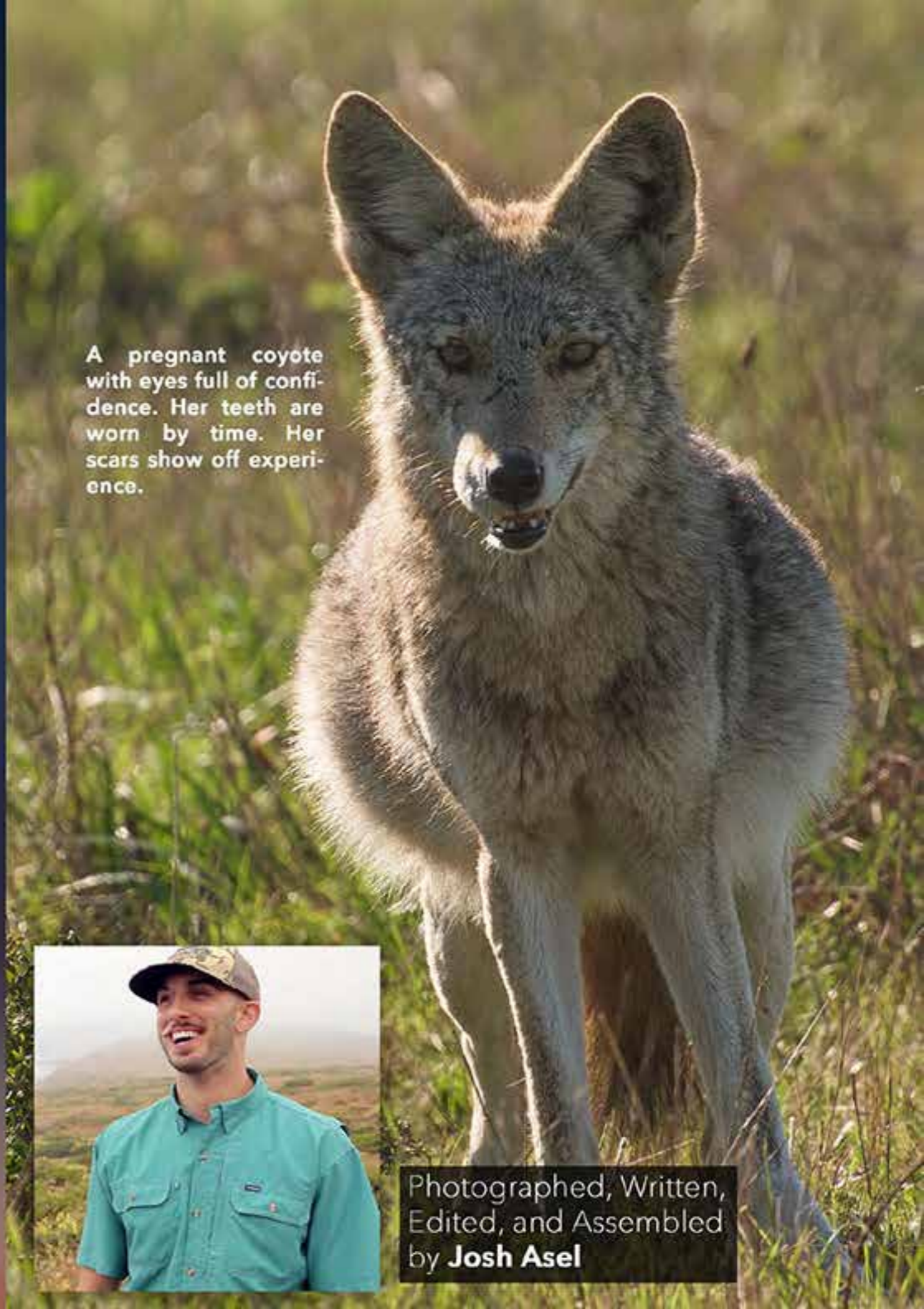
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A pregnant coyote with eyes full of confidence. Her teeth are worn by time. Her scars show off experience.



Photographed, Written, Edited, and Assembled by **Josh Asel**



# Foreward

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The issue of women in the workplace is a challenging and sensitive topic to tackle. I don't even think I'm the right person to take it on, but I think it needs to be talked about and I want and need to learn more about the whole situation so let's go for it anyway. This article was written with the intention to gain a better understanding of women in the workplace from women with incredible heart. I am by no means an expert, but more interested in the powerful dedication of women in the related fields of wildlife and environmental study.

