



# Weston Family Foundation Graduate Fellowship for Northern Conservation 2021 Guidelines and Instructions



**Purpose: To advance Wildlife Conservation Society Canada’s conservation goals at two long-term sites, the Northern Boreal Mountains (Yukon/British Columbia) and Ontario’s Northern Boreal, by generating relevant scientific information.**

**Application Deadline: 22 February 2021, 5pm (EST).**

With generous support from Weston Family Foundation, Wildlife Conservation Society Canada (WCS Canada) is pleased to offer research fellowships to graduate students (Master's and Doctoral).

These fellowship awards are intended to:

1. Support field-based research that is relevant to WCS Canada’s conservation objectives at our two long-term sites in the boreal region of Northern Ontario, and the Northern Boreal Mountains of Yukon and British Columbia. Research that takes place outside of these sites, but that generates relevant conservation information, may also be eligible.
2. Provide all or partial funding for graduate-level, field research and related activities for students to carry out their thesis-related research. Fellowship awards are not intended to support student stipends; however, stipends and salaries for field assistants are eligible.

## **Fellowship Awards**

WCS Canada will award one-year fellowships of between \$5,000 and \$20,000 each. The amount of funding awarded will be determined in part by the applicants’ financial needs and the number of applications received.

Fellowship awards are available for project activities beginning on or after April 1, 2021.

## **Eligible Applicants**

Fellowship applicants must be pursuing a graduate degree in conservation science, or in a related field such as landscape ecology, natural resources management/conservation, conservation planning, conservation biology, environmental studies, wildlife/plant/fisheries ecology or socio-ecological studies.

Individuals who have received a WCS Canada Weston Family Foundation Fellowship award in a previous year may reapply. 2020 Fellows who have projects that have been extended beyond one year in response to COVID-19 may also re-apply for 2021. Applications to support an additional year of the same project will be considered. Applications from past grantees for new projects will also be considered. For example, a student that received a Fellowship award for Master's research may submit an application to support their PhD research

## Eligible Projects

The proposed research project must help advance WCS Canada's conservation objectives at one of its two long-term sites (the boreal region of northern Ontario or the boreal mountains of Yukon and British Columbia - please see map below) or increase conservation knowledge that is relevant to one or both of these sites. Relevant research areas include, but are not limited to, studies of: aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems; wetland, riparian, and peatland ecosystems; species management/conservation; ecosystem connectivity; ecological changes resulting from climate change; sustainable harvesting of fish and/or wildlife; and socio-ecological effects of natural resource development or management, especially cumulative effects of multiple development projects.

## Eligible Expenses

Expenses for thesis-related research costs are eligible including, but not necessarily limited to:

- Lab fees and other analytical costs.
- Research equipment, material and supplies.
- Travel to, from and around research sites.
- Travel in support of collaborative activities. Travel related to attending and presenting at conferences will also be considered.
- Shipping and postage costs
- Stipends and salary costs for field support, including field assistants.
- Other costs related to the needs of the research project or that have the potential to expand the scope and impact of the research project.

Stipends for graduate students are not eligible for Fellowship support.

## Applications

Students must submit a complete application: Applications must include the following:

1. **Applicant Information Form** can be downloaded [here](#);
2. **Cover Letter** outlining how the proposed research addresses WCS Canada's site-based conservation objectives;
3. **Curriculum Vitae** of the student;
4. **Research Project Description** (3-5 pages) including project goals, objectives, methods, and conservation relevance;
5. **COVID-19 Risk Assessment** listing how ongoing COVID-19 conditions and restriction might impact the project and how you plan to respond/adapt to each situation or scenario, including the possible need for mandatory quarantine for anyone traveling into the Yukon territory;
6. **Project Budget** using the [budget template](#) which must include the amount requested from WCS Canada and the complete budget for the project, with committed or pending support from other sources itemized;
7. **Letter of Support** from the student's academic supervisor. Supervisors may choose to submit their letter of support directly.

We ask that documents 2 to 7 be consolidated into one PDF file. If the Letter of Support is being sent separately then combine files 2 to 6.

Applicants are strongly advised to ensure that their proposed research follows accepted ethical guidelines for research in the North before submitting proposals. Examples include the [First Nations Information Governance Centre's Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession \(OCAP®\) standards](#), [First Nations Ethics Guide on Research and Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge](#), [Principles of Ethical Métis Research](#), [Tri-Council Policy Statement \(2018\) - Chapter 9, entitled "Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples of Canada](#), [ACUNS Principles for Conduct of Research in the North](#), and the [Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Nunavut Research Institute Guide for Researchers](#).

***Fellowship awards will be conditional upon applicants providing copies of approved permits for research and evidence of compliance with necessary animal and/or human ethics review and welfare protocols.***

## **Application Submission**

Applications should be submitted by email to with the subject "**2021 Weston Fellowship Application**".

