

SONIKA BENGALURU LAKSHMINARAYANA

PhD Researcher in Zoology | Wildlife Veterinarian

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PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Wildlife veterinarian and researcher with expertise in wildlife health, conservation medicine and vector-borne diseases. Experienced in wildlife conservation programmes, conservation breeding and veterinary management of threatened species, with research experience in molecular detection and epidemiology of tick-borne pathogens. Holds an MSc in Wild Animal Health from the Royal Veterinary College and Zoological Society of London, with an international research publication on *Babesia* and *Anaplasma* infections in cervids. Currently pursuing a PhD in Zoology at the Nature Research Centre, Lithuania, investigating interactions among co-infecting avian malaria parasites in mosquito vectors and their effects on parasite development, transmission, and population structure.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Avian malaria and haemosporidian parasites
- Vector-borne diseases and host–vector–pathogen interactions
- Parasite co-infections and transmission ecology
- Molecular detection and epidemiology of wildlife pathogens
- Tick-borne pathogens: *Babesia*, *Anaplasma* and *Borrelia*
- Wildlife health and conservation medicine
- Conservation breeding and health management of threatened species
- Molecular epidemiology, phylogenetics and population genetics

EDUCATION

PhD in Zoology | 2026–2030

Nature Research Centre, Lithuania

Full-time doctoral studies. PhD research: “Experimental Study of Avian Malaria Co-infections in Blood-sucking Vectors”. Supervisor: Dr Rita Žiegytė.

MSc Wild Animal Health | 2021–2022

Royal Veterinary College, University of London & Zoological Society of London, UK

Merit (68%) for MSc thesis: “Ticks and Tick-Borne Pathogens in Two Populations of Managed Cervids in the Scottish Highlands”. Best Scientific Poster Award.

BVSc & AH – Veterinary Medicine | 2018

Karnataka Veterinary, Animal & Fisheries Sciences University, India

Graduated with an OGPA of 7.02.

RESEARCH & PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Junior Veterinary Consultant | 19 Feb 2025 – 31 Aug 2026

Wildlife Institute of India, India

Great Indian Bustard Conservation Project

Project Associate Veterinarian | Oct 2023 – Jan 2025

Wildlife Institute of India, India

Great Indian Bustard Conservation Project

Conservation Breeding & Wildlife Health – Lesser Florican Conservation Breeding Programme, Rajasthan, India

- Veterinary health management and routine monitoring of captive Lesser Floricans.
- Contribution to conservation breeding, reproductive management and preventive-healthcare activities.
- Development and implementation of veterinary protocols, biosecurity and health-monitoring procedures.
- Support for semen collection, artificial insemination and reproductive-management initiatives.
- Participation in field/in-situ surveillance and conservation activities for Lesser Floricans.

Intervention in Wild Animal Health (IWAH) Field Course | Sariska Tiger Reserve, India | Feb 2024

- Training in wildlife disease investigation and intervention techniques.
- International collaboration involving WII, ZSL, RVC, University of Edinburgh and University of Melbourne.
- Overall assessment score: 73%.

Veterinarian | Cessna Lifeline Veterinary Hospital, Bangalore, India | Aug 2020 – May 2021

- Emergency and inpatient veterinary care.
- Anaesthesia and perioperative management.
- Diagnostic imaging and clinical assessment.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

MSc Research Project – Royal Veterinary College & Zoological Society of London, UK

Ticks and Tick-Borne Pathogens in Two Populations of Managed Cervids in the Scottish Highlands: A Pilot Study

Research focused on detection and investigation of tick-borne pathogens in managed cervid populations, with emphasis on *Babesia* spp. and *Anaplasma phagocytophilum*.

PUBLICATIONS

Lakshminarayana, S.B., Guthrie, A., Blake, D.P., Harley, J., MacKintosh, A., Lait, P.J.P., Bacon, A. & Milnes, E.L. (2024). Detection of *Babesia* cf. *odocoilei*, *Babesia capreoli*, and *Anaplasma phagocytophilum* in cervids of the Scottish Highlands, United Kingdom. *Journal of Zoo and Wildlife Medicine*, 55(3), 750–756. DOI: 10.1638/2023-0140.

AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS

- Best Oral Presentation – Tick Research, Association of Indian Zoo and Wildlife Veterinarians International Conference, India, 2025
- Graduate Degree Manuscript Award + USD 500 Prize, 55th AAZV International Conference, Nashville, USA, 2023
- Murray Fowler International Conference Scholarship, AAZV, 2023
- Best Scientific Poster Award, MSc Wild Animal Health, ZSL/RVC, 2022

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Oral Presentation – Tick-borne pathogens in cervids, 55th AAZV International Conference, Nashville, USA, 2023
- Oral Presentation – Tick-borne pathogen research, Association of Indian Zoo and Wildlife Veterinarians International Conference, India, 2025
- Poster Presentation – MSc Wild Animal Health research, ZSL/RVC, 2022

TECHNICAL & RESEARCH SKILLS

Molecular & Research Techniques

- PCR and qPCR
- DNA sequencing
- Molecular pathogen detection
- Phylogenetic analysis
- Epidemiological modelling
- Tick identification – morphological and molecular
- Population and pathogen genetic analysis

Wildlife & Veterinary Skills

- Wildlife health assessment
- Wildlife disease investigation
- Conservation breeding
- Wildlife anaesthesia
- Emergency and critical care
- Diagnostic imaging – radiography, CT and MRI
- Clinical pathology

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- American Association of Zoo Veterinarians (AAZV)
- Association of Indian Zoo and Wildlife Veterinarians (AIZWV)