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August 2026



A Note from the CCC Director

Collaborating requires forming a shared understanding of challenges, opportunities, and vision. This can be easier said than done, particularly where there is conflict (which I've learned over the years is nearly always present at some level). To achieve what we need in conservation, it is ever more critical that we figure out how to work with people who see the world differently than we do. A recent book by Michael Pollan—[A World Appears: a Journey into Consciousness](#)—fueled my interest in (1) how we each carry our own stories about the world around us, and (2) how groups converge on a shared story that allows us to move forward together.

Most people I work with strive to be rational thinkers. The consciousness experts

Pollan includes in his book explain why we are far less rational than we tend to think. In this 17-minute very interesting (and somewhat “out there”) TED talk, [Your Brain Hallucinates Your Conscious Reality](#), Anil Seth explains that how we understand the world based on what we perceive through our eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and skin, and that what we perceive will always be imperfect and incomplete. These sensory signals are added to a lifetime of imperfect and incomplete beliefs about how the world is.

Pollan also explains how science has struggled to grapple with consciousness because, by definition, the observer cannot be separated from what is observed, an essential aspect of science since at least Galileo. Working from this idea, the authors of [The Blind Spot: Why Science Cannot Ignore Human Experience](#) argue that Western science fails to fully reckon with lived experience, including its inescapable role in scientific inquiry. The authors also argue that there is a steep cost to this blind spot, that our detached approach to observing the world has caused us to lose “our empathetic resonance with the larger universe” which then allows us to treat nature as an exploitable resource. In [Science From A Native Perspective](#), Indigenous scholar, author, and teacher Gregory Cajete emphasizes that, in contrast to Western science’s principles of separateness and objectivity, “Personal relationships with plants, animals, and natural forces constitute a Native Science orientation.” This orientation in turn compels a different framing of community and responsibility.

These insights remind me that strong collaboration emerges from being intentional about our individual orientation, like recognizing the limits of our own perspective and staying open and curious about how others see the world. Also, collaboration is stronger when we are intentional about our relationships with each other and with the places where we live and work.

As always, I appreciate hearing what you think of what I share, and I’m interested in any books, podcasts, etc. that have inspired you. You can email me at john.sanderson@colostate.edu.

Be well.



News from the CCC

We're Hiring: Mountain Pine Beetle Task Force Project Manager

Are you passionate about collaborative conservation, stakeholder engagement, and keeping complex projects moving forward? The Center for Collaborative Conservation is seeking a Project Manager to support the Mountain Pine Beetle Task Force (MPB TF).

In this role, you'll help coordinate and manage key aspects of the Task Force's work, including project timelines, meeting planning and facilitation support, stakeholder engagement, communications, and working group coordination.

Priority application deadline: September 4, 2026

If you're ready to make a meaningful impact while working with a dedicated team of conservation professionals, we'd love to hear from you!

[Apply here](#)