## **Questions?**

General: Tina Dias ([tdias@wcs.org](mailto:tdias@wcs.org))  
Ontario's Northern Boreal: Dr. Connie O'Connor ([coconnor@wcs.org](mailto:coconnor@wcs.org))  
Northern Boreal Mountains: Dr. Don Reid ([dreid@wcs.org](mailto:dreid@wcs.org))

## **Reporting Requirements**

Recipients of Fellowship Awards will be required to report on the progress of their projects and provide a final report. [Reporting requirements](#) include providing photos and video footage of fieldwork activities. [Examples of videos submitted by previous Fellows can be found on the WCS Canada YouTube channel.](#)

# WCS Canada's Conservation Objectives



## **Ontario's Northern Boreal (ONB)**

The Far North in Ontario contains the world's largest intact boreal forest, the third largest wetland, and the second largest peatland complex. Its sheer size (450,000 sq. km), remoteness, low human population density, lack of a permanent transportation or energy infrastructure network, and, as-yet, small industrial footprint make it a stronghold for a number of species that have experienced range reductions in the rest of Canada, including caribou, wolverine, and lake sturgeon as well as the most southern sub-population of polar bears. It is also a homeland to approximately 40,000 First Nations Peoples (including Anishinabeg; and Mushkegowuk). In the last two decades, First Nations Peoples in this region have experienced a mineral boom in staking, exploration, and mining, intensifying in the past several years with the discovery of a world-class nickel-chromium deposit (the "Ring of Fire"). In 2010, the Government of Ontario formally committed to protecting at least 50% of the landscape and creating a new relationship with First Nations to support sustainable development based on community. land-use planning processes.

Our vision is that Ontario's Northern Boreal Landscape remains the largest intact boreal landscape in the world with thriving populations of iconic fish and wildlife species within a dynamic landscape, supporting healthy and resilient communities of First Nations pursuing traditional resource use and limited industrial development.

### **Objectives:**

- To use conservation principles to inform regional and community planning and environmental assessment processes
- To use scientific information to inform conservation of fish and wildlife

- To provide information to First Nations communities to support planning goals and objectives
- To develop and encourage best practices in industrial development that addresses conservation and traditional resource use
- To advance the science necessary to support climate change adaptation and mitigation in Ontario's northern boreal, particularly with First Nations

## **Northern Boreal Mountains (NBM)**

The Northern Boreal Mountains encompass approximately 468,000 sq. km in northwestern Canada, incorporating diverse boreal, taiga, and tundra ecosystems. Resident aboriginal peoples rely on their harvests of wildlife and fish, including the longest-distance migration of salmon in the world. Much of the region is still wilderness, supporting robust populations of barren-ground and mountain caribou, grizzly bears, wolverine, and lynx, and significant breeding populations of many boreal bird species. Much of the region was part of the Beringian refugium during the last ice age, and that geographic isolation led to significant speciation and endemic wildlife. Lowland forest and riparian habitats support the majority of the region's biodiversity but these habitats are poorly covered by existing conservation lands. WCS Canada is focusing on the NBM because of the mix of conservation opportunity and threat the region currently faces.

Our vision is that the full suite of wildlife species continues to thrive, with robust populations conserved across the diversity of ecosystems, throughout the boreal mountains of northwest Canada.

### **Objectives**

- To contribute to the identification and designation of a full suite of ecological benchmarks or protected areas in the Northern Boreal Mountains
- To contribute new science or scientific interpretations to enhance conservation of fish and wildlife in the Northern Boreal Mountains
- To develop best management practices for the integration of wildlife and ecosystem conservation into natural resource management and human uses of wild places
- To partner with and enhance the technical and scientific capacity of government agencies and other organizations which have a conservation mandate
- To develop assessments of the risks to biodiversity inherent in climate change and pursue research regarding suitable adaptation strategies to be applied in concert with various partners

## About WCS Canada

**Our Mission:** *WCS saves wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature.*

**Our Vision:** *WCS envisions a world where wildlife thrives in healthy lands and seas, valued by societies that embrace and benefit from the diversity and integrity of life on Earth.*

*WCS Canada ([www.wcsCanada.org](http://www.wcsCanada.org)) was established as a Canadian conservation organization in July 2004. We implement and support comprehensive field studies in Canada that gather information on wildlife needs and then seek to resolve key conservation problems by working with a broad array of stakeholders. We also provide technical assistance and biological expertise to local groups and agencies that lack the resources to tackle conservation concerns. WCS Canada is independently registered and managed, while retaining a strong collaborative working relationship with sister WCS programs in more than 66 nations, including an integrated North America Program.*

*The Wildlife Conservation Society ([www.wcs.org](http://www.wcs.org)) is a recognized global leader in conservation and for more than a century has worked in North America promoting actions such as bison reintroduction, pioneering field studies, parks creation, and legislation to protect endangered wildlife.*

### **Statement on Racism, Diversity and Inclusion in Canadian Conservation**

*We at WCS Canada recognize that there are significant barriers to Black, Indigenous and People of Colour in all areas of scientific research and conservation practice. The history of conservation in Canada and many parts of the world has witnessed the direct impacts that racism and discrimination have had on communities as they are continually racialized, having their rights denied, and values marginalized; many still face overt and systemic racism and violence. Addressing threats to the environment that we are currently facing together requires the inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives, and a commitment to strengthening our response in order to develop ecologically-sound and socially-just outcomes.*

*We at WCS Canada will not accept or ignore any form of racism or discrimination -- in our organization, the environment and the societies where we live and work. We are actively working to bring more diversity into our programs, but fully recognize we have a lot more to do, including within the broader science and conservation sphere in which we operate. We remain committed to our core values of [Diversity and Inclusion, Respect, Collaboration and Integrity](#) and expanding our actions on anti-racism. We are working to increase all forms of representation in our work with [communities](#), in conservation and in our board and leadership. We are reinforcing our commitment to the hiring, advancement, retention and morale of our talented staff and the career development of the next generation of conservation scientists. There is still much to be done to increase diversity in conservation science and in our own hiring and programming. We thank those who are drawing attention to the urgency of making this work happen. We are listening, we are learning, and commit to continuing to act.*