WILMER S AMAYA-MEJIA

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EDUCATION

2020 – Present	**University of California, Los Angeles** Doctor of Science in Biology *Co-Advisors:* Pamela Yeh PhD, Ravinder Sehgal PhD Advancement to Candidacy: May 31th, 2023
2018 - 2020	**San Francisco State University** Master of Science in Biology *Advisor*: Ravinder Sehgal PhD *Thesis:* "Phylogenetic analysis of avian haemosporidian parasites across islands of Milne Bay Province, Papua New Guinea."
2012 – 15	**Virginia Commonwealth University** Bachelor of Science in Biology

PUBLICATIONS

Amaya-Mejia, W., Ma, L., Freimuth S., Sehgal, R.N.M., Yeh, P. (2025) *Haemosporidian Infection Prevalence Variation Across an Urban Gradient in a Songbird.* Ecography. *Under Review.*

Amaya-Mejia, W.*, Pavan, L*., Lilly, M., Swei, A., Dirzo, R., Sehgal, R.N.M. (2025) *Determinants of Avian Disease Occurrence Across a Fragmented Landscape in California.* Parasites & Vectors. *Under Review.*

Amaya-Mejia, W.*, Lim, S.*, Ma, L.*, Yeh, P., Shultz, A., (2025) *Feather Macrostructure Corresponds to Increased Temperature not Urbanization Across California.* Scientific Reports. *Under Review.*

Amaya-Mejia, W., Dodge, M., Morris, B., Dumbacher, J.P., Sehgal, R.N.M. (2022) *Phylogenetic analysis of avian haemosporidian parasites across islands of Milne Bay Province, Papua New Guinea.* Parasitology Research. doi.org/10.1007/s00436-022-07490-y

Lilly, M., **Amaya-Mejia, W**., Pavan, L., Peng, C., Crews, A., Tran, N., Sehgal, R.N.M., Swei, A. (2022) *Local community composition drives avian* Borrelia burgdorferi *infection in tick infestation.* Veterinary Sciences. doi.org/10.3390/vetsci9020055

Gelinas, K., Ovid, D., **Amaya-Mejia, W.,** Ayala, R., Baek, H., et al. (2022) *Investigating Instructor Talk among Graduate Teaching Assistants in Undergraduate Biology Laboratory Classrooms.* CBE – Life Sciences Education. doi: 10.1187/cbe.21-10-0302

PRESENTATIONS

Amaya-Mejia, W.*, Ma, L., Freimuth, S., Sehgal, R.N.M., Yeh, P. Haemosporidian Infection Prevalence Variation Across an Urban Gradient in a Songbird. November 29th, 2024. VI International Conference on Malaria and related Haemosporidian Parasites of Wildlife. Medellin, Colombia. *Poster Presentation.*

Ma, L.*, Lim, S.*, **Amaya-Mejia, W.,** Shultz, A., Yeh, P. Feather coloration corresponds to increased temperature, not urbanization, in dark-eyed juncos (*Junco hyemalis*) across California. August 7th, 2024. 2024 Ecological Society of America Conference. California, USA. *Undergraduate Poster Presentation.*

Amaya-Mejia, W.*, Ma, L., Freimuth, S., Sehgal, R.N.M., Yeh, P. Predictors of Avian Malaria Prevalence in an Urban Landscape. June 26th, 2024. 2024 Ecology and Evolution of Infectious Diseases Conference. California, USA. *Poster Presentation.*

Amaya-Mejia, W.*, Ma, L., Freimuth, S., Sehgal, R.N.M., Yeh, P. Avian haemosporidian infection prevalence in California as a reflection of environmental conditions. May 4th, 2024. Southern California Academy of Sciences 116th Annual Meeting. California, USA. *Oral Presentation.*

Leung, V.*, **Amaya-Mejia, W.,** Yeh, P. Characterizing the gut microbiome diversity of urban and non-urban dark-eyed juncos (*Junco hyemalis*). August 11, 2023. BIG Summer Research Symposium. California, USA. *Undergraduate Poster Presentation.*

Law, K.*, **Amaya-Mejia, W.,** Yeh, P. The co-evolutionary relationship between the dark-eyed junco and their avian haemosporidian parasites. August 11, 2023. BIG Summer Research Symposium. California, USA. *Undergraduate Poster Presentation.*

