

PhD candidate in Evolutionary Biology: Amsterdam, The Netherlands

We have a PhD position available to study gorilla health in Gabon. As part of an innovative new collaboration between the University of Amsterdam and WWF, the WWF Netherlands Great Ape Chair is soliciting interest in a potential PhD candidate to undertake a study in the biodiversity-rich Gamba landscape complex of protected areas located in the southwest of Gabon.

Since 2009, the WWF Gabon Country Programme Office, in partnership with the Gabonese government and backed by WWF NL, the WWF African Great Apes Programme and other committed supporters, has supported the locally based NGO "PROGRAM" (Protector of the Great Apes at Moukalaba) and their efforts to evaluate the feasibility of habituating a group of western gorillas for controlled eco-tourism and research. Relatively well protected from external threats, Moukalaba Doudou National Park offers great opportunities to develop a great ape based tourism programme that will benefit both local communities and the diverse and abundant wildlife the Park harbors. As western lowland gorillas (and their sympatric counterparts, the central common chimpanzee-Pan troglodytes) are Critically Endangered, as recognized on the IUCN Redlist of Endangered Species, income generating controlled great ape research and tourism is considered by many experts to potentially play a vital role in the long-term conservation of this species. As disease threats and incidences of disease transmission become increasingly more present among and between humans and great apes, more study is needed to better understand: pathogen presence and evolution in gorillas; pathogen overlap between gorillas and human populations; effect of pathogens on great ape behavior and ecology, and, most importantly, to provide recommendations on how best to minimize these effects on overall great ape health lifecycles and fecundity. The study will be conducted with Prof. Serge Wich (University of Amsterdam and Liverpool John Moores University), Dr. David Greer (WWF), and Dr. Robbie Rae (Liverpool John Moores University) as supervisors. Field research will be conducted in Gabon. Laboratory analyses will be conducted at Liverpool John Moores University and University of Amsterdam.

Description

We are looking for a candidate who has fluent or at least good speaking, writing and reading skills in French and English. The candidate should have a MSc in a relevant area: biology, environmental science, parasitology, etc. Previous experience with primatological research in the tropics and preferable Africa is important. Solid skills in GIS (e.g. ArcGIS, QGIS, R) and statistical skills (e.g. SPSS, R) are essential. Skills with parasitological research are a plus.

Benefits

The position will be based in Gabon and has a duration of four years. It starts preferably 1 August 2015, but this is flexible. This is not a fully-funded PhD. Research expenses, visa, and travel are covered. There is no appointment and no salary, but a small stipendium might be available to cover the costs of living in Gabon.

For more details visit following website: <http://www.uva.nl/en/about-the-uva/working-at-the-uva/vacancies/content/2015/03/15-089.html>