

# PhD position studying the ecology and conservation of an endangered butterfly

Join a newly funded national research partnership working to conserve endangered butterflies in Canada. This fully funded PhD will provide training in field ecology, habitat management, species-at-risk recovery, and collaborative conservation involving First Nations, government agencies, NGOs, and captive-rearing specialists.



Beginning in September 2026, the successful applicant will join the Norris Lab at the University of Guelph as part of an NSERC Alliance–Society project on the recovery and rewilding of at-risk butterflies in Canada. The PhD will focus on the endangered Mottled Duskywing (*Erynnis martialis*), a species associated with some of Canada's rarest habitats.

**THE PROJECT** will examine key demographic and ecological processes that influence the persistence and recovery of Mottled Duskywing populations. Research themes include population dynamics and viability, dispersal and movement ecology, and landscape ecology. The student will also evaluate how habitat management actions, including experimental prescribed fire and mowing treatments, influence host plant abundance and butterfly population recovery. Working closely with project partners, the student will generate knowledge that directly informs species-at-risk recovery decisions and conservation practice.

**FIELD RESEARCH** will involve work at protected sites in southern Ontario, including mark–resighting, habitat assessments, and distance sampling. The student will participate in the implementation and evaluation of experimental habitat management treatments and collaborate closely with practitioners responsible for on-the-ground restoration and recovery activities. As part of a planned rotation, opportunities will also exist to contribute to captive-rearing activities and other components of the broader butterfly recovery program. All research-related costs will be covered by the project.

**QUALIFICATIONS:** Successful applicants will have a demonstrated interest in ecology and conservation biology, previous field experience on butterflies or related taxa, strong quantitative skills, an ability to work independently and collaboratively, and will hold (or expect to complete) an MSc degree in ecology, entomology, or related field. Canadian citizens and permanent residents are strongly preferred. Individuals from groups traditionally underrepresented in ecology and conservation are encouraged to apply.

**APPLICATION:** This is a fully funded four-year PhD at the University of Guelph. In addition to a graduate stipend, the student will receive support to attend conferences, opportunities to collaborate with partners, and experience working at the interface of science, conservation practice, and community engagement. Applicants should send a brief statement of interest (1-2 paragraphs), CV, unofficial transcripts, and contact info for three references to **Ryan Norris (rnorris@uoguelph.ca)** by July 9, 2026. Please merge all materials into a single PDF file and use "LASTNAME\_modu\_phd" for the file name. Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. The anticipated start date is Sept. 2026.