



Fellowships

Applications due by January 1, 2023

Contact: grants@wildanimalinitiative.org

About Wild Animal Initiative

The mission of Wild Animal Initiative is to improve the lives of wild animals at scale. This will ultimately require evidence-based interventions, policy changes, and widespread public support, but interventions can have unintended consequences if they're not properly researched. Therefore our primary goal is to advance the understanding of the welfare of wild animals through rigorous scientific research.

We fund hypothesis-driven, humane wild animal welfare-focused research projects with high scientific merit and the potential for significant impact on wild animal welfare.

Fellowship Program Summary / Overview

Our fellowship grants are designed to assist early-career scientists by providing salary support in a quality mentoring environment. The fellowship program aims to facilitate the growth of a diverse community of scientists who intentionally integrate wild animal research (e.g. ecology and other related fields) and welfare science (e.g. farmed animal or sentience research).

Your proposal should convince our reviewers that your proposed project is scientifically sound and will advance the understanding of wild animal welfare. It should also convey the investigator's expertise to conduct the study and commitment to exploring the implications for wild animal welfare.

We offer a stipend of up to \$60,000 USD per year for salary and living expenses. Eligible candidates can request an additional allowance of up to \$25,000 USD per year for field work, consumables and other research related costs.

Fellowship Eligibility Criteria

Wild Animal Initiative postdoctoral fellowships are highly competitive. A maximum of six fellows will be selected for this call. Applicants should contact Wild Animal Initiative at grants@wildanimalinitiative.org to discuss the project, mentorship, and the application process before [submitting an Expression of Interest \(EoI\)](#).

This call is open to applicants at an early-career stage (postdoctoral researchers or anyone within 5 years of receiving a PhD), interested in pursuing a long-term research career in wild animal welfare. We particularly encourage applications from communities underrepresented in the sciences, including but not limited to people of color, people of the global south, self-identified women, and non-binary individuals.

- **Mission Alignment:** Projects must advance the science of wild animal welfare. Projects *exclusively* focused on farmed animal welfare, domestic welfare, or wildlife conservation or management do not fall within Wild Animal Initiative's mission and will not be supported.
- **Location:** We welcome proposals from researchers around the world, with the following exceptions:
 - (1) We are unable to fund work that will be carried out in the United States by a non-US resident.
 - (2) We are not able to fund researchers resident in nations subject to sanctions by the United States (e.g., Iran, North Korea, Russia).
- **Animal Use and Handling Policy:** Projects must adhere to Wild Animal Initiative's guidance for animals involved in research. If your project will involve any work with animals, in the field or the lab, please be aware we are less likely to select a proposed project that would cause harm to animals. If invasive methods are to be used, welfare concerns should be elaborated in the proposal and methods justified with evidence showing why the use of alternatives would not be possible.
- **Budget:** The budget for salary cannot exceed \$60,000 per year, inclusive of benefits and indirect costs (if charged by your institution). The budget for consumables cannot exceed \$25,000, inclusive of indirect costs (if charged by your institution). A budget for postdoctoral healthcare costs of up to \$5,000 should be included, if need is demonstrated.
- **Timeframe:** The project submitted should be framed as a 1, 2 or 3-year project with clearly identified achievements for year 1 and justification for years 2 and 3, as appropriate.
- **Duration:** Maximum fellowship/project duration is three years.
- **Mentor:** Applicants must have the support of an appropriately experienced mentor in the applicant's field.

If you are not sure if your project would meet these criteria, please [email us](#) to discuss your project.

How to Apply

To submit an application, please submit the following materials through the [online Fellowship EoI form](#):

- Your CV
- A brief explanation of your career plans.
- A brief statement of your interest in wild animal welfare.
- A 1-2 page concept note outlining the details of your proposed project.
- A brief explanation of how you and your key collaborators are qualified for the proposed project.
- Required for Track 1 applicants only: Letter of Support from your proposed advisor and their CV uploaded as one file (Only required if you know the host institution and/or advisor). In the letter your proposed advisor should address the **advisor selection criteria** outlined below.

Please refer to the [EoI fellowship application form](#) for further details. Please be sure to review the Eligibility Criteria above, and the Selection Criteria outlined below in preparing your proposal.