I recently went to a talk with Damien Mander, a former Special Forces soldier in the Australian Military and founder of the IAPF--International Anti-Poaching Foundation, hoping to hear more about rhinos and elephants within an African poaching problem context. What I really heard was the praises he sung of women soldiers he trained whose hearts are incorruptible, determined, and on fire for wildlife. That special force of women has taken down 62 mid to high-ranking poaching-related individuals without firing a single bullet. Perhaps a testament to Damian's intensive training, it's also an impressive feat unheard of and it has been achieved by a squad of African fighting females who've already experienced the terrors of domestic abuse and war.

Globally, women in conservation obviously don't have to be soldiers to fight. Or perhaps they are a different type of soldier on the frontlines of the wildlife conservation war. Being in the middle of our world's sixth mass extinction where people are fighting for rights to protect national monuments and against a multi-billion dollar wildlife black market industry, where the fate of every person on Earth is going to be determined by nature's survival, it's hard for me to see this fight as anything else except a war. If there was ever a time for public opinion to realize that women are just as much in the fight as men are or more, that time already passed a long time ago and everybody else needs to catch up,



including myself. Women can work any job a man can. The evidence is overwhelming. This article is a small testament to some of those incredible individuals.



*Ariel Greenwood works holistic management at Freestone Ranch with her new canine companion, Violet who is a special breed of herd dog.*

## “And the implied rape ‘argument’ is a shameless pathetic disgusting excuse for your incontestable shortcomings.”

I’ve never had a story start where the catalyst for me has been a Facebook post. A photographer whom I respect but won’t mention decided to address why there is the lack of women in the field of wildlife and conservation photography. After I clicked on the post she shared--post article--there was a man who left an incredibly sexist rant, ranging from “Typical stupid feminist empty rhetoric” to “And the implied rape ‘argument’ is a shameless pathetic disgusting excuse for your incontestable shortcomings.” Disgusting... and sad that this kind of thinking exists in the first place. If you’re a woman, then these kinds of comments are probably nothing new to you. If you’re a man, whether you’re aware of such disparaging comments or have yourself participated in them, it’s time to destroy that nonsense and see women for what they actually are in the business world: impressively formidable individuals and valued allies.

Ironically, from what I’ve gleaned from the varying conversations with the “conservation matriarchs” is that, even though they’re aware of, or have been a reciprocate of, such sexism in the workplace, to say the least, each one seems to be more concerned with getting their heads in their work with exceptional zeal and, frankly, just dominating in their field by doing what they love.

And it varies from woman to woman. I started my interviews and photography with three artists, Fiorella Ikeue, Tiffany Bozic, and Jane Kim. It just so happens that they are all friends and sometimes work associates. So, it made sense to meet them all at the same time at new Jane’s studio in Half Moon Bay. Each works on paintings or other mediums of wildlife. Individually and collectively, their work has put wildlife and natural environments at the forefronts of countless minds by creating art that merits publication from the likes of National Geographic, Patagonia, California Academy of Sciences, and a stacked resume of other organizations in love with their illustrations. Some of the art is more purely scientific, some more on the cusp of fantasy and surrealism. Sometimes it’s small format, sometimes literally as large as a ten-story building. No matter how the style is presented, all of their artwork carries a soulful weight and is not easily forgotten.



# TIFFANY BOZIC

How important is scientific illustration to wildlife conservation?

I think of scientific illustration as a tool. Like any tool, it can be used to create a positive, constructive dialog to help increase awareness, which may help conserve nature. I don't consider my work scientific illustration though because they are not factual. I take a lot of artistic license to tell stories through my paintings. In the same way that poets use metaphor, I try to create paintings that can resonate emotionally.

You were the first "Artist in Residency" at the California Academy of Sciences, male or female. How has that accomplishment affected your career?

Artists have probably been working with the Academy of Sciences since it opened in 1853. The artist in residency pilot program that I took part in was about matching an artist with a scientist and then creating an exhibit on the public floor around our year-long discussions. What I gained most from that experience was that I found a community of passionate critical thinkers who have become good friends and who continue to inspire me today.

I never really felt my work fit into the "Art World" necessarily - I would always rather be lost somewhere in a meadow with a deer licking my hand or something. So when I agreed to do the Artist in Residency it created a bridge between my two loves - Art and Nature. I'm searching to understand what it means to be human and explore our connection to nature, so bringing Art and Science together to explore this theme just makes sense to me.