Lim, S.*, Ma, L.*, **Amaya-Mejia, W**., Yeh, P. Effects of urbanization on feather eumelanin of *Junco hyemalis* in southern California. May 24, 2023. 26th Annual Biology Research Symposium. California, USA. *Undergraduate poster presentation.*

Amaya-Mejia, W.*, Aguirre, A., Yeh, P. Disease and genetic changes in urban dark-eyed juncos (*Junco hyemalis).* February 7, 2023. Santa Monica Bay Audubon Society. California, USA. *Invited Oral Presentation.*

Aguirre, A.*, **Amaya-Mejia, W.,** Yeh, P. An Analysis of Sexual Selection and Major Histocompatibility Complex Diversity of Dark-Eyed Juncos. November 10, 2022. Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minoritized Scientist. California, USA. *Undergraduate Presentation.*

Aguirre, A.*, **Amaya-Mejia, W.,** Yeh, P. An Analysis of Sexual Selection and Major Histocompatibility Complex Diversity of Dark-Eyed Juncos. August 24, 2022. Summer Programs for Undergraduate Research Showcase. California, USA. *Undergraduate Presentation.*

AWARDS

2023	**Cota-Robles Fellowship,** *$25,000*
2022	**Pasadena Audubon Society Research Grant,** *$3000*
2022	**Lida Scott Brown Quarter Fellowship***, $7500*
2021	**Lida Scott Brown Research Grant,** *$1500*
2021 and 2022	**Ford Foundation Honorable Mention**
2021	**Western Field Ornithology Research Grant,** *$750*
2021 and 2022	**La Kretz Center and Stunt Ranch Research Grant,** *$6900*
2021	**Chancellor's Award for Community-Engaged Scholars,** *$10,000*
2020	**Cota-Robles Fellowship,** *$25,000*
2020	**Graduate Dean Scholarship,** *$2,500*
2020	**Competitive Edge Program,** *$6,000*

OUTREACH AND RELATED EXPERIENCES

Association for Multi-Ethnic Bioscientists' Advancement
2021-Present
UCLA

Active board member of AMEBA. Initiated and organized numerous graduate-student focused events designed to increase diversity, representation, inclusion, and retention of students within the Life Sciences department at UCLA.

Graduate Teaching Assistant
2018 -2019, 2022-Present
San Francisco State University
UCLA

Instructor for lab and discussion sections, including both independent and co-instructor for various biology courses. Provided lectures on molecular, cellular, ecological, evolutionary, and developmental biology. Facilitated with student-led laboratory and discussion exercises, and knowledge assessment.

Bruins-In-Genomics (BIG) Summer Program Mentor
2023
UCLA

Summer program for two undergraduate students aimed at providing research opportunities in the field of genomics and computational biology. Two research projects included quantifying diversity of avian gut microbiomes and understanding the phylogenetic relationships of haemosporidians of dark-eyed juncos.

UC-HBCU Initiative Mentor
2023
UCLA

Summer research program for two undergraduate students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities designed to provide a novel opportunity to conduct research. Projects included 1) understanding the effects of urbanization on the feeding behavior and diets of dark-eyed juncos and 2) characterizing the transmission of *Chlamydia* between dark-eyed juncos across an urban environment.

MARC Undergraduate Fellowship Mentor
2021-2024
UCLA

Multi-year program to support underrepresented students in STEM pursuing biomedical research projects. I provided guidance for a research project studying the diversity of MHC genes in different populations of dark-eyed juncos in southern California and whether this affects reproductive success.

Community Engagement - HoLA
2020 - 2023
UCLA

Collaboration with community partners to develop after-school course for underserved students living in Los Angeles. Students are encouraged to develop interests in native wildlife while engaging in the application of scientific thought. Foundational work focused on the studying the local effects of urbanization.

Entering Mentoring Training Workshop
2021
UCLA

NIH-funded workshop designed to improve mentoring relationships. Modules included aligning expectations, effective communication, diversity, inclusion, and equity considerations, foster independence, professional development, fostering self-efficacy, and establishing a mentorship philosophy plan.