Applications received via email will not be accepted.

Applications must be **received by 5:00 pm EST** on January 1, 2023. **We encourage applicants to [contact us](#) to discuss their interest in applying at any stage of the process.**

Prospective fellows can apply through one of the following three tracks:

Track 1: Fellow and mentor apply together

Applicants should propose a project that explicitly combines animal welfare and the study of wild animals. Applicants should identify a desired host institution and a suggested mentor/advisor(s) before submitting a proposal. Mentors can be from any institution but applicants should confirm with Wild Animal Initiative whether their selected mentor and institution are among the pre-approved mentors and host groups/institutions, in preparing their application. Wild Animal Initiative will evaluate the applicant, the project, and the proposed host university and mentor for suitability.

Note - If applying through Track 1, both the Principal Investigator (mentor) and the individual submitting the application (fellow), must be involved in the application process.

Track 2: Fellow applies with a project idea; Wild Animal Initiative helps identify mentor/host institution

Applicants should propose a project that explicitly combines animal welfare and the study of wild animals. Wild Animal initiative will evaluate the proposed project and will suggest an appropriate host institution and mentor.

Track 3: Fellow applies for a fellowship to work with a pre-approved mentor on a predefined project

Applicants should review the projects available and submit an application identifying the project of interest.

Track 3 is not yet available, but coming soon. Please check back in mid-2023 for fellowship projects and opportunities for 2024. Once approved, predefined projects will be listed [here](#).

Prospective mentors interested in hosting fellows and/or proposing projects who would like to register for pre-approval should complete the [Fellowship Mentor form](#).

Project selection criteria

Applications will be assessed based on how strongly they address these questions:

- **Impact:** How likely is it that this project will ultimately lead to an improvement for wild animal welfare?
- **Engagement:** To what extent will this project accelerate or inspire other wild animal welfare research?
- **Scope:** How many animals could potentially benefit from the results of this project, and by how much?
- **Tractability:** Is there a high probability that this project is able to be carried out as described and will deliver the expected answers or results?
- **Neglectedness:** Could this project be funded by another organization instead, without reducing its value for wild animal welfare?
- **Research ethics:** Will the execution of this project cause harm to people or non-human animals?
- **Cost-effectiveness:** After considering the above criteria, if two projects have approximately equal overall merit, we will give preference to the one with the lower budget.

Fellow selection criteria

- Strong demonstrated interest in the welfare of animals (particularly wild animals)
- Strong value-alignment: Please refer to our [mission and values](#)
- Research experience in either animal welfare science, or field ecology, or a related field.
- An interest in learning about either animal welfare science, or field ecology, or a related field (whichever of the above the candidate does not already have experience in).
- Interest in learning about and improving scientific understanding of wild animal welfare.

Qualifications of prospective fellow

- Must have completed a PhD or be a full-time graduate student expecting to graduate within 3 months of application.
- Unless otherwise discussed, preference will be given to applicants who have or are able to secure a postdoctoral research appointment, and/or who are affiliated with an institution.
- Must not have completed more than two years of full-time postdoctoral research training on the proposed project.
- Preference will be given to applicants able to commit to working full-time on the funded research.
- Must be based in a country where they are eligible to work.
- If a component of the research is to be conducted in a country in which the fellow is not based, then the proposal must have the support of a mentor who is based in that country.

Advisor selection criteria

- Must demonstrate a general interest in animal welfare.
- Must demonstrate time available and interest to support and mentor an early career postdoctoral fellow to expand their understanding of the advisor's discipline (animal welfare or field ecology-related) and help the fellow integrate this new-found understanding into their own research.
- Interest in supporting early career scientists to forge a career in wild animal welfare research.
- Overall value-alignment (e.g. animal ethics and [DEI](#)).

Definitions

- **Welfare:** The aggregate quality of an individual's subjective experiences over a given time period (or the sum of the welfare of each individual in a group). This can also be called "well-being" or "quality of life." "Improving welfare" is often synonymous with "reducing or preventing suffering." See [here](#) for further explanation.
- **Wild animal:** Any individual animal whose life is not closely managed by humans. This includes animals living freely in human-dominated environments, such as parks and urban spaces, but excludes pets, farmed animals, and animals kept in zoos or in laboratories.