Do you think that some men, or even entire professional outlets, have a mental condition to not take women as seriously as men in competitive fields?

I'm aware of the many challenges facing professional female artists, and I do think there is a lot of room for improvement. It is an important time to talk about these issues, but we also have to be careful of sweeping generalizations. I think it benefits all of us to expand our perspective by listening and learning from diverse people and their experiences.

## TIFFANY BOZIC

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I've experienced plenty of challenges too, but I try to just keep going despite them. I've learned to surround myself with positive healthy people, regardless of gender, and I try to put my efforts into painting.

From what I've seen, women who are headstrong in their work are not to be messed with. They've worked harder to cultivate the same respect that comes easier to the typical white male. What benefits do you think comes out of working with a woman of a stronger will?

The woman I know that are successful are more like Energizer bunnies. They just have the stamina to keep going! Their not really concerning themselves with what other people think. They know their ideas are just as valid and interesting as anyone else's so they roll up their sleeves and put in the hard work.

I'm interested in constructive positive connections, so I tend to focus on the similarities we share with each other instead of the differences. I've always felt inspired by people, no matter the gender, that have a strong curiosity and have the confidence to explore and share their enthusiasm with the world.

That said, I'm very grateful to be a woman though. I love the experience of being a wife and a mother, and the close friendships I have with other women is one of the best things I've experienced in my life. I feel like the issues that I explore in my work have depth because I can speak from the authentic experience of a woman's perspective. Fundamentally at the root though I think what interests me most is the human condition, and we all have something unique to contribute to that.

What traits of yours do you think has helped you get to the position you are in today?

I think my self-motivation got me to where I am today. I've been driven by the desire to grow. To have the freedom to constantly push myself into the unknown, to try things that are beyond the limits of what I think I'm capable of. To compete with myself, and constantly try to grow to be a better artist, and a better person. Everyday I'm grateful that I've had the freedom to strive.

**“Fundamentally at the root though I think what interests me most is the human condition, and we all have something unique to contribute to that.”**



*From left: Fiorella Ikeue, Jane Kim, and Tiffany Bozic*

FIORELLA IKEUE



**“We’re waking up whether we want to or not.”**

**You've been in scientific illustration professionally for a relatively short period of time but have already made huge leaps, like catching the attention of the outdoor gear brand *Patagonia* and other nature conservation centers. What kind of mentality have you cultivated to generate your success?**

I like action, and when you care deeply about the environment there is plenty of work to be done. I strive to be eco-conscious in my daily life, and I think this mindset pushes me to be a better resident of this planet and create art that connects viewers to the natural world.

**Has there been an inspiration in working with other powerful women?**

Absolutely! Working with Jane is incredibly empowering. She takes being strong and passionate to another level. We often work on off-site installations with a team of women, all of whom have inspired me to acknowledge my own power and showed me how important it is to lift each other up.

**What are some of the issues you faced in the field as a woman?**

I can't say that I've faced any issues personally as a woman, but it is interesting to note that although there is an abundance of women in science illustration, the well-known figures tend to be men.

**Well that's great to hear that you haven't faced any issues personally. The old school society norm where it's just a man or just a woman should be doing this or should be doing that is fading away. It's expanding; people are opening up their minds to this great new way of thinking.**

In every area I feel like that's happening, it's not just women and men, it's so many things. We're waking up whether we want to or not. Sometimes you need to kind of hook someone in a certain direction. Sometimes is striking imagery, sometimes it's having a human element in a painting, sometimes it's a fad. But if that gets someone hooked onto being more eco or learning about something, then to me, if that's what it's going to take then sure, I'll have it.



# JANE KIM



## JANE KIM

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I remember hearing you say you don't consider yourself a conservationist. However, your work has had a monumental impact on people's lives and how they view wildlife. You've worked with everyone from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to National Geographic and even had a feature on VICE about raising planetary awareness. Where do you draw the line?

I do not consider myself a conservationist in that my goals are not necessarily to conserve our planet at some arbitrary point in time. I hope that with my work, I can inspire people to fall in love, pay attention and see the wonders of our planet. The Earth has always been dynamic, but if we all learn to value it and continue to learn how it evolves, we can begin to make conscientious decisions about how we live within it.

**How does science illustration make a difference in the battle for saving wildlife and wild lands?**

Science illustration is so important. It can be used to describe complex systems, depict the microscopic, record the world around us, bring the extinct back to life and imagine the future.