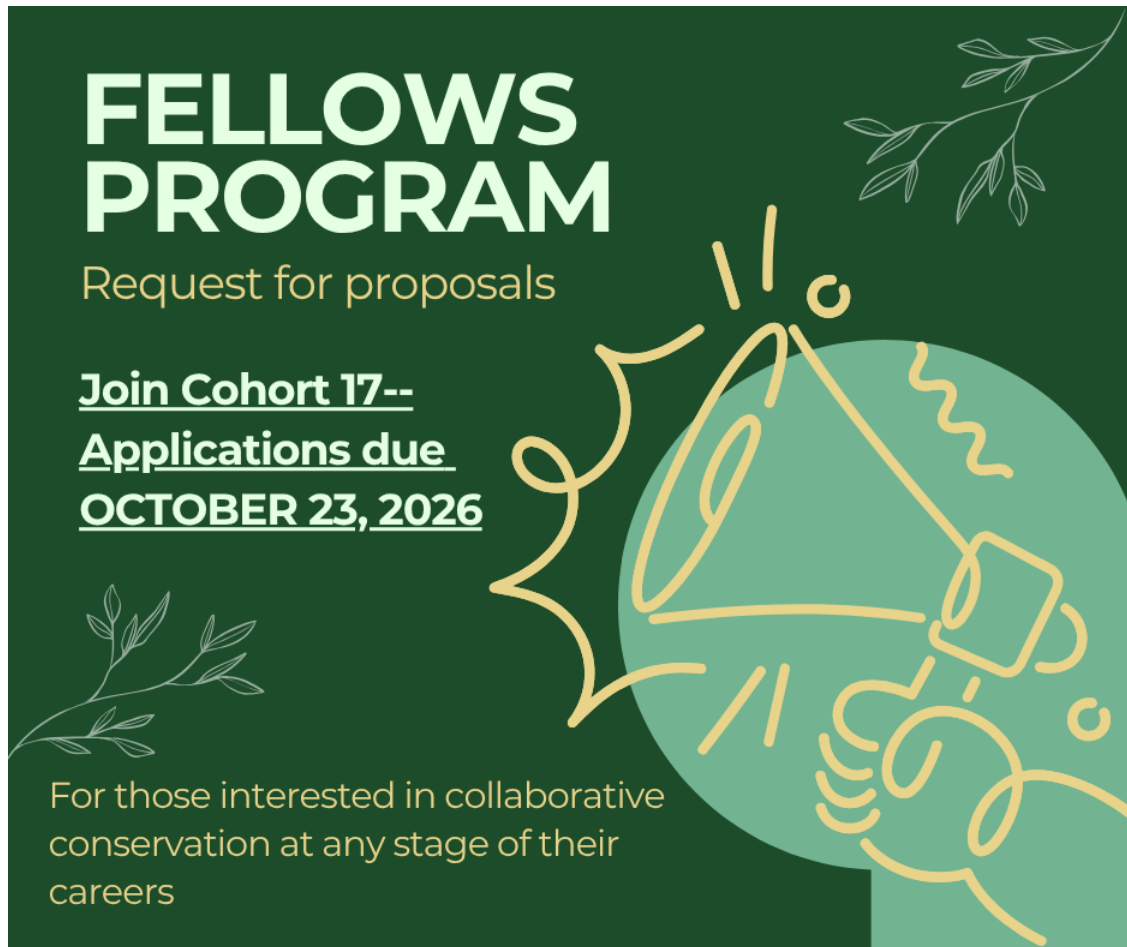


The 2026 Colorado Forest Collaboratives Summit is just 3 weeks away!

This year's theme is 'Forest Health at the Speed of Collabor-Action' and focuses on moving collaboratively from planning to implementation.

Learn more about Summit on [our webpage](#).

Registration closes on September 2nd.



Join Cohort 17 of the Collaborative Conservation Fellows, 2027-2028!

[The Fellows Program](#) is for those interested in conservation at any stage of their careers— including graduate students, mid-career professionals, academics, or experienced practitioners. During the program, Fellows learn and apply the practices that are the hallmark of successful collaborative conservation.

Proposals are reviewed by a committee of CCC staff and partners with expertise in collaborative conservation.

Past Fellows projects have included:

- Working with a diverse group of stakeholders to do on-the-ground conservation, such as a restoration, social science, or citizen science project.

- Building the capacity of a group of stakeholders to collaboratively address a conservation issue. This type of project might include convening, training, planning, creating tools (such as an app, social network map, photovoice, etc.), doing outreach, or other activities.
- Co-produce research that contributes to new conservation management plans or sheds light on transferable and transformative collaborative conservation practices.

For all details, please [go here](#).

Interested applicants can learn more through virtual Information Sessions scheduled for: [9/11/2026 \(12:00-1:00 pm MDT\)](#), [9/23/2026 \(5:00-6:00 pm MDT\)](#), [10/8/2026 \(9:00-10:00 am MDT\)](#).

Applicants can also schedule a 45-minute meeting to ask questions, discuss project ideas, review proposal format and content, and address other concerns. These proposal support meetings can be scheduled [here](#).

You may also reach out to CCC's Associate Director of Learning, Allison Brody, at allison.brody@colostate.edu

Other News and Opportunities



**Ph.D student seeking input
from grasslands residents and
experts (current or former).**

Miguel Angel Hernández Rodarte, a Ph.D. student from Durango, México is seeking photo survey participants for his graduate research – looking at understanding more

about the personal values and perspectives that people across North and South America have for grasslands. This survey will include gathering photographs and short personal reflections, and should only take 20-30 minutes to complete.

