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**Lina Maria VALENCIA**

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**Home Country**  
Colombia

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**Degree**  
Physical Anthropology

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**Expertise**  
Primate Conservation

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**Research Focus**  
Landscape and  
Conservation Genetics

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**Host University**  
University of Texas at Austin,  
United States

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**Fellowship Awarded**  
2012

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Lina Maria Valencia was born and grew up in Bogota, the capital city of Colombia. Her parents owned a small farm in the countryside, and since childhood she was encouraged to take care of natural resources and love nature, which led to her pursuing a related career in biology.

Lina Maria has a BSc in Biology from the Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá. As an undergraduate, she attended several field courses around Colombia. During an Ecology field course in her second year, she saw a troop of squirrel monkeys less than 10 meters away and followed them for two hours through the forest. This sparked her interest in primate biology, ecology and behavior, and for her undergraduate thesis she studied the highly endangered brown spider monkey *Ateles hybridus*.

The PhD research focuses on how genetic tools can contribute to the conservation of primates, specifically addressing how animals respond to environmental change and habitat fragmentation. Lina Maria is particularly interested in investigating how heterogeneous landscapes influence the population structure of primate species, and the environmental factors that affect the connectivity between populations in order to generate conservation plans for endangered species in Colombia.

After she finishes her PhD, Lina Maria expects to return to Colombia where she hopes to become a faculty professor and continue her research work. The PhD project will give her experience of modern research methods that she will bring back to her home country. When fieldwork takes her to remote areas, Lina Maria plans to take the opportunity to instruct local women in biology and involve them in environmental educational programs.