



RUSSELL E. TRAIN
**EDUCATION
FOR NATURE**

FELLOWSHIP GUIDELINES

Caroline Goldman Cassagnol Fellowship

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For all inquiries and questions about the Caroline Goldman Cassagnol Fellowship, please contact efn@wwfus.org.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

April 15, 2026

Overview

Sustained actions to support effective and timely conservation and sustainable development efforts must not only be underpinned by interventions that incorporate a wide range of local and traditional knowledge, skills, tools and abilities, but must also provide long-lasting impact to keep pace with increasing biodiversity challenges. Building robust, functional, and adaptive interventions requires long-term investment in research, education, and training that bolsters capacities to accelerate conservation outcomes.

Despite demands placed on biodiversity to meet current and future societal needs, capacity deficits in many places around the globe continue to be evident and include insufficient resources to sustain individual and organizational capacities, limiting the ability to build local conservation leadership. Efforts to foster and maintain conservation capacity have included the development of core competencies, provision of resources, support for education, research, and training and establishment of institutions. However, the complexity of balancing loss of biodiversity with development combined with widening inequalities in capacity continues to demonstrate that achieving inclusive conservation and sustainable development requires scaling up and across to deliver individual, institutional, and community capacities. At this critical moment in time, when biodiversity is faced with growing threats, we require support for individuals and systems to continuously meet the surge in capacity and close the gap between capacity needs and delivery.

Reflecting on three decades of EFN work, the Cassagnol Fellowship creates an opportunity to deliver on the lesson that supporting conservation leaders at their home country universities, research centers, and conservation projects creates lasting opportunities for co-development and collaboration, and therefore ensures longevity of solutions while also sustaining the pipeline of conservation leaders.

Eligibility Criteria

The Cassagnol Fellowship is established for EFN alumni who intend to continue/return to work in higher education/academia, conservation research and outreach. Fellows will be selected based on academic and conservation research, outreach track record in their fields, and commitment to further the professional development of emerging conservation leaders.

- ▶ Applicants must have completed their respective doctoral or master's programs at institutions from anywhere around the world (preference given to those who have received EFN support within the past five years). PhD and master's degree holders who currently hold an academic or research appointment, which will be active through the duration of the fellowship, are eligible to apply.
- ▶ Applicants must have received a PhD/master's degree or equivalent doctoral/master's level research degree (preference given to those who completed their degrees within the past five years) in any discipline with a strategic focus on conservation.
- ▶ Applicants who have not yet formally received their degree must present evidence of having completed the academic requirements before commencing the fellowship.
- ▶ Applicants must identify a mentor to support research and scholarly work. They should also identify a second mentor at their home institution. Both mentors are required to submit letters of recommendation during the application process.
- ▶ Applicants must have support from their institutions to pursue a 12-month fellowship appointment.
- ▶ Applicants must have an academic or research appointment in an eligible country. Additionally, a letter of support from the institution should be included at the time of application.

Focus Areas

Proposals should seek to engage diverse groups and sectors with emphasis on the following:

- ▶ Developing skills, good practice, and standards. These should include hands-on activities and case studies that directly address the dual institutional challenges and gaps to understanding and mitigating the potential social and environmental impacts and risks associated with development programs and projects and opportunities for enhancing inclusive conservation objectives to achieve sustainable development.
- ▶ Engaging diverse stakeholders, including gender dimensions and mainstreaming and involvement of local and indigenous people and communities.
- ▶ Fostering a professional network among individuals and organizations with an emphasis on collaboration and information exchange. Priority will be given to proposals that seek to strengthen collaboration with local associations (e.g., conservation professionals, impact assessment professionals, environmental journalists, urban and regional planners or environmental lawyers), and regional bodies.
- ▶ Strengthening institutional capacities to address challenges related to conservation, development, and to improving the expertise and experience of individuals and communities to improve livelihoods and achieve conservation outcomes collaboratively, including attention to cumulative effects.

Selection Criteria

Final fellowship recipients will be identified through a competitive selection process and scored based on a set of criteria including, but not limited to, the following areas:

- ▶ Academic achievement - fellows with strong PhD and master's degree achievement who are actively conducting conservation research and capacity development.
- ▶ Strength and quality of proposal - uniqueness of the concept, relevance, and detailed plan of action, the proposed work demonstrates an understanding of the rationale, the proposed activities are feasible within the proposed work plan, and the budget is realistic.
- ▶ Individual and collective impact - applicant's ability to succeed in conservation research and the development of capacities for emerging leaders; short and long-term impacts as well as far-reaching outcomes beyond proposed timeframe whilst taking into consideration a risk assessment; Contribution to and advancement of innovative programs in their field of study.
- ▶ Demonstration of commitment, inclusivity, and leadership.
- ▶ Project measurability - the proposed initiative has measurable outcomes and outputs
- ▶ Collaborations - projects that enhance partnerships with a clear outline of each stakeholders' role in delivering the proposed objectives.
- ▶ Recommendation letters and commitment to fellows advancement in the proposed work.

Application Process

The call for applications will close on April 15, 2026. An overview of the grant timeline is below. The application is available [here](#).

- ▶ April 15, 2026: Deadline for submissions of applications in the portal
- ▶ April - June 2026: Selection process
- ▶ July 2026: Successful applicants informed
- ▶ August - September 2026: Contracts signed, and grants issued

Note about the Fellowship

The Cassagnol Fellowship was established by Professor Robert Kogod Goldman in memory of his sister, Caroline Goldman Cassagnol, and is a permanently endowed fund within the Russell E. Train Education for Nature Program Endowment. The fellowship honors Caroline Goldman Cassagnol's passion and lifelong commitment to conservation of endangered species and the habitats in which they live. "Caroline loved all animals and wanted to do all she could to help protect wildlife and wild places around the world. It is for this reason that for many years, she championed the goals and mission of WWF through financial support. This fellowship honors her passion for conservation and commitment to WWF by investing in individuals that share a common world view and purpose."

Prof. Goldman adds that investing in local conservation champions is the smartest way to ensure lasting impact. "There is an exponential effect when you invest in people. It is my hope that this fellowship will support local leaders to pursue their interests in habitat restoration and wildlife conservation, and inspire them to train others, so that the cycle continues. And, as it does, Caroline's legacy will live on." WWF will honor Caroline's commitment and legacy by ensuring that the Cassagnol Fellows have access to the financial support to sustain the co-development of knowledge and skills, lead innovating change, and create strong conservation outcomes locally, regionally and internationally.