

# Astrid Vargas

## Name

Astrid Vargas

## Citizenship

Spanish & North American

## Address

Johannes  
Vermeerstraat 81-2  
1071 DP, Amsterdam, NL

## Contact

+31 611.88.15.30  
astridvgu@me.com

## Qualifications

**Ph.D.**, Zoology and Physiology, University of Wyoming, May 1994. Dissertation title: **Ontogeny of the endangered black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) and effects of captive upbringing on predatory behavior and post-release survival.**

**D.V.M.**, School of Veterinary Medicine, Complutense University of Madrid, Spain, June 1988. Specialization: **Medicine & Animal Health**

## Languages

Bilingual **English/Spanish**.  
Working knowledge of **French**.

## Skills Summary

Program Management, Endangered Species Recovery, Landscape Restoration, Regenerative Agriculture, Community Renewal, Biodiversity Conservation, Conflict Resolution, Process Facilitation, Adaptive Management, Fundraising, Environmental Policy, Applied Research, Environmental Education/Outreach, Environmental Consulting, Interdisciplinary Approaches.

## Profile

- Proven track record in inspiring and leading teams to deliver effective programs that result in social revitalization, landscape restoration and recovery of endangered species.
- Experience in working across five continents and across cultures
- Experienced facilitator with an ability to get diverse groups to move towards common goals through co-creation, participatory planning, collective leadership and conflict resolution
- Use of art and creativity as inspiration tools to motivate positive change
- Received multiple career achievement awards and voted one of the Top 100 Ibero-American People of the Year – “Men and Women Who Have Made a Difference” (2008)

## Affiliations

- |              |                                                                                                                |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2015-present | <b>Alvelal</b> , Founding member, Spain.                                                                       |
| 2014-present | <b>Commonland Foundation</b> , Senior Strategic Advisor, Landscape Restoration, Spain-Netherlands.             |
| 2008-present | <b>Tompkins Conservation</b> , Conservation Land Trust, Strategic Advisor, Jaguar Recovery Program. Argentina. |
| 2007-2011    | <b>Biodiversity Foundation</b> , Spanish Ministry of the Environment, Board member. Spain                      |
| 2005-2010    | Spanish Society for the Conservation and Study of Mammals ( <b>SECEM</b> ), Board member (2005-2011), Spain.   |

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- 2005-2011 **International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**, Species Survival Commission (SSC), member. Cat Specialist Group, Conservation Breeding Specialist Group and Reintroduction Specialist Group.
- 2001-2012 **Smithsonian Institution**, Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, Research Associate, USA.
- 1996-2004 **Idea Wild (IW)**, Board member, USA.

 Awards and Recognitions

- 2010 **“Lifetime Career Achievement Award”**, Ministry of the Environment, Government of Andalusia, Spain (Environmental Awards, Government of Andalusia, XV edition, September 2010).
- 2009 Award for an **“Outstanding Contribution to the Conservation of Nature”**, ADENEX (Asociación para la Defensa de la Naturaleza de Extremadura, Spain), XXIII edition, 2009).
- 2008 Selected by journal/magazine “El País Semanal” as a one of the **“Top 100 Iberian-American People of the Year: Men and Women that have Made a Difference in 2008”**; published in El País Semanal, November 30, 2008.
- 2008 Nominee **“Future for Nature Award”** (one of the top 10 world-wide nominees for the 2008 Future for Nature Awards, December 12, 2007), The Netherlands ([www.futurefornature.net](http://www.futurefornature.net)).
- 2008 Selected as one of the **“Top People of the Year: Andalusia”**; published in Málaga Hoy, January 4, 2009).
- 2007 **“Nature Conservation Award - José Antonio Valverde”**, AEFONA (Asociación Española de Fotógrafos de la Naturaleza), IV edition, November 2, 2007).
- 2007 **“Best Idea to Save Nature Award”** for work on the Iberian Lynx Captive Breeding Program, “RedLife: Endangered Nature” Magazine ([www.redlife.org](http://www.redlife.org)), Spain.
- 2006 **“Nature Conservation and Research Award”**, EDC (Asociación para el Estudio, Divulgación y Conservación de la Naturaleza), Vila Real, Valencia.
- 1997 **“Career Commendation for Contributions towards the Recovery of the Endangered Blackfooted Ferret”**,

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Black-footed Ferret Executive Committee, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, September, 1997.

