



RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The Rob and Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship, established in 1956, embodies the Foundation's mission to advance wildlife conservation, deepen ecological understanding, and promote responsible land stewardship. Guided by the Foundation's vision of cultivating informed, ethical, and service-minded conservation leaders, the Fellowship supports exceptionally qualified M.S. and Ph.D. students whose research strengthens scientific decision-making and contributes directly to practical, on-the-ground management. Since its founding, the program has served as a cornerstone of the Foundation's commitment to developing the next generation of conservation professionals—individuals equipped to steward natural resources with integrity, curiosity, and a long-term view of the public good. To date, the Fellowship has supported more than 350 graduate students representing over 65 academic institutions, and Welder Research Fellows have collectively produced nearly 1,600 scientific publications, significantly enriching the understanding and management of wildlife and natural systems across North America and beyond.

Benefits of Being a Welder Graduate Research Fellow

Stipends

- ❖ The Foundation will provide Fellows a monthly stipend of \$2,000.00 per month for M.Sc. students and \$2,200.00 per month for Ph.D. students for use at the discretion of the Fellow.

In-Kind Support

- ❖ Students working on or near the Refuge are provided dormitory apartment living quarters, utilities, office space, and field and laboratory facilities as available
- ❖ Welder Staff and interns will assist with research as needed and as capacity is available.

Professional Development

Professional Conference Registration Fees

- ❖ The Foundation will pay event registration fees for Fellows who are presenting Fellowship-supported research at any professional conference during their Fellowship period.

Publication Fees

- ❖ Fellows may apply for funding to cover page charges for publication of Fellowship-supported research.
 - M.Sc. Fellows may request support for one (1) publication.
 - Ph.D. Fellows may request support for up to two (2) publications.

Networking and Cross-Training Opportunities

- ❖ Fellows working on the property will have opportunities to meet and engage with conservation professionals from a wide range of disciplines and partner organizations. As time allows, Fellows may also participate in ongoing research, wildlife management, land stewardship, and education programs at the Foundation.

Benefit Detail

Stipends

- ❖ Fellowships are awarded directly to accredited U.S. colleges or universities for graduate students who satisfy all registration and enrollment requirements of their respective institutions.
- ❖ The Welder Wildlife Foundation is a nonprofit organization, and all fellowship funds are restricted to direct expenses that support the graduate student and their research. Fellowship stipends are considered a direct expense of the graduate student. The Foundation **does not pay overhead or indirect costs to cooperating universities or research institutions.**
- ❖ Academic advisors and their institutions are responsible for the supervision of graduate students receiving a Welder Wildlife Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship.
- ❖ Fellowship awards for a 1-year period (12 months; or if the applicant is scheduled to graduate in <12 months, the fraction of a year required for degree completion).
- ❖ Fellowship recipients may reapply for continued funding.
- ❖ MSc. Fellows may apply for renewal 1 time (for 24 total months of funding)
- ❖ Ph.D. Fellows may apply for renewal up to 2 times (for 36 total months of funding)
- ❖ MSc. Fellows are paid a stipend of \$2,000 per month (\$24,000 per award year)
- ❖ Ph.D. Fellows are paid a stipend of \$2,200 per month (\$26,400 per award year)

In-Kind Support

- ❖ On-site housing, utilities, office space, and access to field and laboratory facilities are provided in-kind to our Fellows. These benefits are provided contingent upon availability.
- ❖ The Foundation offers in-kind support to help Fellows implement their research. As staff capacity permits, Welder personnel may assist with field tasks such as mowing study sites, installing fencing, deploying cameras, and other activities essential to approved research projects.

Professional Development

- ❖ Fellows are encouraged to present their Fellowship -supported research at professional conferences.
- ❖ Fellows with Fellowship-supported research accepted for presentation at a scientific conference may apply to the Foundation for conference registration fees
- ❖ The Foundation will reimburse registration fees (not to exceed \$1,000) for one conference per year while on fellowship.
- ❖ The Foundation encourages Fellows to participate in advanced training workshops and short courses, often held in conjunction with conferences, and participate in professional networking activities (including banquets; not including pre- and post-conference field trips), and these may be added to the Fellow's conference registration fees.
- ❖ Travel logistics and expenses (airfare, lodging, meals, etc.) for professional conferences are the responsibility of the Fellow and/or their advisor and institution.
- ❖ Conferences fees are subject to the Foundation's financial capacity.

Eligibility and Award Terms

- ❖ Fellowships are directed to graduate study for M.S. and Ph.D. level programs.
- ❖ The Welder Foundation requires that each fellowship award be administered by an accredited U.S. based institution and that the proposed research has relevance to conservation in the U.S. However, U.S. citizenship is not required.
- ❖ If awarded, all awards shall follow guidance as provided in the *Welder Wildlife Foundation Fellowship Policy and Procedures* including agreeing to forego outside employment while on fellowship.

Application Procedures

The Foundation considers research proposals across a broad range of disciplines, including animal behavior, biology, botany, conservation education, conservation social sciences, ecology, ecosystem services, genetics, mammalogy, ornithology, parasitology, range science, veterinary pathology, and wildlife sciences.