**Has the San Francisco Bay Area been a supportive environment for you as a young working woman?**

Absolutely. I am lucky to live in the Bay Area. My experience has been one of comradery and passion. We can't afford not to support each other!

**Has having a partner like Thayer Walker, the co-founder of InkDwell, helped address typically "masculine" features of business environments? Or do you have another approach?**

Thayer has brought a tremendous amount of value to Ink Dwell in helping break out of a different stereotype—the artist stereotype. It can be very challenging as an artist to sell themselves or their work. With a background in journalism, he has been instrumental in sharing Ink Dwell's story with the world through media. He also handles the business development of the studio. All things as an artist (not a woman) I do not naturally do.

**How do you see your artwork as a part of conservation and what brought your art to this conservation aspect? Going beyond just drawing nature and being so in love with it, but having a more of a goal set in mind for people to fall in love with nature.**

I would say that outreach is one of the most important reasons of why InkDwell does what we do. If we don't have a way to figure out some sort of connection with the audience, that means that I didn't achieve my goals as an artist. So, one of the things that I want in science illustration is that communication and it's about information. I really love those two things. There's really not much that human beings do that excite me but painting is one. It's one that has defined how our modern human beings are today. Cave painting, you know, that was a really important leap into higher consciousness in terms of doing things beyond the need to survive. So, that was an expression and what we chose to do as our expression was draw the things around us. For me, that's a really innate way to communicate with a human being. It's through pictures! I think that, at least for me, using something that we don't even realize is so ingrained into how we think and can be inspired and how our whole perspectives can be shifted through this medium is really exciting. So, conservation-wise, it's not even about that. It's more about getting people excited about nature and the world around us because I think that as we grow and the way technology has grown, and when the industrial revolution hit, and then the digital era hit, and so all of these things brings us inward. All of these inventions are meant to bring us inward in kind of a self contained way. And I think that if [art] can bring us outward, the conservation will follow because we care about everything we're surrounded by.

# ARIEL GREENWOOD



Illustration is not the only way to work with your hands. Ariel Greenwood, a young grazer, is humble in her role but is one of the world leaders of progressive holistic ranch management. In other words, she studies the cause and effects of moving cows around natural areas while growing, producing, and raising livestock for families, five star restaurants, and tech companies. I've known Ariel for a little more than two years since I started work with Pepperwood Preserve, a world-class nature preserve for researchers to explore 3,200 acres as a living laboratory. It's a scared place that's also currently recovering from the Tubbs Fire in October of 2017. Ariel was their grazer and she spent long days, almost every day, researching and advancing the way ranching management is conducted and studying the ecological benefits therein. Before sunrise, you could sometimes hear her dedication in the form of a four-wheel ATV excitedly ascending unpaved roads in search of her cows that roam around perimeters of land fenced in by moveable electric fencing. I

think she is a genius, sometimes reconciling explanations of relating ranching to wildlife conservation using words that, seems like half the time, I don't even know the definitions of, but I'm so engrossed in her elegant explanations that it hardly matters to me. Ariel is currently the Grazing Manager at Freestone Ranch in the Northbay region. She also manages the orchard at Occidental Arts and Ecology Center and works with Fibershed, a place that develops "regional fiber systems that build soil and protect the health of our biospheres."

**“Seek out  
knowledge like  
you seek out  
food, water, or  
oxygen.”**

**Why is holistic management important to wild ecosystems?**

Holistic Management is an approach to making decisions about grazing systems amidst chaos and complexity. All too often, the daily pressures on ranches and conservation-focused landbases causes them to experience a slow drift in decision-making that soon forms a large rift between their stated goals and the actual situation on the ground. In response to this phenomenon, the Holistic Management system first identifies what are the goals of landbase, and then creates structure around how resources are managed day-by-day relative to those goals.

Because the health of land is often the sum of our small, daily decisions, it helps livestock producers reconcile the movement of herds with their social, economic, and environmental goals by making an adaptable plan for every day.

Grassland ecosystems co-evolved with disturbances like fire and grazing, but under- and over-grazing are both hugely consequential to the health of grasslands. Here in the Bay Area's coastal prairie ecosystems, overgrazing sees the loss of critical plant species, which in turns leads to degraded habitat for wildlife and erosion of topsoil and soil carbon.