1990-1994

**United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Cooperative Research Unit, Ph.D. Scholarship Award**, University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY, USA.



## Professional Experience

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### PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND CONSULTING

2017-present

**Founder, Inspiration for Action, Netherlands**

Inspiration for Action develops inspirational approaches to help people revitalise their communities, landscapes, and nature through co-creation, collective leadership, art, and creative bottom-up initiatives. Inspiration for Action is founded on the belief that we need to be inspired in order to act with sustained commitment to improve ourselves, our communities, and the environment upon which we depend.

2014-2017

**Program coordinator, Commonland-Alvelal, Netherlands-Spain.**

Commonland is an international organization established to restore degraded landscapes worldwide, while delivering social, natural, financial and inspirational returns. I worked with Commonland to deRevelop and co-coordinate a 4 Returns Project in Spain. I helped mobilize the local community to establish Alvelal Association and gain strength for long-term success. My commitment continues to date. In addition to coordinating the first steps of the Alvelal Project, I provided strategic advice to Commonland on landscape restoration issues and provided technical advice on biodiversity conservation strategies. In addition, I helped raise investment funds and other kinds of support for 4-returns business development.

2012-2016

**Conservation Director for Europe, Tompkins Conservation, USA.**

Tompkins Conservation (TC) manages a range of environmental projects that include ecosystem restoration, biodiversity and species recovery, self-sustaining agro-ecology, community development, and the establishment

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of national parks to protect biodiversity for posterity. The Tompkins and their have managed to preserve more than 11 million Ha in the form of national parks. As Conservation Director for Europe, I helped TC raise awareness among networks of High-Networth-Individuals interested on environmental philanthropy. Through promoting TC's environmental philanthropic work, we increased awareness and commitment among change-makers, while earning political, technical and financial support for TC's conservation workd, In addition I was, and continue to be, part of the advisory team for the jaguar recovery program in Iberá, Argentina.

2003-2010

**National coordinator, Iberian Lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) Conservation Breeding Program, Ministry of the Environment, Madrid, Spain.**

I served the Iberian lynx conservation efforts by establishing and coordinating an international captive breeding program for the critically endangered Iberian lynx. I coordinated conservation efforts between 25 different national and international organizations and established a network of captive breeding facilities (2 in Andalusia, 1 in Extremadura, and 1 in Portugal). I served as liaison between national and regional governments and also between the Spanish Ministry of the Environment and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). I coordinated applied research, organized conferences and seminars and conducted outreach activities to increase awareness about the critical status of the Iberian lynx and of the Mediterranean ecosystem upon which it depends.

**Summary results:** Iberian lynx cubs were born in captivity for first time ever in 2005 and more than 60 additional cubs were born in captivity between 2005-2010. Lynx were "returned" back to Portugal in 2009 (after more than 10 years of being considered extinct). Program earned international recognition and met IUCN established goals for start to reintroduce captive-born lynxes in 2010.

2003-2010

**Director, Iberian Lynx Conservation Breeding Center "El Acebuche", Doñana National Park, Huelva.**

El Acebuche was the first large captive breeding facility for then Iberian lynx and a reference center for the ones that followed (La Olivilla in Jaén, Silves in Portugal, and Granadilla in Extremadura). My tasks as Center Director included empowering teamwork, designing animal husbandry techniques, coordinating applied research programs, assisting veterinary staff, raising funds for facility improvement, and attending visits and collaborators from different parts of the world.

2001-2004

**Co-director, Species and Spaces International, Spain.**

NGO involved in endangered species conservation projects and educational activities in Europe, Latin America and

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Africa. The main consulting projects carried out by SSI involved the conservation of the golden-crowned sifaka in Madagascar, the conservation of manatees in Costa Rica and supporting Iberian lynx recovery efforts in Spain. In addition, SSI carried out Endangered Species Conservation and Management Courses in Guatemala, Chile, Costa Rica, and Spain.

