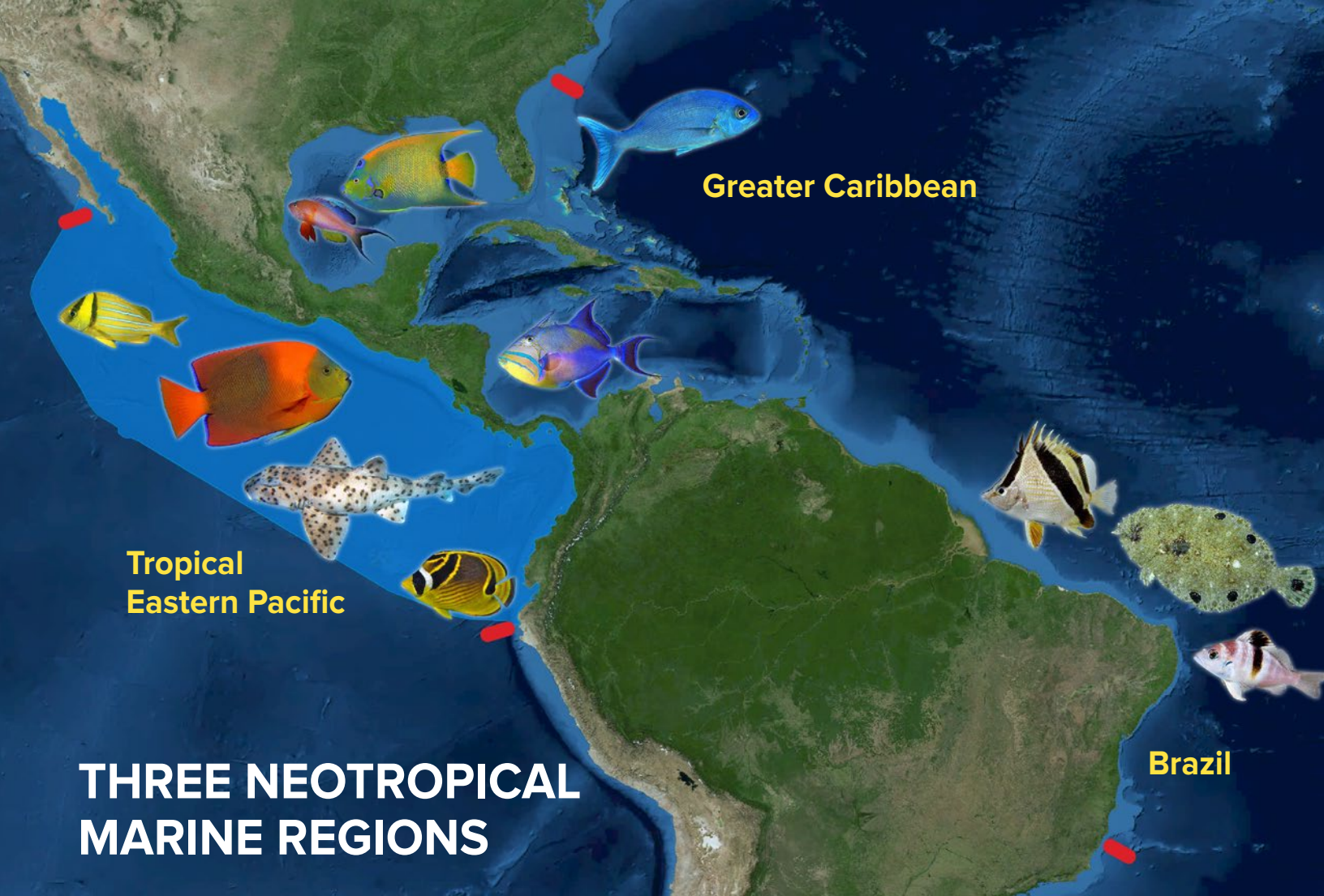


**D. Ross Robertson
Research Award
Fellowship
for Field Studies
of Neotropical
Deep-Reef fishes**



Smithsonian
Tropical Research Institute



PURPOSE

This endowment was established to support field research by early-career fish biologists on deep-reef fishes in the neotropics. Such research includes all aspects of the biology of living deep-reef fishes found between 40-300 m depths anywhere in the Neotropics.

Proposals for collaborative research involving both the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) and the Division of Fishes of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) are encouraged.

