
Personal Information

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Conference Details

Communication Type: Organized Session & Individual Presentation

Date: 7/21/2025

Total Expense (USD): \$2500-3000

Location: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Conference Title: International Congress for Conservation Biology

Communication Title: *I am involved in 2 sessions*

#1 Organized Session: Addressing power imbalances and combating harassment and sexual assault in conservation.

#2 Individual Presentation: Let's talk – How conservation leaders can enhance capacity for communication and collaboration through deliberate dialogue

ABSTRACT

#1 Increased attention on the pervasiveness of harassment and assault in the daily professional lives of women and men calls for open dialogue and institutional culture change, particularly around issues of gender-based discrimination and the role of power dynamics. Although the topic of harassment in the workplace is not new, what constitutes the 'workplace' for conservation professionals can present a unique set of challenges. Given that conservation work often occurs in isolated environments (such as wooded areas or open water) and hyper-masculine settings (such as those common in fishing, farming, and hunting) it is surprising that the issue of harassment and sexual assault has not garnered more attention. However, harassment does not only occur in the field. It can be experienced in various professional settings, including conferences, laboratories, and offices. Panelists will discuss how power dynamics, implicit bias, culture, and tradition can perpetuate harassment and facilitate discussion on how individuals and the society can address incivility, harassment, and sexual assault in conservation.

#2 - Successful conservation relies on scientists, managers, policy-makers, and community members working together to meet conservation goals. At the heart of effective collaboration is mutual understanding. The Toolbox Dialogue Initiative, a US NSF sponsored project, is an evidence-based approach to building mutual understanding through dialogue that enhances communication and collaboration in cross-disciplinary groups. The process of building mutual understanding in a Toolbox dialogue relies on two mutually reinforcing mechanisms: group reflexivity and perspective taking. This enables collaborators to coordinate what they know about an issue and to develop a heightened ability to anticipate each other's actions and reactions. The Toolbox approach can be used to build capacity among cross-disciplinary researchers and facilitate partnerships for addressing complex environmental issues.

Application must not exceed two pages and must be submitted as a pdf file to grad.awards.pda@msu.edu

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Applications that do not respect these criteria will not be considered for the MSU PDA travel award.

COMMUNICATION OUTCOMES

My participation at the Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) involves an individual oral presentation and an organized special panel session, both of which are very important for my career advancement. This global conference only occurs every other year, and with both issues that I am presenting on getting a lot of attention these days, this is an excellent opportunity for establishing my work in these areas.

First, the special session I am organizing on harassment and sexual assault in conservation is not only an extremely important issue across all disciplines, but it is also a new conversation for the conservation community and an area that I am extending my research into. In 2018, I published a brief article on these issues for my field and received several emails from people working both within and outside of academia looking for more information and guidance. These responses highlight not only the interest, but the need for more discussion and data. This prompted me to volunteer for the society's Anti-Sexual Harassment and Violence Task Force, of which I serve as a co-chair, supporting my service to this issue and my profession. In proposing and organizing this session for the Equity, Inclusion and Diversity committee I am hoping to expand my network within and outside of the society for career development and future research into the state of harassment and sexual assault within the field.

My individual presentation coincides with my postdoctoral work and is key to leveraging my research interests in capacity building for cross-disciplinary team science and multi-stakeholder engagement in conservation. This conference attracts many large conservation organizations and international researchers that would be interested in these types of efforts and my hope is to network, make connections, and develop a collaborative for a grant proposal to facilitate and study a cross-disciplinary research team working on a conservation issue. Making such connections at a high-level meeting of this nature would help me to become more competitive and carve out a niche for myself within the social science realm of conservation research.