Meanwhile, undergrazing can lead to death of native plants, and rapid brush encroachment. Holistic Management allows producers and land managers to manage animals relative to the plants' growth timelines so that plants are appropriately grazed, allowing for better impact, rest, and recovery for plants and thereby supporting environments that are increasing in biodiversity, productivity, and overall resiliency.

**What has it been like being a woman in the predominately masculine field of ranching?**

I've been working in agriculture since I was 16, and have been fortunate to have my first few employers be strong women keen to teach me skills and

## ARIEL GREENWOOD

create opportunities for learning. Since I started working with livestock beginning in 2014, my mentors have mostly been men, but I have been fortunate to have been similarly supported and invested in.

That said, there does tend to be a self-fulfilling prophecy within ranching wherein men are expected to be naturally better at certain things than women, and so whether consciously or not, men are sometimes given opportunities over and above women. But I try to ignore that trend and advocate for the skills and knowledge I need.

A part of ranching is very physical: being able to work all day in hard weather for multiple days in a row, or exert a lot of energy completing specific tasks. But most of the time, the work of ranching involves deep, strategic, and careful thinking, paying close attention to budgets like plant recovery and animal condition, as well as low-stress stock handling and general physical endurance. There will always be a need for strong and willing bodies to accomplish certain tasks, but there's rarely a shortage of those around.

**Women are defining the new norm for being accepted in their fields, like pushing programs for young girls to be encouraged to confidently enter into male-dominated fields. Is there any advice you have for girls out there who are intimidated to become successful in such a field?**

Seek out knowledge like you seek out food, water, or oxygen. Cold-call people, ask for intros or find their emails and write them, show up at worksites ready to put in a full day and having brought all you need with you, listen more than you talk, and pursue online resources when local ones aren't showing up for you.

Trust that if people are trying to intimidate you from pursuing your path, it's because they themselves are intimidated and insecure, and it likely has little to do with you.

**Find mentors, and emulate their teachings but not necessarily their choices. (You can take the good and leave the bad). Know that in many of the trades professions, people pay more attention to what you do than what you say -**

let your work speak for you. Learn from everyone, even if they are old-school, younger than you, or jerks. But if you're working for free or cheap in exchange for skills and teaching, create working agreements so that you're not taken advantage of, even if unintentionally.

Don't try to be a man - just try to be your best self, and make the best decisions you can with the information available to you. Account for the conditions of your decisions so that when you get new information you can change them. Acknowledge your deficits but also your strengths. Humility is not just an attitude, but a practice.

**From what I've seen, women who are headstrong in their work are not to be messed with. They've worked harder to cultivate the same respect that comes easier to the typical white male. What benefits do you think comes out of working with a woman of a stronger will?**

Women who are confident in their skills AND their values have a lot to contribute to agriculture. Once agriculture became unbound from the constraints of peasant-scale farming, it has historically depended upon the simplification of ecosystems to produce a narrow range of products.

In contrast, I think the deep, expansive affection for the whole picture comes maybe a little more easily to women, and so women are well-positioned to elevate the value of emergent ecosystem properties over and above single products. Combine that affection with a deep and studied focus of the craft of farming, grazing, etc., and you have a sort of agrarian hellbent on shifting the baseline of agriculture by working within the current agricultural economy to bring about lasting social and ecological change. This process is already at work, and the fact that it's not overtly noticeable is a sign of its success.

**Do you think we'll be seeing more women enter into the movement of sustainable agriculture in the near future?**

From what I can tell, this is already happening. Historically, many ranches have had heavy (if unseen) involvement by women, and a strong percentage of participants in farmer and rancher training programs are women--sometimes over half. This is good news, because men and women can complement one another's work across scales, so more women in the agricultural workforce benefits everyone.



# LISA MICHELI

Incredibly, Pepperwood Preserve is home to another one of the women in this story. Lisa Micheli is the Executive Director of the facility and has recently been added as a fellow to the California Academy of Sciences. Lisa was the one who originally invited me to Pepperwood and I'm so glad she did too. I never thought that one day both Lisa and Ariel would be in one of my stories, especially regarding this topic. Lisa has a heck of a story to tell too. During our photo shoot, she recounted the first twenty years or so of her life, always being the lone woman in her workspace of men. But it didn't seem to matter. Details lacking, no matter where she was, she's been in high position of power. It speaks to her character too. It's all too easy to get caught up in ego in positions with that much power, yet Lisa remains in the footsteps of humility and kindness with a seemingly everlasting warmth about her.

Pepperwood is a world-class conservation facility working with international researchers to tackle the problems of land and water management. What do you think are the most important themes emerging out of this work?