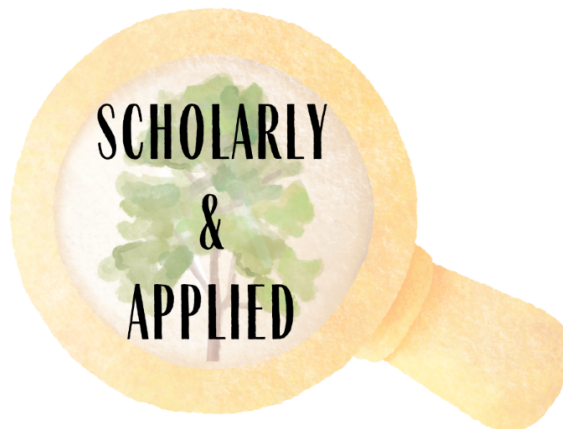
For participants in United States, the U.S. IRB approval for our work is #7062 from Colorado State University IRB, and you can access the informed consent letter [here](#). If you are interested in sharing your perspectives for Miguel's research, please review this letter which includes more information about the study and covers potential concerns such as identifiable information, and how long the data will be maintained, as well as contact information should you wish to reconnect with us at any time.

We would be very grateful for your participation, and if you have any other questions about this research please feel free to email Aireona Raschke at araschke@colostate.edu. We are readily available to answer any questions that you might have.

If you are willing to participate, please fill out the survey using this Google Form: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfFU3rVbYSvTvtra_NYsdTlbsKdPjApi2ELD-aWYXBF-DMOoA/viewform?usp=header

Thank you so much for your time and consideration!

Scholarly and Applied Impact



Simran Prasad (Cohort 12) let us know that “one of my PhD chapters has recently been published in [Environmental Management](#),” work that was in part supported through her Fellows project looking at human-elephant conflict in the Western Ghats

region of India. By integrating local knowledge with environmental and socio-economic data, the authors were able to develop a deeper understanding of both the risks elephants face as well as the “concerns of the communities living alongside them.” As climate change continues to impact the area, the authors point out the importance of this approach when it comes to addressing “immediate risks while building resilience for both people and elephants in an uncertain future.”

And the Denver Zoo Conservation Alliance recently featured a [story](#) written by Lynn Von Hagen, African Conservation Program Director and member of Cohort 16, about the partnership between the Denver Zoo and Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association. This partnership includes her project with Fellow team members Bernard Ndayisaba and Christophe Ntakirutimana. [“Working Together for Wildlife: Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association”](#) describes the Denver Zoo’s approach to “working with local leadership at the intersection of science, community, and action,” while their Fellows project highlights how scientific research can work hand-in-hand with community needs, addressing questions important to local livelihoods.

Finally, the CCC is excited to once again venture into the classroom as we co-teach an undergraduate course called Collaborative Solutions to Conservation. To get ready for the semester, I’ve been reading Lucy Moore’s book *Common Ground on Hostile Turf: Stories from an Environmental Mediator* (2013). Writing about her work in the southwestern US, Moore reflects on the human dimensions of conflict. She artfully tells stories that relay the importance of relationships, trust, history, culture, identity, and power dynamics, while also showing how she navigated these critical dimensions as she developed her skills as a mediator and facilitator.

- Allison Brody, PhD

Our Associate Director of Learning

Notes From the Field



Disability and Collaborative Conservation: Part One of Two August 2026

Aireona Bonnie Raschke, Ph.D.

July is Disability Pride month in the United States; the Americans with Disabilities Act was signed in July of 1990. So I wanted to take some time to explore this topic over the course of two Notes from the Field posts – August and September.

I was first diagnosed with a chronic illness while I was getting my Ph.D. This was one of the most isolating times of my entire life. Furthermore, in a culture where weakness and moving slowly can be targets for competition or exclusion, I didn't speak to many people in my professional sphere about what was happening to me, and people around me who were also disabled didn't talk to me either.

It took me years to start finding others who were also disabled in the conservation field. And slowly over time I realized, there is a secret world of disabled conservationists (and yes, as a disabled person, I prefer identity-first language, and this is not uncommon). In fact, it took me years of untangling shame and fear to even be able to acknowledge that I was disabled myself.

