

Internship Advertisement

Undergraduate Summer Research Internship, Animal Cognition Research Group
Department of Psychology, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Principal Investigator (PI): Dr. Lauren Guillette

Closing date to apply: Wednesday, September 16, 2026

Dates of internship: 12 weeks starting between May 1st and July 31st, 2027

Apply at: <https://www.mitacs.ca/our-programs/globalink-research-internship-students/>

Projects ID: 54002 – Why do birds have a favourite colour?

For specific project details visit link above and search for the above project or PI name (Guillette)



General information:

The Animal Cognition Research Group (ACRG, <https://sites.psych.ualberta.ca/animal-cognition-ualberta/>) in the Department of Psychology at the University of Alberta is hiring (up to) two undergraduate researchers for a 12-week internship in the Summer of 2027.

This internship will include investigating the nest-building behaviour of zebra finches (*Taeniopygia guttata*) and how social learning influences such behaviour in a laboratory environment using video data and nest morphology to analyze the

birds' behaviour. The current research in our lab focuses on variation in cognition abilities (e.g., sex differences in learning based on nest-building history), social learning in foraging and nest building, and the trade-off between asocial and social information use.

The ACRG is funded by an NSERC Discovery Grant and a Canada Research Chair in Cognitive Ecology. Our laboratory space includes free-flight colony rooms for zebra finches, extensive laboratory space for behavioural testing, and a full histology and microscopy suite

To apply, visit the link provided above.

- If you have questions about the application process, contact the Mitacs team at helpdesk@mitacs.ca

Below are the eligibility requirements (as per the Mitacs application portal):

Applicants must:

- Be at least 18 years of age at the time of application
- Be enrolled in a full-time undergraduate or combined undergraduate/master's program at an eligible institution in Austria, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Jordan, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Kingdom and the United States.
- Applicants must have completed at least two years of undergraduate study or be
- in be enrolled in the second year of their current program (see requirement by country)

- Have one to three semesters remaining in their program as of fall 2027 (see requirement by country)
- Meet the grade requirements for their country of study (see GPA requirements for each international partner)
- Apply to a minimum of three and a maximum of ten projects and ensure selections are from at least three different Canadian provinces
- Be fluent in the oral and written language of the project (English and/or French), meaning you have sufficient proficiency to understand, communicate, and carry out the research activities in both spoken and written forms.
- Be available to complete an internship lasting 12 consecutive weeks between May 1 and October 31. You must be able to start your internship anytime between May 1st and July 31st. Anything before or after those dates is not allowed.
- Not have been awarded a Globalink Research Internship project in the past.

Funding

The Globalink research internship award amount includes:

- Funding to contribute to the cost of a round-trip airfare to Canada (amount varies depending on country of origin)
- Funding to contribute to the cost of transportation from the airport in Canada to accommodation
- Stipend for housing (amount varies depending on country of origin)
- Stipend towards student enrollment fees (amount varies depending on host institution)
- Stipend for food and incidentals (amount varies depending on country of origin)
- Emergency health insurance policy for the duration of the internship
- Support from student mentors on campus in Canada
- Access to industry events and professional development courses

Project title: Why do birds have a favourite colour?

Project ID: 54002

Project summary: Our research investigates themes involving nest building, animal personality, learning, memory, and cognitive biases. The goal of the proposed project is for the student to see research in action, they will assist with setting up, collecting data, and analyzing results for our experiments. These experiments focus on assessing the relationship between mood and species-specific behaviours in animals. The student will have their own computer and workspace in our shared lab environment and will receive guidance from a supportive team of undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral researchers. During the placement, the student will learn how to identify and score specific behaviours of interest in videos, gain exposure to the field of animal cognition and behaviour, and participate in discussions about relevant scientific literature. They will also complete training in research ethics and develop practical skills in data collection and basic statistical analysis. This project offers a valuable opportunity to explore scientific research in a collaborative and interactive environment. These projects help us better understand the relationship between an animal's environment and their mood. Specifically, this project will look at sex differences in zebra finch behaviour in a task known as a "Judgement Bias Test" that is designed to infer affective states (i.e. emotion, mood, or feelings) from subjects after they perform species-specific tasks. The project will investigate overall differences in species-specific vs nonspecific tasks using the Judgement Bias framework.