We have identified increasing aridity and drought in California ecosystems as a critical climate adaptation challenge. This will effect local hydrology and water supply, species composition, and fire hazards. We've been working closely with local agencies to identify resources in locations most at risk, and working with managers to develop climate adaptation strategies.

We have advanced the use of noninvasive wildlife cameras as a way of quantifying wildlife population health, and as a tool for evaluating conservation impact. We are committed to scaling up this approach throughout the bay area as a meaningful conservation metric.

We are working to identify and mobilize key habitat corridor projects capable of mitigating the impacts of climate change on water and biodiversity. Effectively identifying and



*Lisa stands in front of the Dwight Center for Conservation Science at Pepperwood Preserve, a large facility built straight into the side of a forest-covered ridge.*

**You have been the lone woman in your professional circle for a significant portion of your career. What effect has that had on you?**

This is a big question and the effect has changed over time. I think as a young woman I simply wanted to have the chance to successfully compete with men, on what might be described as masculine terms. That means I grew a thick skin, and understood that in general individual performance would be valued over collaboration. Now I see the opportunity to be a catalyst encouraging everyone to support each other success. I also appreciate that women are often the ones who are willing to dig in and do the hard work to achieve an ambitious goals.

**What traits of yours do you think has helped you get to the position you are in today?**

Stubbornness. Imagination. Hard work.

**Women are defining the new norm for being accepted in their fields, like pushing programs for young girls to be encouraged to confidently enter into male-dominated fields when the time is right. Is there any advice you have for girls out there who are intimidated to become successful in such a field?**

Follow your passion. Find support. Seek mentors and listen to them. Talk to people who have the jobs you want and find out how they got there. Don't rely on technology exclusively for communications - learn how to interact in person and ask lots of questions. Be willing to volunteer or intern at the entry level. Make sure you're having fun. Realize you're probably much better than you think you are - and believe it when others tell you that.

# CAMILLA FOX





“An estimated half a million coyotes are killed annually in the name of ‘wildlife management,’ which equates to about one coyote killed every minute.”

*Camilla focuses on the conservation of carnivores and especially controversial species like coyotes. A pack is seen broadly roaming the plains of Point Reyes National Seashore.*



In the same personable spirit as Lisa also walks Project Coyote Executive Director Camilla Fox. Camilla is, to me, already somewhat of a legend. Her fearlessness and resolve to take on issues of carnivores and other controversial wildlife in a multitude of conservation arenas from serving as an appointed member on the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture’s National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee to producing award-winning documentaries about wildlife killing contests. She, herself, is also an award-winning individual including being named one of the 100 Guardian Angels of the Planet in 2013 and the 2014 Conservationist of the Year Award by the John Muir Association. The work of Camilla has been featured in BBC, National Geographic, The New York Times, NPR, and other big names. A similar description can be found in her biography, but behind the scenes, her fierceness in the fight for wildlife conservation is offset by as friendly a personality as you could hope to meet. She is backed-up by her tiny and comical dog Mookie who makes an appearance in the previous photo.

### Why speak up for predators?

Growing up, my father studied wild canids and my family became caretakers for an orphaned wolf named Tiny who lived with us for 15 years, so I've always had a natural connection to native carnivores and the wild. Having worked in the field of animal protection and wildlife conservation for more than 20 years, I saw a need for an organization that would speak up for North America's most maligned and misunderstood species—coyotes, wolves, mountain lions and other predators—and foster coexistence between these animals and humans through education, science and advocacy. State and federal wildlife management agencies often do not have the resources to provide public education about how to live peacefully with coyotes, foxes and other predators in an increasingly human-populated world. Too often, the solution to managing conflicts with predators—whether in an urban or a rural setting—is lethal and indiscriminate killing, including trapping, poisoning, aerial shooting and killing pups in their dens. I founded Project Coyote in 2008 on the premise that the suffering of individual animals matters, and to bridge the gap between animal protection and conservation while providing the tools necessary for people to coexist with wildlife. We are a unique and growing coalition of wildlife scientists, educators and skilled professionals seeking to counter myths and encourage science-based and compassionate conservation and coexistence.

We chose the coyote as our flagship animal because they are the most persecuted native carnivore in the United States and because, unlike foxes or wolves, they only inhabit North America. An estimated half a million coyotes are killed annually in the name of “wildlife management,” which equates to about one coyote killed every minute. Despite the mass killing of coyotes, which has taken place for hundreds of years, they continue to persist and even thrive—and we have much to learn from their ingenuity and adaptability. If we can shift the way we view and treat coyotes, we can transform the paradigm for how we interact with all wildlife.

