

## Overbrook Conservation Fellows Program

The best way to build strength and capacity in conservation is investing in leading young conservationists. How do we identify those promising young conservationists who have the vision, commitment, and drive to make genuine and long lasting contributions to sustaining our environment? And, how do we focus this effort in the parts of our world that need it most?

The Overbrook Foundation is answering these important questions through their Overbrook Conservation Fellows Program. Implemented by the Center for Environmental Research and Conservation (CERC) of Columbia University, the Foundation awards \$20,000 over two years, to young conservationists throughout Latin America to pursue their projects. Their projects can be in the form of additional education, training, research or writing.

Now in its sixth year, Overbrook initiated the fellowship program because, as Stephen Foster, Executive Director of The Overbrook Foundation explains, "There is often a great shortage of great conservationists in the places where they are most needed, and there is rarely if ever outside support for these key leaders." The Overbrook Foundation has made Latin American biodiversity conservation a central focus of its environmental work.

CERC, a consortium of leading institutions in conservation, was chosen to implement the fellowship because of CERC's experience in supporting local conservation champions, because of the consortium's ongoing projects in countries throughout Latin America involving many of Latin America's leading conservationists.

Shahid Naeem, Director of Science for CERC explains, "Latin America is not only our neighbor, it is also one of the largest sources of natural resources on earth and one that is experiencing dramatic change at a dramatic rate. There is no better place where investments in young conservationists doing cutting edge work will have huge payoffs in building local strength and building capacity."

Applicants for the Fellowship are identified by the Overbrook Nominating Panel, comprised of seasoned conservationist/scientists who have a deep knowledge of Latin America and the ecological issues facing the region. A Selection Committee made up of leading conservation foundation program officers makes the final decision on awardees.

The combination of the nomination and selection processes sets the Overbrook Foundation Conservation Fellows apart from other fellowship program in conservation.

This year's cohort is comprised of six young conservationists from five Latin American nations: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Mexico, and Peru.

(Alphabetized by English approach to surname (rather than Spanish))

**Leandro Castello** (Brazil): Will develop and publish new ideas about conservation management in Latin America

**Silvia Chalukian** (Argentina): will complete several key scientific publications and reports on study and conservation of Lowland tapirs in northern Argentina.

**Jorge Torre Cosio** (Mexico): will attend the *Smithsonian Environmental Leaders Course* designed to teach negotiations and communication skills, thus supporting his role in his transitioning organization, Comunidad y Biodiversidad, A.C. (COBI).

**Kantuta Lara Delgado** (Bolivia): will document the ongoing processes of self regulation of natural resources by Tacana communities through their indigenous communal land organizations.

**Claudia Pereira de Deus** (Brazil): will participate in courses, meetings and conferences on innovations in conservation science and management. Knowledge and practice capacity will be built as Cláudia shares information with colleagues at Instituto Piagaçu.

**Maria Leo Luna**: will write a book on 20 years of conservation work in Rio Abiseo National Park in Peru. The book will be written in both English and Spanish.

The Center for Environmental Research and Conservation (CERC) is a consortium of five leading science and education institutions -- Columbia University, the American Museum of Natural History, The New York Botanical Garden, the Wildlife Conservation Society, and the Wildlife Trust. The Center employs a wide array of resources to train environmental leaders and solve complex environmental problems. For more information please visit <http://www.cerc.columbia.edu>.

You may also contact Nancy Degnan, Executive Director, CERC at [ald1@columbia.edu](mailto:ald1@columbia.edu) for more information about the Overbrook Foundation Conservation Fellows Program