Jun 2001-  
Dec 2002

**Technical Coordinator, “An Initiative for Natural Resource Management and Conservation of the Daraina Region”**, Association Fanamby, Madagascar. Together with a Spanish-Malagasy team, we developed a regional conservation plan, raised funds, and trained/coordinated a Malagasy team to help Association Fanamby gain strength to establish a protected area in Northern Madagascar. **Summary results:** The Loky-Manambato protected area was legally established in 2005.

Jan 1995-  
Oct 1998

**National Coordinator, Black-footed Ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) Conservation Breeding Program**, United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), Laramie, Wyoming, USA. I directed captive propagation efforts for the endangered black-footed ferret, including the coordination of 7 breeding centers (in the US and Canada), in collaboration with state and federal agencies and other institutions/organizations. I helped develop policy and management recommendations and served as Behavioral Co-advisor for the American Zoological Association’s Small Carnivore Taxon Advisory Group. **Summary results:** During this period more than 2500 ferrets were born in captivity, of which 907 were reintroduced at 6 different sites of the North American Great Plains.

Jan 1996-  
Oct 1998

**Director, National Black-footed Ferret Conservation Center**, USFWS, Ecological Services, Laramie, Wyoming, USA. I directed conservation efforts at the National Black-footed Ferret Conservation Center, which held the largest captive population of this endangered mustelid. My responsibilities included leading the team, design, conduct and direct applied research aimed at determining the most cost-effective road to black-footed ferret recovery. I also conducted pertinent veterinary procedures to prepare black-footed ferrets for release.

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## ②

## RESEARCH

Nov 2003-  
Jun 2007

**Research Coordinator, Iberian Lynx Breeding Biology, Spanish Ministry of the Environment, Iberian Lynx Conservation Breeding Programme, Doñana National Park, Huelva, Spain.**

Coordinated multidisciplinary research activities, including 15 research projects in disciplines such as ethology, reproductive physiology, genetics, and veterinary medicine, working with international teams from various countries (Spain, Germany, Switzerland, USA and Russia). See book "Iberian Lynx Ex-situ Conservation: An Interdisciplinary Approach" for details.

Jun 2000-  
Jun 2001

**Co-principal investigator, "The Effects of forest Fragmentation on the Conservation of the Golden Crowned Sifaka (*Propithecus tattersalli*) in Northern Madagascar", FANAMBY, Daraina Region, Madagascar.**

Carried our fieldwork and analyses that were instrumental in the development of management recommendations for the establishment of a protected area in the Daraina region.

Jun 1999-  
Sep 1999

**Research collaborator, "Ecology and Conservation of the Fosa (*Cryptoprocta ferox*)", Earth Watch, Ampijoroa Forest Reserve, Ankarafantsika, Madagascar.**

- Scientific collaborator and project veterinarian in coordination with Earth Watch and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, EEUU.

- Help coordinate and organize field tasks for Earth Watch volunteers. Field responsibilities included transect design, animal capture, anesthesia, processing, and post-release monitoring.

Jan 1995-  
Oct 1998

**Principal Investigator and Research Collaborator, Black-footed Ferret Breeding Biology. USFWS, National Black-footed Ferret Conservation Center, Sybille, Wyoming, USA.**

- Carried out experiments to determine the effect of the captive environment on black-footed ferret breeding success.

- Collaborated with professional researchers and graduate students in several research projects involving: Reproductive Physiology (P.I.: Jo Gayle Howard, National Zoo, Smithsonian Institution); Field Anesthesia (P.I.: Terry Kreeger, Wyoming Game & Fish Department); Reintroduction (P.I.: Dean Biggins, National Biological Service); Breeding Behavior (P.I.: Bull Bennet, University of Wyoming). Photoperiod and Reproduction.: Heather Brantvold, Colorado State University).

Jan 1990-  
May 1994

**Graduate Research Assistant, Zoology and Physiology Department, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming, USA.**

- Investigated black-footed ferret behavioral and

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morphological development with special emphasis on the ontogeny of predatory behavior and the development of post-release survival skills.

- Worked closely with state and federal agencies in developing experimental designs aimed at enhancing both captive management and reintroduction of this imperiled species.
- Involved in the day to day care and husbandry of black-footed ferrets. Assisted in monitoring reintroduced black-footed ferrets using radiotracking and spotlighting techniques.
- Trained and supervised technicians and student volunteers.
- Experienced in utilizing different techniques to anesthetize and draw blood samples from various wild mammalian species (including black-footed ferrets, siberian polecats, badgers, prairie dogs, pumas, porcupines, elk, and white-tailed deer).

