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**RICHARD GILDER GRADUATE SCHOOL STUDENT  
AT THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY  
AWARDED INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP**

**SEBASTIAN KVIST RECEIVES SWEDEN-AMERICA FELLOWSHIP FOR RESEARCH ON LEECH PARASITES**

Sebastian Kvist, one of the first five students in the **Richard Gilder Graduate School at the American Museum of Natural History**, was recently the recipient of a competitive international fellowship funded by the Sweden-America Foundation. Kvist, along with 30 other recipients, received a fellowship grant of 200,000 Swedish kroner (equivalent to \$23,000) awarded by Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden, Honorary Chair of the Foundation, during a special ceremony in Stockholm on April 28.

The mission of the Sweden-America Foundation is to “work for the development of a relationship between Sweden, on the one hand, and the United States and Canada, on the other, by promoting the exchange of scientific, cultural, and practical experiences through presenting fellowships to young men and women for research and graduate level studies in the United States and Canada.” Kvist plans to use the fellowship award to partially fund a project that aims to fully sequence the genome of a species of bacteria that lives inside leeches—in scientific terms, an alpha proteobacterial leech endosymbiont. This will allow for the first comparative studies on the anatomy and genomic structure of different classes of proteobacteria, including the largely pathogenic gamma proteobacteria.

Sebastian Kvist joined the Gilder Graduate School with bachelors and masters degrees in biology from Sweden’s **Gothenburg University** and a certificate in conservation biology from **Lund University**, also in Sweden. He is applying innovative genomic techniques for understanding everything from bacteria to perplexing groups of oceanic invertebrates, and is also pursuing a study of the relationships and invasiveness of marine “worms” and their impact on the invaded ecosystems.

“This is an outstanding accomplishment for Sebastian especially at this early stage in his academic career, as he also was competing with professors and other established professionals,” says John J. Flynn, Dean of the Richard Gilder Graduate School. “We’re extremely proud of his work. It further reflects well on the whole graduate program, highlighting our students’ talents and competitive spirit. Our curriculum

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emphasizes rapidly acquiring the skills to function fully as a professional scientist, and we are pleased that Sebastian crafted his successful proposal as part of one of our core courses in *Grantsmanship, Ethics, and Communication* and with guidance from his Ph.D. advisor.”

The campus for the Gilder Graduate School is 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, covering the origins, history, and range of life on Earth.

The program is grounded in the Museum’s exceptional scientific resources, including its internationally recognized staff of curators who serve as faculty, and its world-renowned collections of more than 30 million specimens and cultural artifacts, constituting an irreplaceable record of life. It is the Museum’s amazing collections that provide the Richard Gilder Graduate School with **one of the most important research campuses in the country.** The students take classes and undertake research in comparative biology in the newly constructed graduate school complex on the fifth floor of the historic 77th Street side of the Museum. The new facilities are also open to all graduate students currently studying and researching at the Museum, including those from partner institutions Columbia University, City University of New York, New York University, and Cornell University.

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