AWARDEES ARE SMITHSONIAN FELLOWS

The Research Awards are available for predoctoral students **currently enrolled in a PhD program** and for recent **PhDs (up to 3y past degree)** who are formally affiliated with a research or teaching institution. The Awards will be administered by the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute's **Office of Academic Programs** and awardees will be regarded as STRI fellows. STRI fellows are required to have a primary advisor and a co-advisor. All Award applicants need at least one advisor who is a STRI staff scientist, and, if appropriate for the project, an NMNH fish curator as a co-advisor.

AWARDS SUPPORT FIELD RESEARCH

A D. Ross Robertson Research Award provides funds to support the costs of conducting fieldwork on deep-reef fishes. Those costs include the awardee's travel to and from the research site and living expenses while conducting fieldwork there. Awards do not include a stipend or cover costs of related laboratory research. Priority will be given to proposals that indicate a high standard of research creativity and productivity.

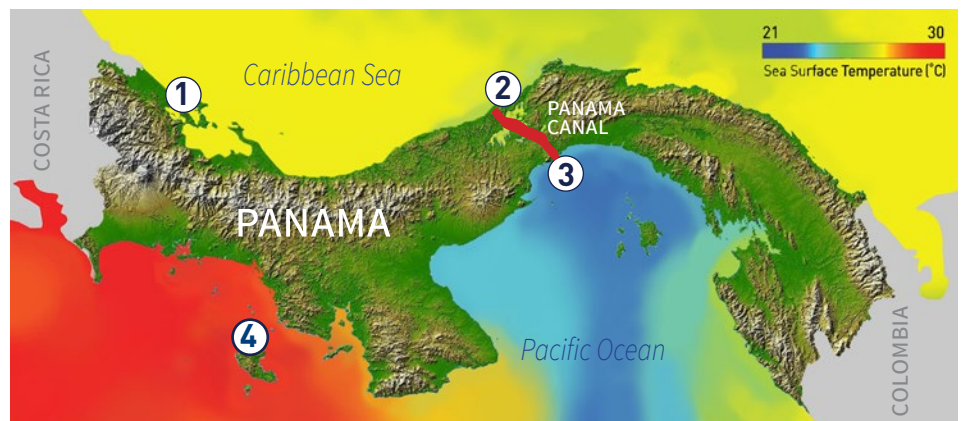
→ **Awardees are encouraged to visit STRI during their tenure but are not required to conduct research in Panama.**

AWARD FUNDING FOR 2025-2026

For 2025-2026 US\$40,000 is available to support one or more research proposals. Proposals may request up to that amount.

MARINE RESOURCES AT STRI

STRI maintains marine laboratories on both coasts of Panama, a marine laboratory in Bocas del Toro on the western Caribbean coast; a marine laboratory at Galeta Point, near the Atlantic entrance to the Panama Canal; its largest marine laboratory at Naos Island, next to the Pacific entrance to the Canal, and a newly developing marine field station at Coibita Island, in Coiba National Park in Panama's western Pacific. It also has laboratories at Gamboa and Barro Colorado Island, at the heart of the Panama Canal. The marine labs offer a broad range of facilities and provide support for STRI's scientific diving program.



Sea Surface Temperature (C) during seasonal upwelling, January-April

These facilities offer access for field research in two very different marine environments that became established after the closure of the isthmus of Panama.



VISIT THE FACILITIES:

- ① Bocas del Toro Research Station
- ② Punta Galeta Marine Lab
- ③ Naos Island Marine Lab
- ④ Coibita Island Marine Lab



OTHER RESOURCES:

- Full list of facilities
- STRI staff scientists
- National Museum of Natural History Division of Fishes
- NMNH Fishes Staff

ELIGIBILITY

STRI encourages students from institutions throughout the neotropics to apply. Awards are based upon merit.

→ **Awards may be used shortly after being granted, although the timing of use is flexible.**

→ **For more information email the STRI Fellowships Office: STRIFellows@si.edu**



Two deep-sea fishes from the Greater Caribbean: *Lipogramma klayi* (left) and *Plectranthias* sp. (right). | Photos: D Ross Robertson.

THE DONOR OF THE FELLOWSHIP ENDOWMENT

D. Ross Robertson received a PhD in 1974 from the University of Queensland, for a study of the relationship between social organization and sex-change in a labrid fish on Australia's Great Barrier Reef. The Australian Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization then provided a postdoctoral fellowship that allowed him to work for a year on the behavior of Caribbean reef fishes while based at STRI.



