



Australian
National
University



ACT
Government



Woodlands &
Wetlands Trust

Caring for our local ecosystems

The biosocial shaping of conservation and biodiversity practices in Australia's capital

We are seeking PhD applicants to contribute to an inter-disciplinary and mixed-method collaboration which explores the complex relationship between natural and social systems in various biodiversity conservation domains in the Australian Capital Territory. The four linked PhD projects each have a defined focus on understanding the social dimensions, impacts and implications of biodiversity conservation efforts at local, national and international levels.

The four successful candidates will work closely with Australian National University faculty, the ACT Government, The Woodlands and Wetlands Trust, Mulligans Flat–Goorooyarroo Woodland Experiment (www.mfgowoodlandexperiment.org.au) and other relevant stakeholders in the government, industry and community sectors as the projects develop. Each of the following projects will be supervised by an interdisciplinary panel comprising leading scholars, knowledge brokers and practitioners in ecology and biodiversity studies, sociology, science communication, public health, science and technology studies, cultural and media studies, and gender studies. Candidates will be exposed to complementary and

cutting-edge methodological approaches and conceptual frameworks, and benefit from diverse disciplinary and substantive networks as well as 15 years of woodlands research and 10 years of Sanctuary development. At this stage, we are envisaging the cohort of students will be co-located across the ANU School of Sociology, Fenner School of Environment and Society, Centre for Public Awareness of Science during the tenure of their programs, as well as taking up periodic residences in the new Woodlands Learning Centre in Throsby. We see collaboration and cross-fertilisation of knowledges and approaches as key to the building of capacity in this exciting and critical area of socio-ecological studies.



1. Exploring pathways to rewilding

How is rewilding being conceptualised, debated, enacted and vindicated?

In the midst of a global biodiversity crises, this project will compare models and applications of rewilding – and other relevant restoration work – in different geographical and cultural contexts. It will explore how distinct conservation knowledges (indigenous and non-indigenous) and cultural practices might inform the creation and/or management of wild infrastructures.

2. Wellbeing and participatory conservation

How does participatory conservation work affect wellbeing?

In an era when climate change, social inequality and mental illness are becoming more marked, this project explores how certain agencies and communities are using nature encounters for transformative, rehabilitative and therapeutic purposes. It will analyse the meanings and implications of these programs and practices for various social groups, and evaluate what potentials a deeper connection to land and nature might foster.

3. Public Reasoning and Social Licence for Ecosystem Futures

What risks can we take for ecosystem conservation?

This project will focus on how publics and experts can reason together to imagine and support novel biodiversity conservation strategies. It will develop forms of public engagement to test social licence for a range of interventions including culling, reintroduction of species and the use of gene technologies.



4. The visual field of nature futures: experiencing Mulligans Flat

How do conservationists and diverse publics cultivate shared and competing ecological visions through image circulation?

This project will explore photo-sharing and social media practices from Mulligans Flat and other nature sites to understand how future-nature imaginaries stabilise around particular topics, places, animals, plants, and times, and how nature simulations either heighten or reduce the significance of ecological and political 'caring'. It will use visual content analysis and ethnography to map the flows of images of animals, plants and terrains amongst educators, sanctuary managers, guides, visitors, locals and others, and to perceive their impacts and effects.



Eligibility

Successful candidates must obtain admission to a relevant HDR Program in the College of Science and secure an Australian Government Research Training Program (AGRTP) PhD Scholarship or similar ANU PhD scholarship of \$27,596 AUD tax free (2019 rate for 3 years). First class Honours (or equivalent academic qualifications) is a prerequisite for appointment.

Upon confirmation of the scholarship, an \$8,000 per annum top-up scholarship (for 3 years) will be awarded.

How to apply

Interested individuals are invited to submit an expression of interest to **Associate Professor Gavin Smith** (gavin.smith@anu.edu.au; 02 6125 0323) by **October 1 2019** stating their interests and ideas in one of the areas of research listed above, academic transcript(s) and their CV. These projects are open to applications from domestic Australian and New Zealand candidates.