All applications are reviewed and ranked by a committee and evaluated primarily on the criteria outlined below. Proposals that typically score highest present a scientifically rigorous project and clearly articulate how the work will contribute to:

- a. advancing basic biological understanding—such as developing or testing ecological theory or addressing key uncertainties in wildlife or ecosystem ecology;
- b. improving wildlife and habitat conservation; and
- c. informing management decisions made by conservation agencies, landowners, and other resource stewards.

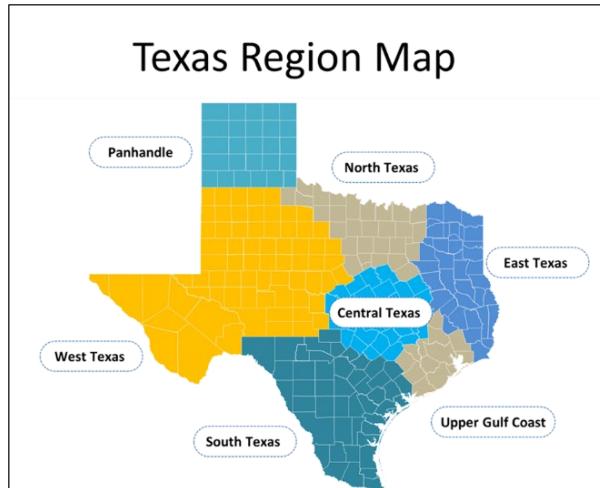
General scoring criteria:

- Academic qualifications of the student
- Career objectives statement
- Scientific merit
- Originality / Creativity
- Contributions to basic biology
- Importance to wildlife conservation and management
- Achievability

Other things being equal, proposals will be ranked in the following order of descending priority:

1. Research already in progress that requires continuation into or through the coming year.
2. New studies initiated on the Foundation Refuge or within the broader South Texas region, particularly those that address local conservation challenges or advance understanding of regional ecosystems (see map).

3. Proposals addressing issues or species of particular interest to the Foundation—especially those with strong relevance to Texas—are encouraged, with priority given to projects that will inform improved management practices and lead to practical, on-the-ground implementation.
4. After consideration of the above criteria, and if funds remain, the Foundation will then consider research conducted elsewhere within the continental United States, with priority given to projects that make the greatest contribution to the conservation of wildlife and their habitats.



Fellowship Application Requirements

Application Deadline

Applications are due annually by **no later than September 1** for consideration for funding that begins the next calendar year. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit all materials well in advance of the deadline to support timely review and ensure full consideration.

Submission Format

A complete application packet must include all required components listed below. Electronic submissions in PDF format are preferred.

Required Components of the Application Packet

1. Cover Letter

The Cover Letter should include a statement of interest in the Fellowship and a description of the applicant's short- and long-term career goals.

2. Curriculum Vitae

The Curriculum Vitae for the Fellowship applicant should include contact information, education, research experience, teaching experience (if applicable), publications, presentations, awards, professional affiliations, community, or university service.

3. Academic Transcripts

Transcripts from all academic institutions attended, including undergraduate coursework. Photocopies are acceptable.

6. Letters of Recommendation (Two Total)

Letters may be submitted from those providing the letters of support directly to Dr. James or included within the application packet.

- ❖ One letter from the applicant's graduate advisor or committee chairperson
- ❖ One additional letter of recommendation from an individual other than the current graduate advisor

7. Research Proposal

The research proposal must not exceed six (6) single-spaced pages, excluding figures, tables, project timetable, and literature cited. The format is flexible; however, the proposal must include:

- Introduction to the research problem, including relevance to wildlife conservation and management
- Objectives and major hypotheses
- Basic design of observations or experiments
- General methods
- Project timetable
- Literature cited
- Budget (using the budget template provided at <https://welderwildlife.org/about-fellowships/>.)

Note: The Welder Wildlife Foundation is a non-profit organization and does not pay overhead or indirect costs to cooperating universities or research institutions.

How to Apply

Submission Address

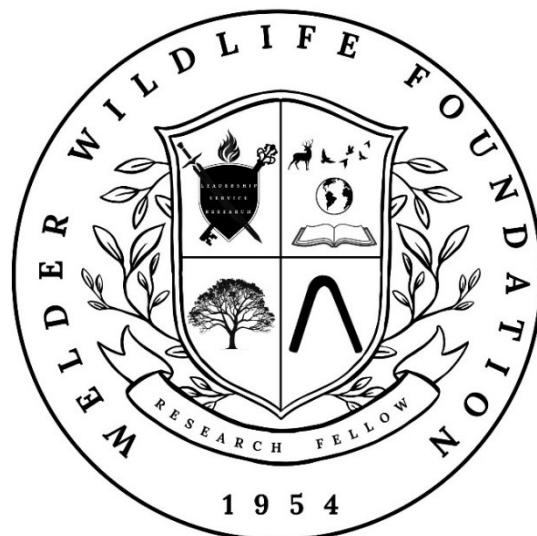
Completed application packets should be submitted electronically to:

Dr. Dale James
 Chief Executive Officer
 Rob & Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation
 Email: djames@welderwildlife.org
 Subject Line: Fellowship Application – “Student Name”

Additional Inquiries

Questions regarding the application process may be directed to:

Dr. Dale James
 Chief Executive Officer
 Rob & Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation
 P.O. Box 1400
 Sinton, Texas 78387
 Phone: 361-364-2643
 Email: djames@welderwildlife.org



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