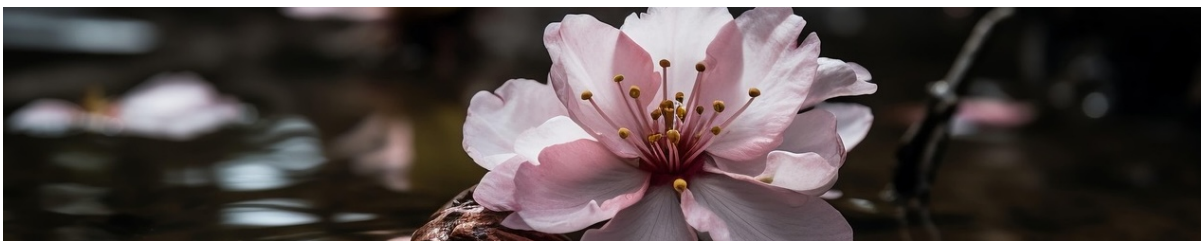
At about the same time, I started to engage directly with the question of how to make the conservation field more welcoming to disabled people, as it was also reckoning with the work it needed to do with other marginalized communities. I ran into an interesting mental and cultural wall when I did this. People don't seem to understand (a) that this is an ethical problem that our field needs to address, and (b) that disabled people have something special and valuable to offer to conservation.

There are systemic barriers to disabled people from the education phase of their conservation careers onwards. For example, conservation students are often required to complete field work in their studies, which may not be possible for some

(but WILL be possible for others). And support for disabled people at universities is often focused on legal requirements, rather than community-building. When students graduate they will run into a different, but very common barrier – job descriptions that essentially tell them not to apply, even while they have legal language telling them that the institution doesn't discriminate. And finally (but not exhaustively), the conservation field has a culture problem. Conservation expects that people work at speed, that people work long hours, and that people give as much of themselves to their job as possible. But for many disabled people, these expectations encourage us to hide our disabilities for fear of being singled out, or immediately barred from positions that people assume we can't do. All of these barriers, and the ones that I haven't discussed, are doors closed in the faces of disabled people. Many of us find windows to climb into, but the conservation field also loses many good people who could help heal the disabled ecologies all around us.

I posit that disabled people bring a unique life experience and expertise that has an essential place among collaborative conservationists in particular. Perhaps this is because that's the sub-field that I have found myself in, and I don't by any means, intend to stereotype anyone. I believe that disabled people belong in all parts of conservation; the disability community is extremely diverse. But seeing the specific challenges that we face in collaborative conservation, I think there is immense value in communicating the specific need for disabled perspectives (as we have just started to do with other perspectives that have not been included in the past) in addressing these challenges.

In directly inviting people into this space, and validating the perspectives that they bring as valuable and not shameful, I believe that we can both create a more inclusive conservation field, while also benefiting the work. There shouldn't need to be a secret world of disabled conservationists. It should not be something that we have to hesitate to share about ourselves in this field, and especially not in collaborative conservation, where people talk about the "whole self" all the time.



Jobs

Check out the CCC's [Job Board](#) for a list of jobs focused on natural resources and collaborative conservation!

Here are just a few postings on the board:

Communications Intern - Center for Collaborative Conservation at CSU | The Communications Intern supports communications, marketing, and outreach efforts across the Center for Collaborative Conservation (CCC) programs. Under the supervision of the CCC Communications Specialist, the intern assists with content creation, social media, graphic design, website updates, event promotion and implementation, and storytelling.

Colorado Director of External Affairs | The Nature Conservancy - The Colorado Director of External Affairs leads the collaborative development of high-level policy priorities and strategies for the Colorado Business Unit. They supervise a team composed of policy and public funding advisors and partner closely with the Colorado Conservation Management Team to plan and implement policy approaches that support desired outcomes related to: climate change, clean energy, forest health, wildfire resilience, land conservation, healthy rivers, and vibrant communities.

If you have openings aligned with our work on collaborative conservation to share, submit them to our [job board](#).

If you think a colleague would find value in reading CCC news, please forward this email and invite them to subscribe using the form at the bottom of the [CCC home page](#).

If you feel moved to support our work supporting conservation, please consider [donating to the CCC](#).

Questions? Ideas? Opportunities? Please email CCC Director [John Sanderson](#).

Be well,
The CCC Team



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