

# Fellowship Program For University Students to Improve Understandings of Wild Horses

*California State University, Sacramento and nonprofit Wild Horse Fire Brigade signed 5-year contract establishing student fellowship studying wild horses*

YREKA, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, December 15, 2023 /

EINPresswire.com/ -- In 2014, William E. Simpson II moved into the wilderness mountains near the Oregon-California border and began living-among and studying a herd of wild horses. Simpson calls his wild horse research station, 'Wild Horse Ranch'.

The ancestors of some of the herd of wild horses at Wild Horse Ranch are believed to have been documented through observation by explorers with Sir Francis Drake in 1580, as cited in the doctoral dissertation, The relationship between the indigenous peoples of the Americas and the horse: deconstructing a Eurocentric myth, by Dr. Yvette 'Running Horse' Collin, which can be read in full here:

<https://scholarworks.alaska.edu/handle/11122/7592>

In 2014, Simpson had no idea he was embarking upon a journey in field biology that was inaugurated more than 50-years years earlier by Dr. Jane Goodall, when [she pioneered contemporary field biology](#) during her work with the Apes in Gombe Africa.



Wild Horses are seriously under-studied, leading to mismanagement



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Professor Wayne Linklater, PhD

Through research and education, Wild Horse Fire Brigade, a 501-c-3 all-volunteer nonprofit, is uniquely paving the way towards the natural and sustainable conservation of American wild horses. Through rewilding and relocation of wild horses from areas of conflict (livestock, mineral/gas extraction) and into appropriate wilderness areas, wild horses can resume their natural roles as keystone herbivores reducing the frequency, size and intensity of wildfires via vegetative management.

Our path towards this goal is only made possible with the help and financial support of caring people and our privately-owned herd of free-roaming heritage wild horses at our wilderness research station. We call it, 'Wild Horse Ranch'.

Wild Horse Fire Brigade's natural and humane rewilding and relocation plan for wild horses is proven through our ongoing pilot study and research. It is supported by published science that favors trophic rewilding of native wild horses. The ancestors of the heritage herd of wild horses owned and managed by Wild Horse Fire Brigade, were first observed and documented by Sir Francis Drake in 1580, according to the published doctoral thesis of the indigenous scholar Dr. Yvette 'Running Horse' Collin - PhD.

California State University - Sacramento and Wild Horse Fire Brigade have embarked on a novel cooperative mission to educate students about native wild horses at the Wild Horse Ranch wilderness research station.

Through its affiliation with California State University - Sacramento, Wild Horse Fire Brigade will uniquely offer university students valuable field research experience among free roaming wild horses in their native habitat. The highly experienced field research team of Michelle Gough and Wild Horse Fire Brigade's founder William E. Simpson II will provide on-site guidance to students in the field.

This novel program will be under the oversight and guidance of Professor Wayne Linklater, PhD - Chair, Department of Environmental Studies at California State University - Sacramento, who also serves on the Wild Horse Fire Brigade advisory board.

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Wild Horse Fire Brigade's mission is to reduce catastrophic wildfire and save wild horses through research, education and better management



Dr. Goodall's revolutionary discovery, that Apes made and used tools, was only made possible due to the relationships and bonds of trust she established with the Apes. And these bonds of trust allowed her unprecedented close-range observational study of the Apes leading to her discovery.

Now, more than 50-years later, William Simpson has followed in the footsteps of Dr. Goodall and has established himself as a trusted friend of the herd of wild horses that he studies. And those bonds of trust have allowed him access to the herd and families of wild horses as an embedded observer, gaining new information about their behavioral ecology and ethology that can only be achieved via such close-range observational study.

In honor of Dr. Jane Goodall, Simpson has coined the term for close-range embedded observational field study of wildlife as the 'Goodall Method'.

[In a published article](#), Simpson explains how the Goodall Method benefits the study of American wild horses.

In early 2022, as a result of 8-years of field research and caring for the herd of wild horses, Simpson, Michelle Gough, and his non-profit 'Wild Horse Fire Brigade' were recognized as the owners of the herd of horses, which had been considered 'feral' horses by Siskiyou County. Now, as a privately-owned herd, they are jurisdictionally considered 'livestock' and unlike wild-feral horses, which have no



Professor Wayne Linklater Ph.D., Chair - Department Environmental Studies California State University Sacramento



Wild horses are ecosystem engineers & reseeded herbivores. Photo: grasses & plants germinating from wild horse droppings. Unlike ruminants (deer, cattle, sheep) that digest the seeds they consume, wild horses complete life-cycles of flora, sustaining co-evolved fauna

protections, Simpson's herd is now protected under California livestock laws.

After a decade of research, Simpson's foundational work has led to the creation of a novel fellowship program that will allow selected university students from California State University, Sacramento to engage in field studies, learning about wild horses at Wild Horse Ranch. This program is unique and will provide university students with an unparalleled opportunity in field biology and observational access to wild horses and their behavioral ecology and ethology.



A family of wild horses that lives in a remote forest have symbiotically grazed-in a fire-break, which is protecting a forest of champion old-growth conifers against catastrophic wildfire.

This exciting new fellowship program will be overseen by Wild Horse Fire Brigade's advisory board member [Dr. Wayne Linklater, PhD, Chair Environmental Studies, California State University, Sacramento](#). Michelle Gough and William Simpson will be the teaching assistants at the field study research site.

Wild Horse Fire Brigade is funding all aspects of this fellowship program, so there is no cost to the University or students.

#### About Sacramento State

##### The Region's University, Today and Always

Founded as Sacramento State College in 1947 with 235 students and five full-time faculty members, Sacramento State has been serving the region for 75 years. Now nearly 31,000 students strong, it is the sixth largest of the 23 campuses in the California State University (CSU) system. It is an accessible and inclusive place of learning and achievement, a hub of diverse thought and intellectual challenge, and is intertwined with the community it serves. From research that results in impactful legislation to entrepreneurial ideas that blossom into robust businesses, Sacramento State continues to provide immersive learning experiences that benefit students, the region, and beyond. It is Sacramento's University.

Website: <https://www.csus.edu/experience/fact-book/about-sac-state.html>

#### About Wild Horse Fire Brigade

Wild Horse Fire Brigade is an all-volunteer 501-c-3 nonprofit corporation that seeks to reduce catastrophic wildfire and toxic, climate impacting wildfire smoke, by reducing key wildfire fuels (grass & brush) using large-bodied herbivore wild horses. Through research, education and an



economically and ecologically sensitive Plan, Wild Horse Fire Brigade intends to reduce the size, intensity and frequency of catastrophic wildfire through improved management of at risk American wild horses.

Learn more at the website: <https://www.wildhorsefirebrigade.org/why-donate>

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