

2025 Marianne Schmink Outstanding Dissertation Award  
'Multispecies Solidarity and Medicinal  
Plant Economies in Pandemic-Era Ecuador'

**Dr. Katharine McNamara**

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## BIO

Dr. **Katharine McNamara** is a Postdoctoral Fellow at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada and One Health scholar whose interdisciplinary research examines how people and nonhuman species navigate crises together. Her work bridges multispecies ethnography, global health, and climate adaptation, with a particular focus on how everyday practices of care, knowledge, and livelihood shape resilience. Her doctoral research, conducted in Loja, Ecuador with the support of the Fulbright Hays DDRA Award, explored how communities mobilized relationships with medicinal plants during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially the endangered quina tree (*Cinchona officinalis*). She is the 2025 recipient of the Marianne Schmink Outstanding Dissertation Award from the University of Florida's Tropical Conservation and Development program. Dr. McNamara's current work extends these themes into research on climate-related mobility and adaptation across multiple global field sites.

## SUMMARY

This talk draws on ethnographic research in Loja, Ecuador to examine how people and medicinal plants responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. Focusing on the quina tree (*Cinchona officinalis*)—a natural source of quinine harvested to near extinction in the 18th century—I trace how local healers, entrepreneurs, and households mobilized cascarilla (quina bark) to care for sick family members, sustain livelihoods, and protect endangered trees during a moment of intense uncertainty. Rather than viewing human use of medicinal plants only as extraction, I introduce the concept of multispecies solidarity to show how care, commerce, and conservation became intertwined in everyday practice. Through stories of traditional healers, craft brewers, and plant nurseries, the talk highlights how relationships with quina enabled both human wellbeing and ecological survival. These cases offer insight into how multispecies communities navigate overlapping health, economic, and environmental crises.



**Tuesday - January 20, 2026**

**12:45 - 1:45 pm**



**Grinter Hall 376 or**

**[Zoom link](#)**

Tropilunch is a seminar run by graduate students from the Tropical Conservation and Development (TCD) Program. It provides a forum for a range of discussions and presentations related to TCD work and research. Special guests, visiting scholars, and practitioners also participate. It happens weekly around lunchtime.



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