Oct 1988-  
Dec 1989

**Research Assistant - Conservation and Research Center, National Zoological Park, Smithsonian Institution, Front Royal, Virginia, USA.**

- Actively involved in research projects designed to study the neuroendocrine control of male reproduction in the endangered Eld's deer.
- Collected biological samples and developed assay techniques such as radioimmunoassay (RIA) and high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) to permit measurement of blood hormones contained in urine and blood plasma.
- Assisted in the development of behavioral tests to assess reproductive status in male Eld' deer. Involved in projects designed to monitor hormonal changes in several mammalian species including giant pandas, spectacled bear, polar bear, sloth bear, siberian polecat, golden lion tamarin, and lowland gorilla.
- Participated in the husbandry and care of the endangered Eld's deer, Père David deer, black-footed ferret and golden lion tamarin. Assisted in an Earth-watch program with trapping and tracking small mammals and white-tailed deer for population surveys.

Spring 1989

**Volunteer Research Assistant, National Institutes of Health - Animal Center, Bethesda, MD, USA.**

Performed laparoscopy, in vitro fertilization, embryo transfer and artificial insemination techniques on domestic and leopard cats as a model for other endangered felids. Learned electroejaculation procedures and cryopreservation techniques for embryos and semen.

Summer 1988

**Volunteer Technician, Madrid Zoological Park, Spain.**

Assisted the ethology staff with behavioral observations of chimpanzees and gorillas. Worked in the animal quarantine facilities assisting the veterinarians and helped in the daily routines of feeding and cleaning the enclosures of the animals that were maintained there.

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Fall 1983-  
Spring 1988

**Surgical and Clinical Assistant, Durán-Algaba Veterinary Clinic, Madrid, Spain.**

Performed pre- and post-operative tasks, assisted during surgery, performed wound management, and administered fluid therapy. I was also responsible for admitting patients for treatment, interacting with clients and answering public inquiries over the telephone.

## ③

**EDUCATION, OUTREACH  
AND CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES**

- Sep-Dec 2006 **Coordinator of the International Seminar Series: “Ex-situ Conservation of the Iberian lynx”** which included more than 50 national and international speakers and was structured into five modules: General Conservation Issues, Veterinary and Health Aspects, Genetics and Husbandry, Reproductive Physiology, and Reintroduction. Course funding and logistics: Biodiversity Foundation. Sevilla and Doñana National Park, Huelva, Spain.
- Oct 2007 **Lecturer in workshop “Interdisciplinary Leadership for the Conservation of Biodiversity”** a course designed for conservation managers, which included participants from Argentina, México, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Colombia, Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile y Brasil. Conservation Land Trust, Iberá, Argentina.
- Dec 2002 **Co-coordinator of International Seminar “On the Brink of Extinction: Integrating Science, Politics and Society in the Recovery of Endangered Species”**, Environmental Education Center. Valencia, Spain.
- May 2001 **Member of the Organizing Committee and Coordinator of two working groups**, (carnivores and critically endangered primates, respectively), Conservation Action Management Plan (CAMP) of Endangered Wildlife of Madagascar, Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, USA & Antananarivo, Madagascar
- Nov-Dec 1999 **Co-coordinator and lecturer of the course “Techniques for the Conservation and Management of Endangered Species in Latin America”**, Capacity Building and Training Center of La Antigua, Guatemala. Funding and logistics: Ministry of Environment of Spain (MIMAM) and the Spanish International Cooperation Agency (AECI), in collaboration with the United States Fish & Wildlife Service.



