

Partnership Profile: BirdLife International

Adventure Canada and BirdLife International both support regenerative practices, capacity building, and community innovations to help build a world where nature and people can co-exist in a state of harmony. In this partnership profile, Ian Davidson, BLI's Americas Regional Director, tells us more about the new Graeme Gibson Fellowship.

By **Ian Davidson** | July 21, 2021

Related expedition: [Atlantic Canada Explorer](#) and [Iceland to Greenland: In the Wake of the Vikings](#)

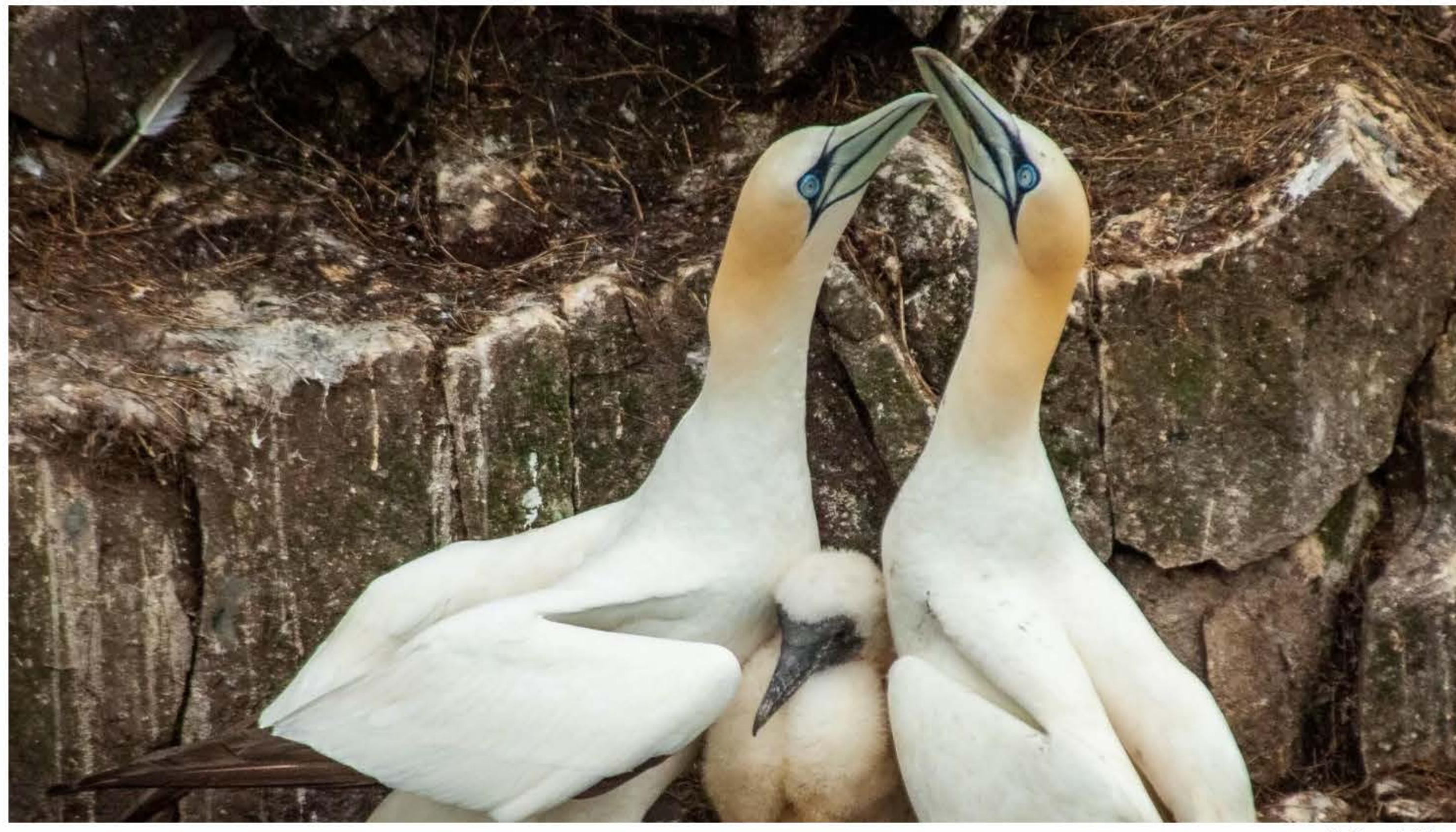


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What is BirdLife International?

BirdLife International, or BLI for short, is a global partnership of conservation organizations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats, and global biodiversity. We are widely recognized as the world leader in bird conservation. We conduct rigorous scientific research and collaborate with community stakeholders for our on-the-ground projects supporting our conservation programs.

For example, during my own time with BLI, I worked for over a decade from Quito, Ecuador and led BLI's conservation projects throughout the South American region, including in Patagonia, the Galapagos, the Amazon basin, and across the pampas. I worked with local and Indigenous peoples to support them in their efforts to conserve these valuable ecosystems.



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What is the Graeme Gibson Fellowship?

This is a new initiative that will provide talented up-and-coming leaders in the world of biodiversity conservation the chance to hone their skills and expertise. It is named for the late Graeme Gibson, a writer and conservationist who was also a past Co-President of BLI's Rare Bird Club with his wife, Margaret Atwood. It really honours Graeme's love for birds and conservation.