**Promoting coexistence between wildlife and humans is more important than ever today. What are some of the major problems being addressed and does our future look hopeful?**

Unfortunately, there is still widespread fear and misunderstanding of native carnivores in North America. This anti-predator sentiment harkens back to our colonial days when settlers of the continent viewed predators as a threat and as vermin to be exterminated. Today, coyotes, foxes, wolves, bears, and other predators are killed en masse by governments and private citizens on behalf of ranchers and landowners, out of fear, and for entertainment. But this approach to wildlife “management” is misguided and not based on sound science. Increasingly, scientists are finding that lethal control doesn't solve the problem and can even increase conflicts with wildlife..

Promoting acceptance and cultivating appreciation for animals who have historically been persecuted isn't always easy. Among the greatest challenges are risk perception and general lack of public awareness of how to coexist with wildlife and the crucial role that each species plays in healthy ecosystems.

But I'm very optimistic—communities across the nation are coming together to develop plans for compassionate coexistence. Providing education and the appropriate tools for solving problems and preventing conflicts is the key to living peacefully with wildlife. Our Coyote Friendly Communities Program promotes safe urban and rural communities by bringing together stakeholders—including animal control agencies, wildlife agencies, schools and the public—to discuss the benefits of native carnivores and provide useful tips for keeping people and pets safe. We've found that once people learn of the myriad benefits that coyotes provide to communities—including free ecological services such as keeping rodent populations in check—and how easy it is to live safely and peacefully alongside coyotes, they accept their wild neighbors.

We also have a program called Ranching With Wildlife, which helps ranchers and farmers protect livestock using traditional animal husbandry practices and strategic nonlethal predator control methods such as fencing, guard animals, and scare tactics. These methods are proactive, humane, and cost-effective solutions that allow ranchers to enjoy the benefits that coyotes have to offer, including rabbit and rodent control.

Coyotes and other native carnivores have much to offer us, not only by keeping

## CAMILLA FOX

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ecosystems healthy, but also by bringing us a sense of natural wonder and providing inspiring examples of ingenuity, adaptability, and resilience at a time of rapid social and ecological change.

### What are some of the issues you've faced in the field as a woman?

While gender has an impact on decision-making in conservation initiatives, women are unfortunately not as well represented in the field as men. Leadership positions in conservation and wildlife management agencies are still dominated by men, who often have backgrounds in science, land management, wildlife control, and hunting and fishing—roles traditionally filled by men. State wildlife agencies are also largely funded by hunters and fishermen, who wield significant power in the way wildlife is managed (though this is slowly changing as agencies are realizing that hunting and fishing participation is declining in the U.S. as there is a growing interest in wildlife watching and other non-consumptive use).

It can be a challenge for women to break into the field. There is pressure to be better at our jobs just to receive the same opportunities as men, and to become “one of the guys” so we can build relationships with male conservation and government leaders that drive policy changes.

The singular dimensionality of conservation governance has undoubtedly resulted in poorer outcomes for the environment and wildlife. While gender equality is important in and of itself, it should not obscure the unique and fresh approaches and viewpoints women bring to complex conservation problems that require innovative and effective solutions. Women are as invested in protecting wildlife and natural resources as men.

As science increasingly demonstrates that animals are capable of suffering and of living rich, complex lives, it is becoming clearer than ever that individual animal lives matter—beyond the importance of conserving species and their role in healthy ecosystems. Women have been the driving force in the animal protection movement and can uniquely bring into focus the need for compassionate conservation—the idea that ethics, animal welfare, and consideration of the interests of individual animals must be considered in wildlife and conserva-



**“Women have been the driving force in the animal protection movement and can uniquely bring into focus the need for compassionate conservation...”**

tion management decisions. I firmly believe that women are critical to future conservation successes. I've been fortunate to have mentors and colleagues who respect and value my contributions to the field, and hope that my work will inspire girls and young women to pursue careers in conservation.

**Do you ever think that maybe you didn't get an assignment because you're a woman or had your intentions or methods questioned because you have a different reproductive system?**

I think part of the reason is because I have lived a very intentional, driven and focused life where I knew what I wanted and I pursued it. It hasn't always been easy – like starting a national nonprofit organization during a bear market (2008) when many nonprofits were going under.

