



Tabor Whitney

B.S. Biology – University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, USA

M.A. Anthropology – Northwestern University, Chicago, IL, USA

General Research Interests:

- Primatology
- Conservation Physiology
- Gut Microbiome
- Fecal Glucocorticoid Metabolites

My dissertation integrates conservation physiology and social science to examine the biological and social factors shaping wildlife conservation outcomes in the Los Tuxtlas region of Veracruz, México. Focusing on the endangered Mexican mantled howler monkey (*Alouatta palliata mexicana*), the research combines ecological surveys, physiological biomarkers, and community perspectives to understand how habitat disturbance and human perceptions inform conservation management. Using non-invasive methods, I analyzed fecal samples to measure the gut microbiome, short-chain fatty acids, and glucocorticoid metabolites, alongside ecological data from forest fragments across the Los Tuxtlas Biosphere Reserve. Results show that forest size, connectivity, and tree diversity significantly influence gut microbiome composition, emphasizing the importance of conserving large, connected, and diverse forest fragments. In contrast, short-chain fatty acids and glucocorticoid metabolites showed no relationships with ecological attributes. Community surveys across seven towns revealed widespread pride in local biodiversity and strong support for forest and wildlife protection, particularly after viewing educational videos about the importance of mantled howler monkeys. Together, these findings highlight that effective conservation depends on both biological insight and community collaboration, offering a practical, interdisciplinary model for protecting primates and other wildlife in human-dominated landscapes.

Contact: taborw@u.northwestern.edu