



School of Earth and Sustainability

UNIQUE GRADUATE FELLOWSHIP ***Biodiversity Conservation, Community Science, Technology, and Equity***

We are searching for a candidate to take up a unique fully funded Masters opportunity (upgradeable to PhD depending on performance and fund-raising) at Northern Arizona University at the interface of biodiversity conservation, community science technology, and equity in the Southwest of the United States.



The Opportunity

A central challenge for conservation is the inequity between global and national conservation decision making and on-the-ground conservation practices and realities in local communities. This results in a disconnect between powerful urban-based conservation stakeholders and the rural communities who live where conservation takes place, leading to further divides in an increasingly polarized and unequal global society.

Community science (also known as Citizen Science) approaches that engage members of the public to participate in collecting data on biodiversity are increasing. Platforms and applications such as eBird and iNaturalist are taking off around the world. These programs can lead to a number of benefits including building social cohesion for conservation, awareness of nature, and contributing to biodiversity data. In addition, mechanisms are in development for financial support to further incentivize and support individuals in data collection.

As part of the team that is furthering this initiative internationally, we seek a Masters level graduate student to focus on the potential application of community science in the US Southwest.

Objectives of the Masters

The selected Masters student will aim to explore and understand the potential for, and possible benefits from community science in the US Southwest from a social-ecological perspective. Research objectives and questions could include but are not limited to:

- What is the interest and willingness of individuals and communities in the Southwest to contribute to community science, especially beyond existing demographics (e.g., established ebirders)?
- How can participation in community science be structured and incentivised to increase participation from newer sections of society?
- Which citizen/community science programs are already underway, or in development, in the region and what lessons can be drawn in relation to their application to biodiversity conservation?

The successful candidate will work closely under the co-supervision of Associate Professor Dr. Duan Biggs and Assistant Professor Dr. Pranay Ranjan at NAU with additional input from representatives of partner organizations. Relevant graduate coursework as stipulated by the Masters in Environmental Science and Policy (MS ES&P) degree program at NAU will be required (<https://nau.edu/ses/masters-in-environmental-sciences-and-policy/>).

The successful candidate will have the opportunity to work with program partners at the Arizona State University (ASU), Conservation International (CI) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and in discussion with supervisors, guide this research to develop other questions. This Masters is convertible to a PhD, depending on performance and funding availability.

Contribution to Lab group, School, and University

The candidate will be expected to contribute to the activities and functioning of the Dr Biggs' Resilient Conservation applied research group (resilientconservation.org), as well as participate in graduate activities of the School of Earth and Sustainability at NAU. Dr Biggs' lab is highly collaborative, features a trans-disciplinary team and is rapidly growing.

Selection Criteria

In order to be considered, the applicant should fulfil the following **essential requirements**:

1. An Honors, or equivalent undergraduate degree in Environmental Social Science, Community Development, Ecological Restoration, Agricultural Extension, Development Studies, or other relevant fields. Candidates with a previous Masters qualification will also be considered.
2. Working knowledge and competence of conducting mixed methods social science research including quantitative and qualitative data collection.
3. Knowledge and competence of conducting quantitative, and qualitative data analyses using packages such as R, SPSS, and NVivo.

4. Ability and willingness to conduct interviews and focus group discussions in rural settings, including with diverse communities in the US Southwest.
5. Willingness to spend the necessary time in the field in the US Southwest.
6. Strong writing and verbal skills in English.
7. Relevant lived experience and willingness to strengthen under-represented voices in conservation in the US Southwest.

The candidate will be registered at Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Arizona, USA.

Stipend/Salary

The total package of this Graduate Fellowship will be \$41,744 per year including stipend of tuition and health insurance over two years subject to adequate progress and performance. The stipend starts at \$20,677 per year. If the candidate makes exemplary progress and funding dependant, the Masters could be converted into a PhD. Funding for this opportunity is from the Thomas D Sisk Graduate Fellowship and the Olajos Goslow Chair at NAU. Some fieldwork funding is available, but the successful candidate will be expected to apply for additional funding and grants to support their research.

More information on the Thomas D Sisk Graduate Fellowship

The purpose of the Thomas D Sisk graduate fellowship is to recruit and support the next generation of conservation leaders who mirror the diverse demographics of the communities of the US Southwest. In addition, the Fellowship aims to ensure the continuation of conservation work bridging disciplinary divides, and the divides between academia and other conservation stakeholders, by strengthening partnerships between NAU and other conservation organisations.

To apply

Please email your application to communityscitech@gmail.com with the subject line: **Application for Sisk Graduate Fellowship**.

Your application should be a single PDF or MS Word document that includes:

1. CV/Resume.
2. A 1-2 page personal statement of why you are interested in this position, how your accomplishments meet these requirements, and your willingness to pursue an interdisciplinary graduate degree. This document can also be used for your NAU application.
3. A statement against the selection criteria of 1-2 pages.
4. Bachelors and/or Honors, or other previous degree transcripts (scanned copies will do, but official ones will be needed for the formal application to Northern Arizona University once a candidate has been selected).
5. Names and emails of three references. These will only be contacted for short-listed candidates.

It is strongly recommended that you apply as soon as possible. Unfortunately, we cannot provide individual feedback on any applications. We will run interviews on a rolling basis and when particularly strong applications come through. We reserve the right to make offers early.

The closing date for applications is 12 January 2024. Shortlisted candidates will be contacted for interviews. The top applicants will be required to apply to the ES&P Masters at NAU. Please note that a completed application for the ES&P program for includes:

- An online **application** for admission to the NAU Graduate College, with the required application fee.

- **A statement of your interests and goals**, and your reasons for pursuing an advanced degree.
- A sample of your academic or professional **writing**.
- **Unofficial transcripts** of all undergraduate and graduate course work.
- Names of the **faculty advisor(s)** you have been in contact with and would like to work with.
- Three **letters of recommendation** from academic or professional supervisors (you will only have to provide contact information, and then recommenders will submit letters directly to NAU).

NOTE: The position is open until filled. We reserve the right to not fill the position if no suitable candidate is found.

START DATE: The successful candidate is expected to start in August 2024

Any questions on the application or position should be addressed to Duan Biggs (duan.biggs@nau.edu) or Pranay Ranjan (pranay.ranjan@nau.edu). Please clearly indicate in the subject line: **Inquiry on Tom Sisk Fellowship.**

