

**Dra. Constanza Napolitano / In the Field 24/7, Genetics Program Coordinator**

Since she was a little girl she was attracted to nature -- she liked to play with organisms from the sea or the mountains during family walks in Chile. Coming from a family of human doctors, she had to hold fast to her position of studying nature and animals, and she did. During university, she worked on the reintroduction project of the Andean condor, being passionate about the Andes mountain range. But when she learned about the Andean cat, the mysterious feline that lived in Chile but of which nothing was known, she immediately decided to do her undergraduate thesis on this species to contribute to their knowledge. She spent many months in the Chilean altiplano, collecting feces from latrines in rock caves, with an extreme climate and more than 3,500 meters above sea level. Back in Santiago, in the laboratory she extracted DNA from the feces to identify the species of origin through genetic sequences. She found that the latrines were shared by different high Andean carnivores, describing their diet and spatial distribution. This first research experience cemented in her a deep interest in science and conservation, specializing in genetics of native feline conservation in Chile. Constanza has been a member of the Andean Cat Alliance since 2004, where she currently coordinates the Global Genetics Project, whose objective is to fill information gaps in its distribution, and identify Management Units for Conservation. In 2016, she participated as an advisor to the core group of the National Conservation Plan of the Andean Cat in Chile, an initiative led by CONAF. Constanza is a Veterinary Doctor and Doctor of Science from the University of Chile, and has received the Young Talents (Chile, 2011) and Emerging Leaders in the Americas (Canada, 2010) awards. She is currently an associate professor at the Departamento de Ciencias Biológicas y Biodiversidad in Universidad de Los Lagos, in Osorno, southern Chile, and a researcher at the Institute of Ecology and Biodiversity in Santiago.