

2024 Environmental Scholarship Recipients Announced

The Prescott Audubon Society scholarship committee is pleased to announce two recipients of the 2023 Environmental Scholarship: Melissa Fontecilla and Jeremy Gardner.

Because of successful fundraising this past year, the committee was able to again award two scholarships in honor of Kathy Wingert, longtime PAS member and educator. A brief profile of each recipient follows.

Melissa Fontecilla, from Chino Valley, is a senior at Oregon State University, pursuing a bachelor of science degree in Natural Resource Management. In her definition of environmental conservation, Melissa stated that “three essential terms” need to be taken into account: conservation, preservation, and restoration. “Environmental conservation should be the halting of further destruction of ecosystems through preservation; the more efficient use of necessary resources through appropriate conservation; and [the] restoring of natural systems to revive past ecosystem functions and services through restoration.” Her personal focus is “preservation of wildlife species to maintain proper ecosystem functioning,” and her “passion for public education and awareness.” She hopes to be a voice for wildlife that connects the community with nature, in order to facilitate preserving our ecosystems and the future. She will use the scholarship funds to complete her courses.

Jeremy Gardner is a junior at Prescott College, pursuing a bachelor of arts degree in Environmental Studies. He’s had a long involvement in conservation, starting in high school and continuing through his volunteer work for a humanitarian aid mission in Honduras, and in working as a “river ambassador” on the Verde River, which has included helping to preserve Yellow-billed Cuckoo nesting areas along the riparian corridor. He plans to expand his conservation work at Prescott College’s center in Kenya which facilitates the efforts of the Maasai Mara people to preserve their native habitat through eco-tourism. He, also, will use the scholarship funds to pay for his courses.

We hope to arrange a time next year for both Melissa and Jeremy to give presentations to PAS members at a future Window on Nature program.

This year, there were 16 applications despite the shorter application submission period. We think this demonstrates that the PAS scholarship has an established “rep” in the county. And once again, the high caliber of the essays and projects meant committee members had our work cut

out for us. Nonetheless, we are proud that, through this scholarship, PAS continues to support the next generation of young environmentalists.