

# AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

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## **RICHARD GILDER GRADUATE SCHOOL AT THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY RECRUITS ITS THIRD CLASS**

### **FIRST AMERICAN MUSEUM AUTHORIZED TO GRANT THE PH.D. DEGREE WELCOMES A NEW GROUP OF STUDENTS**

John Flynn, dean of the **Richard Gilder Graduate School at the American Museum of Natural History**, announced today the recruitment of four new students into the school's historic comparative biology Ph.D. program. These students, who are entering the program from respected universities, will join the nine students currently enrolled in the Gilder Graduate School in September.

“The admitted students are another extremely academically strong and diverse group, setting themselves at the top of the total applicant pool,” said Flynn. “All of these students already have tremendous research proficiency which will serve them well in our accelerated program. The enthusiastic response we’ve encountered during the admissions process is a wonderful achievement, reflecting our unique academic strengths in faculty, current students and postdoctoral fellows, collections and laboratories, as well as of the resources and support provided by the entire Museum-wide community.”

The campus for the Gilder Graduate School is located at the American Museum of Natural History, one of the most prestigious natural history museums in the world and **the only American museum granted the authority to award its own Ph.D. degree**. The initial Ph.D. program, carrying on the Museum's legacy of excellence in field discovery and theoretical advances, focuses on comparative biology, one of the biological sciences' most exciting and challenging research areas, which covers the origins, history, and range of life on Earth.

The new comparative biology Ph.D. program students enrolled for 2010 are a diverse group, selected from a large and highly qualified pool of applicants from around the world:

**Phillip Barden** joins the third year class with a bachelor's degree from Arizona State University. Barden, who comes from Phoenix, Arizona, plans on studying social insect systematics and the evolution and behavior of living ants as well as ancient insects preserved in amber. Barden is also an alumnus of the Museum, having successfully participated in the AMNH Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program, which is funded by the National Science Foundation, in 2009.

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**Ansel Payne**, who hails from West Virginia, received his bachelor's degree from Harvard University and is completing his master's degree from Tufts University. His research interests include the phylogeny and evolution of social insects as well as the nesting behavior and nest architecture of solitary bees.

**Pedro Peloso** is a Fulbright Scholar from Belém, Brazil, who graduated from the Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo Vitória and received his master's degree from the Museu Paraense Emilio Goeldi Belem, both in Brazil. Peloso's main interest is studying the interrelationships and evolution of the modern tropical biota particularly amphibians (microhylid frogs), and biogeography.

**Dawn Roje**, from Los Angeles, California, received her bachelor's degree from the University of California, Los Angeles, and her master's degree in aquatics and fisheries science from the University of Washington. Her research involves phylogenetics and ancestral state reconstruction, study of developmental genes and evolution of bilateral symmetry in multicellular animals, and asymmetry and larval morphologies in flatfishes.

The Ph.D. program of the Gilder Graduate School is grounded in the Museum's world-class scientific resources, including its internationally recognized staff of curators and scientists, who serve as faculty, and its **world-renowned collections of more than 32 million specimens and cultural artifacts**, as well as **some of the most advanced, state-of-the-art scientific facilities in the world**.

Students take classes and undertake research in comparative biology in the graduate school complex on the fifth floor of the historic 77th Street side of the Museum. The fifth floor houses a teaching lab, lecture hall, and a two-story-tall graduate student center and mezzanine with individual student work stations. The facilities are also open to all Ph.D. students currently studying and researching with faculty at the Museum, including those from partner institutions Columbia University, City University of New York, New York University, and Cornell University.

Following are the current students in the Richard Gilder Graduate School's Ph.D. program in Comparative Biology:

#### **Entering Class 2008**

- **Zachary Baldwin** (University of Washington)
- **Bryan Falk** (Portland State University)
- **Antonia Florio** (City College of New York)
- **Sebastian Kvist** (bachelor's and master's degrees from Sweden's Gothenburg University, certificate in conservation biology from Lund University, also in Sweden)
- **Shaena Montanari** (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

#### **Entering Class 2009**

- **John Denton** (bachelor's degree from Harvard University, master's degree from Stanford University)
- **Alejandro Grajales** (bachelor's and master's degrees from Universidad de los Andes in Colombia)
- **Edward Stanley** (University of St. Andrews in Scotland, master's degree from Villanova University)
- **Isabelle Vea** (bachelor's and master's degrees from Universite Pierre et Marie Curie in Paris, France)

For more information on the Richard Gilder Graduate School, visit [rggs.amnh.org](http://rggs.amnh.org).

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