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Margaret Atwood and Graeme Gibson, 2017 Out of the Northwest Passage expedition

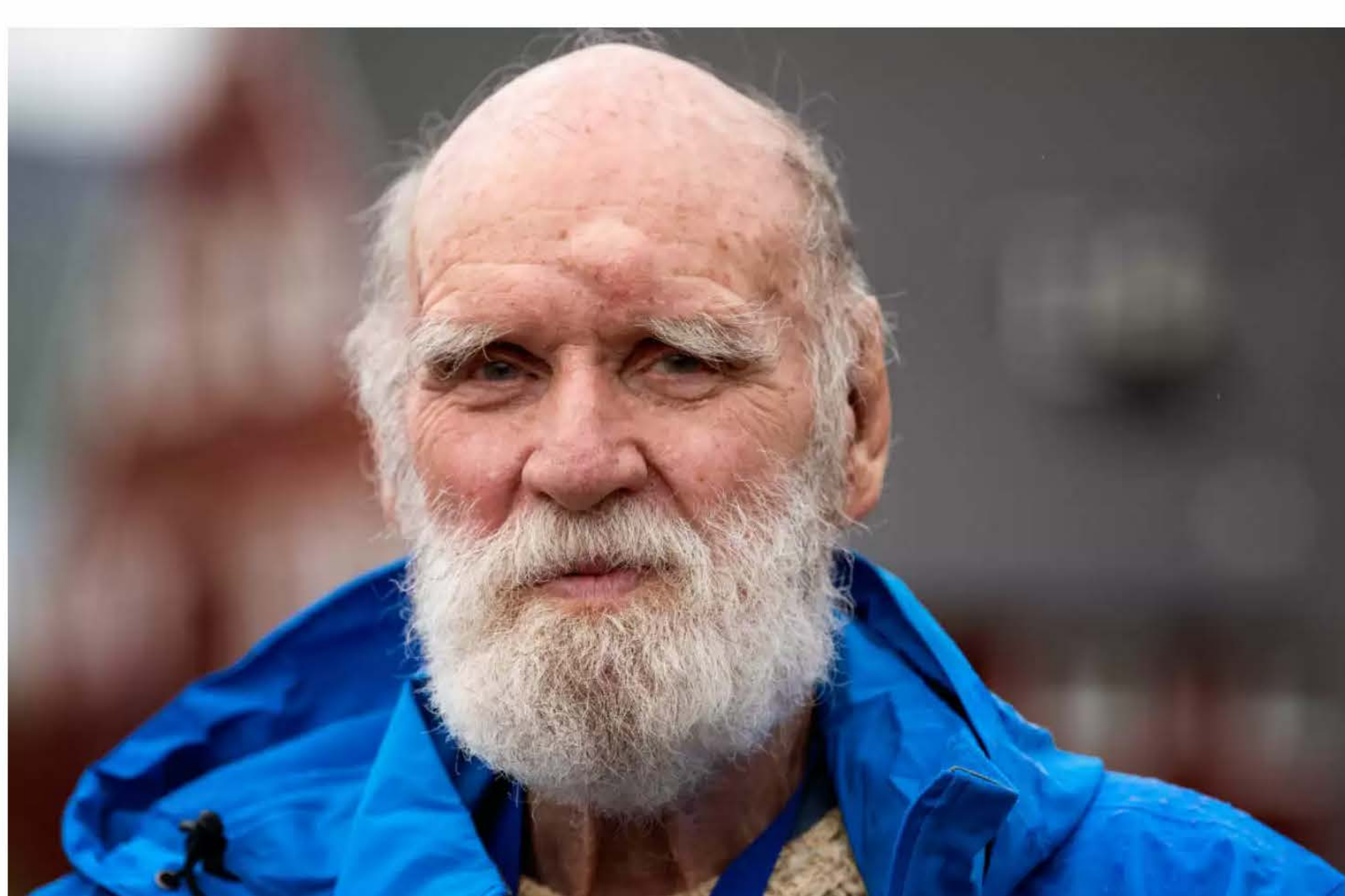
The program will build a cohort of sixty fellows and the focus will be on cultivating a range of critical leadership, communication, and change management skills—such as team building, public speaking, negotiation skills, and crisis management techniques, among other things—that will be tailored to each fellow's local and international context.

We hope that after completing the course, each of these leaders will better understand how to successfully execute change and develop effective working practices in each of their own local conservation organizations.

“Paying attention to birds, being mindful of them, is being mindful of life itself. We seldom think of it this clearly, but sometimes, unexpectedly, we are overtaken by a sense of wonder and gratitude. Surely it is the encounter with a force much larger than ourselves that moves us.” —Graeme Gibson

Why now?

We know that during the last fifty years, human activity has caused a 60% decline in the planet's diversity of life. The scale, complexity, and urgency of twenty-first century environmental challenges requires conservation leaders who are well-equipped to face the challenges of a changing and precarious world. That's what the Graeme Gibson Fellowship is all about—preparing these leaders as best as we possibly can.



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Graeme Gibson, 2018 Iceland Circumnavigation expedition

How does travelling with Adventure Canada support the fellowship?

Margaret and a BLI representative will be travelling on the 2022 Atlantic Canada Explorer and 2023 Iceland to Greenland: In the Wake of the Vikings expeditions, with the express purpose of launching and building enthusiasm for the new Graeme Gibson Fellowship. We'll have the chance to give special presentations about BLI and biodiversity conservation—and of course we're hoping for some great sightings on our shore excursions and out on deck!

I had the pleasure of meeting Margaret and Graeme for the first time in 2007, when I travelled with them on an Adventure Canada Arctic expedition in my capacity with BLI. They were both such a delight to travel with and I still treasure those memories. I hope you'll join us on these upcoming journeys and consider supporting the important work of this fellowship. I'm sure you'll find Graeme's curiosity about birds as contagious as we did. See you aboard!