As my entire career has been in the nonprofit world I have not had to deal with some of the challenges that women I know have had to deal with in the corporate world. That's not to say that nonprofits are free and clear of gender bias, sexual discrimination and sexism - but I think it's less frequent -particularly in the smaller organizations. I have always preferred smaller organizations where I think there is more gender and racial equality and that suffer less from institutional bureaucracy.

**What has the improvement for women in the workforce been like over the years from when you first started to now?**

It's difficult to measure the proportion of women in conservation today, but I've seen significant positive changes over the years. There are more women graduating with degrees in conservation science, assuming roles in academia, and climbing the ladder in government and nonprofit governance. As young women see people like me or my colleagues rising in the ranks, they'll believe it's possible for them to achieve success in the field too. I can only hope that those in leadership are beginning to recognize the important role and unique angles that women offer including communicating with younger generations about environmental issues, identifying conservation problems and solutions, and mentoring future leaders.

# LAURA HAWKINS



## LAURA HAWKINS

When the fight isn't in wildlife rights, inspiration through art, or understanding through environmental management, it's in rescue and rehabilitation. At the center of that battle is Laura Hawkins, Executive Director of the Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley in San Jose, California. The center is the only one of its kind around, taking in wildlife from the entire Santa Clara County and beyond. It's a monumental task because highways 101 and 280 nearby are responsible for some of the highest rates of wildlife-vehicle conflicts on Earth. They take in more than 5,000 animals every year, many of those from vehicle collisions. So, now you can see what kind of responsibility lies on Laura's highly capable shoulders. To me, she seems to be shameless in looking for any reasonable opening to elevate the WCSV, incredibly thankful for every opportunity she gets, and relentless in her mission. If I were to describe her character in one word, it would be *honorable*.



*One of the many animals the Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley holds is a juvenile great horned owl. It joins another five great horned owls in an enclosure where they can socialize and learn to fly on their own. They will all be released when the timing is right.*

**You have an affinity for the rescue and rehabilitation of domestic animals too, so what made you turn to wildlife?**

It starts with a respect I've always had for all animals. I came from a family who considered it our responsibility to be stewards for any that were in need. I spent many years working with domestic animals professionally and in the rescue realm, which was very gratifying. However, I knew that these animals had a lot supporting their causes because they're more relatable than wildlife. What motivated me to get involved with wildlife was a desire to champion this type of animal that very often plays second fiddle to cats and dogs. I wanted to understand, and help others to understand how critical of a role wild animals play in our daily lives.

**Why is wildlife rescue and rehabilitation important to conservation?**

WCSV's mission is, in part, to teach the public about peaceful coexistence with the wild animals we live amongst. The more we can educate people about how important they are to the balance of our ecosystem, and how that affects us, the greater the



chance is of people appreciating these creatures and their vital roll, rather than seeing them as a nuisance or a problem.

A rehabilitated animal that is released back to the wild helps with the stabilization and balance of various populations, which is always a good thing – especially when the animal is a species of special concern. I consider that a huge win for all of us when we're able to do that.

**What femininity do women bring to their respective fields that men simply cannot?**

It's hard to talk in absolutes about this kind of thing, because I think that men and women have overlapping masculine and feminine traits. Many of the women I know in this field have an ability to balance sensitivity and nurturing – which can be traditionally feminine traits -- with realism. I can only speak for myself, but I think I analyze situations more than most men, which affects my de-

**“The most important thing is that we share a passion for conservation.”**

cision-making in a positive way. I can consider the bigger picture and not look at every situation as black or white.

**Do you feel that women have had to “man-up” and bring more masculine traits into their field in order to become more successful?**

Luckily, I haven't personally felt the need to “man up” or be any tougher than is natural for me in this field, as I think I was born with a thick skin. However, I think no matter who you are – man or woman, you need to ask yourself if you can handle the fact that many wild animals do not live. If you aren't someone that can accept it, it's going to be a problem to do this work effectively.

**Do you think that some men have a mental condition to not take women as seriously as men in competitive fields?**

I see this as an attitude, most often learned, rather than a mental condition, and luckily, I would say this doesn't seem to be the prevailing attitude, at least in my current situation. I have had to deal with the “old boys' club” in the past, but really just saw it as an annoyance, versus something that was going to really affect me or my career. I have a lot of respect for the men I know and work with in this realm. The most important thing is that we share a passion for conservation.



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