

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
The Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Department and TENN Herbarium
2026 Hesler Visiting Scholar Fellowships
Sponsored by the L.R. Hesler Herbarium Support Fund
Application Deadline: 15 February 2026

Visiting Scholar Fellowships provide opportunities for scientists to use the collections at the University of Tennessee Herbarium (TENN) to enhance and facilitate a biodiversity-focused research project. TENN houses over 690,000 specimens of vascular plants, bryophytes, fungi, and lichens. Our vascular plant collection is unique in having the largest collection of specimens from the state of Tennessee and the historical collections documenting the flora of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, a World Biosphere Reserve. Our bryophyte collection houses 159,000 specimens from throughout the world, with a strong emphasis on species found in Tennessee (Appalachian Region), North America (particularly the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, and the southeastern US), Mexico, and Asia. Our fungal collection houses nearly 73,000 specimens with searchable online records, including international and domestic collections with an emphasis on the southern Appalachians.

Graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, faculty, and independent researchers from any country are eligible to apply. Funds are for travel, housing, and other visit-related expenses while conducting research at the TENN Herbarium. A maximum of two awards will be given out annually.

Faculty Host

Applications must have a letter of support from a University of Tennessee – Knoxville (UTK), Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (EEB) Department affiliated faculty who will serve as the host for the Visiting Scholar. Please contact a potential faculty host beforehand to communicate your background, goals, and objectives for the project/visit. View a list of UTK EEB faculty here: <<https://eeb.utk.edu/people-2/faculty/>>. Applications and letters of support received after the deadline will not be considered.

- Application deadline: **15 February 2026**
- Letter/s of support deadline: **15 February 2026**
- Applicant awards announced: **6 April 2026**
- Awardee accept/decline deadline: **4 May 2026**

Each award recipient must make at least one in-person research visit to the TENN Herbarium during the year following their award (for example, if the grant is awarded in April 2026, the recipient will have from April 30, 2026 to May 1, 2027 to make a research visit). Visitors from outside the United States should allow appropriate time for visa considerations.

Previous recipients are also welcome to apply for funding, although preference will be given to those who have not received an award in the past.

How to Apply:

- Email the following to the TENN Collections Manager, Garrett Billings, <tennherbarium@utk.edu> as a single PDF with "Hesler 2026 Visiting Scholar - <applicant's last name>" in the subject line.
 - Project proposal highlighting the goals, purpose, and significance of the proposed research. Include a description of the importance of the TENN Herbarium's collections to the project. Briefly outline the procedures and methods planned for the project.
 - **The project proposal should not exceed two (2) pages, not including references.**
 - An itemized budget estimating travel, lodging, and other anticipated expenses.
 - Scholars traveling from North America, including the Caribbean, may apply for \$3,000 maximum. Scholars traveling from outside North America may apply for \$6,000 maximum. List any Visiting Scholar Awards that you or your UTK EEB affiliated sponsor have received in the last five years from the University of Tennessee, including the year, amount, purpose, and accomplishments from the award.
 - The applicant's CV.
- A letter of support from the UTK EEB-affiliated faculty host should be emailed from the person writing the letter, not the applicant, as a PDF to the TENN Collections Manager, Garrett Billings, <tennherbarium@utk.edu> with "Hesler 2026 Visiting Scholar - <applicant's last name> - Support Letter" in the subject line. If the applicant is a student or postdoctoral scholar, please also have a letter of support sent from the supervisor/advisor at your home institution.
- Any thesis/dissertation, publication, or presentation aided by this award must include a statement acknowledging the support of the L.R. Hesler Fund at the University of Tennessee Herbarium (TENN) and hard copies/PDFs should be sent to TENN.
- Once the award is granted the funds must be used as outlined in your proposal.
- Successful applicants will submit a report after the fellowship period including a short summary of the scientific results of the visit for fellow researchers (including any GenBank accessions), cost accounting, and a brief publishable statement (150-200 words) that is written for the general public describing the research visit to the TENN Herbarium and research outcomes. The latter statement may be published in the UTK Ecology & Evolutionary Biology print newsletter and online. This report, cost accounting, and statement must be submitted to the TENN Herbarium via the Collections Manager, Garrett Billings, <tennherbarium@utk.edu>, no later than one month following the researcher's visit.