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- Oct 1999 **Co-coordinator and lecturer of the course “Conservation and Management of Endangered Species in Spain”**. National Center for Environmental Education (CENEAM), Segovia, Spain. Funded by the European Union.
- Dec 1998 **Lecturer of the course “Conservation Biology”**, Universidad de Los Lagos, Osorno, Chile.
- Nov 1998 **Lecturer of the course “Techniques for Conservation of Endangered Species”**, Costa Rica Wildlife Management Regional Program, National University of Costa Rica, Heredia, Costa Rica.
- Jun 1998 **Workshop coordinator, “Black-footed Ferret Immobilization, Anesthesia, and Preparation for Reintroduction”**. United States Fish & Wildlife Service, Fort Collins, Colorado, USA.
- Feb 1998 **Working Group Coordinator, Iberian Lynx Captive Breeding working group, at the workshop “Iberian Lynx Population and Habitat Viability Analyses (PHVA)”** Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG). USA & Cabañeros National Park, Spain.
- May 1997 **Working Group Coordinator, “Veterinary Aspects” at the workshop “Neotropical Wildlife Rehabilitation”**, Costa Rica Wildlife Management Regional Program, National University of Costa Rica, Heredia, Costa Rica.
- Jan–Dec 1993 **Teaching Assistant**. Environmental Physiology Laboratory. University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming, USA.

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OTHER PROJECTS  
AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 2007–2011 **Board of Director’s member for the Biodiversity Foundation**, Spanish Ministry of the Environment.
- 1996–2004 **Board of Director’s member for Idea Wild (IW)**, a US-based NGO that supports biodiversity conservation programs in Latin America by means of purchasing pieces of equipment for researchers, managers and educators. Promoted Idea Wild activities in Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Peru, and Bolivia.
- Oct 1999–Jan 2000 **Technical consultant, Iberian Lynx Recovery Programme**, Spanish Ministry of the Environment. Developed a Captive

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Breeding Action Plan for the Endangered Iberian Lynx. Organized a workshop with Spanish conservation professionals (government officials, managers and researchers) to bring consensus for the development of the Plan. Madrid, Spain.

Jul 1998-  
Jul 2008

**European Mink Conservation Program**, Spanish Ministry of the Environment. Technical consultant in the development of an action plan for the conservation and recovery of this endangered species. Madrid, Spain. Ad hoc advisor of the International European Mink Species Survival Plan. Tallin, Estonia.

Feb 1998

**Population and Habitat Viability Analysis (PHVA) for the Iberian Lynx**, International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG). Assisted throughout the PHVA process and coordinated the captive breeding working group. Parque Nacional de Cabañeros, Spain.

Nov 1997

**Iberian Lynx Recovery Program**, Doñana Biological Station (EBD), Superior Council for Scientific Research (CSIC). Assisted in the development of a European Action Plan for the conservation of this endangered species. Sevilla, Spain.

Feb 1997

**Mexican Wolf Recovery Workshop**, Fort Worth Zoo and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Biological consultant in issues related to reintroduction of captive-raised Mexican wolves. Texas, EEUU.

Dec 1996

**Madidi National Park conservation program**. EcoBolivia y Wildlife Conservation Society. Provided technical assistance to a group of amazonian Takana indians to write a proposal to the IUCN to help develop ecotourism facilities at the reserve. Pilón Lajas, Bolivia.

Aug 1996

**Siberian Tiger Conservation Project**, Hornocker Wildlife Research Institute. Assisted in monitoring and radiotracking a wild Siberian tiger population, Sikhote Alin Reserve, Russian Far East.

Jun 1996

**Humbolt Penguin Conservation Project**, Wildlife Conservation Society. Assisted in trapping, handling and monitoring the largest existing colony of endangered Humbolt penguins, Punta San Juan, Peru.

Aug 1992

**California Seagull Monitoring Program**, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Assisted with trapping and banding California Gulls, Laramie Basin, Wyoming.

Aug 1991

**Wyoming Toad Conservation Program**. Assisted in setting up transects, trap and monitor the last wild population of endangered Wyoming toads. Laramie Basin, Wyoming.

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Sept 1991-1997 **Black-footed Ferret Recovery Project.** Assisted with field work (trapping, radiotracking, spotlighting and veterinary work) to monitor population of reintroduced ferrets. Shirley Basin, Wyoming ; Charles Russell National Wildlife Refuge, Montana ; Badlands National Park, South Dakota, EEUU.

Spring 1989 **Earth Watch Program.** Assisted Earth Watch volunteers in trapping and monitoring small mammal populations and radiotracking white-tail deer, Conservation and Research Center, NZP, Front Royal, Virginia.

 Publications

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PEER-REVIEWED PAPERS  
AND BOOK CHAPTERS

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