D Ross Robertson (left) and colleagues sorting fishes caught using the submersible Curasub at Curacao. | Photo: Barry Brown.

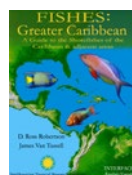
In 1975, he became a STRI staff scientist and continued in that capacity for 45 years until he became a STRI Emeritus Scientist in 2020. He continues to remain active in research and fieldwork. Becoming a staff scientist at STRI was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that allowed him to pursue field research on a broad variety of topics relating to the behavior, ecology, diversity, and evolution of shore-fishes in all three tropical oceans. He has never wanted to do anything else.

In appreciation of a highly rewarding and stimulating life in science at STRI, Dr. Robertson decided to give back much of what he received through his employment by creating endowments for student fellowships and research awards to support the development of future generations of fish biologists studying similar topics in the neotropics. As he has also had a research interest in the taxonomy of neotropical reef fishes, and an appreciation of the value of that now under-supported, traditional field, such research is included among the topics to be supported by these fellowships Awards.

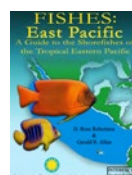
 VISIT THE FOLLOWING LINKS:



D. ROSS ROBERTSON
[STRI SCIENTIST PAGE](#)



FISHES: GREAT CARIBBEAN
[ONLINE AND MOBILE RESOURCES AVAILABLE](#)



FISHES: EAST PACIFIC
[ONLINE AND MOBILE RESOURCES AVAILABLE](#)

FELLOW APPLICATIONS

→ **Incomplete or oversized applications and those received after the application deadline will not be considered.**

A complete application includes the following:

1. A detailed research proposal (single spaced, 12-point font) containing:
 - **A one-page project summary** that provides an overview of the proposed research, and a separate project description that does not exceed five pages. The project description must include objectives, hypotheses or research question(s), experimental design, and an explanation of the theoretical and/or practical significance of the research. oceans.
 - **A research budget:** Fellowships are intended to fully fund proposed research activities during the tenure of the fellowship. Proposals need to include a detailed budget covering all expenses related to the project, including equipment, supplies, research-related travel costs, and other support required to conduct the research, with individual justification for the various expenses. Applicants need to indicate amounts and sources of all non-Smithsonian financial support related to the proposed research. STRI fellows are subject to fees (see <https://stri.si.edu/fees/category-a>) that need to be included in the budget. Applicants should discuss potential research costs with STRI and NMNH sponsors before submitting an application. The budget will be carefully reviewed by STRI and is subject to agreement between STRI and the fellow.
 - **A complete timetable** with milestones and travel-date estimates to accomplish the research objectives according to the planned tenure.
 - **A bibliography** of publications cited in the proposal.
2. **The applicant's Curriculum Vitae**, to include education history, expertise, achievements and honors, publications, and a short description of research interests.
3. **The STRI advisor and the co-advisor** who have agreed to be advisors to the applicant.
4. **Pdfs of up to three of the applicant's publications.**
5. **Letters of reference requested by an applicant** are to be sent separately by two non-Smithsonian scientists familiar with the candidate's education and accomplishments. The provider of a reference letter is responsible for uploading the letter to SOLAA, (see <https://solaa.si.edu/solaa/#/public>). Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all letters of reference are submitted by the submission deadline.



Pontinus castor, the Longsnout Scorpionfish, a deep-reef species. Curacao. | Photo: D Ross Robertson.

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATION

Deadline for submission: October 15, 2025. Applicants will be informed of results within 8 weeks after that deadline.

All applications must be submitted through SOLAA, (the Smithsonian Online Academic Appointment system).

Follow these steps:

1. Go to: <https://solaa.si.edu>
2. Select "New to SOLAA? Complete the information to create an account."
3. Once you create your account and provide the information required, you can select the type of appointment. Choose as follows:
 - Program Type: "Fellowship"
 - Unit of interest: "STRI- D. Ross Robertson Research Award for Neotropical Deep-Reef Fish studies"
 - Program: "STRI- D. Ross Robertson Deep-Reef Fishes Award"
 - Fill in the application questions
 - Upload the required documents
 - Request the reference letters, giving sufficient time for referees to submit them to SOLAA **before the application deadline.**