

PhD position Conservation Ecology (1.0 fte): Groningen, Netherlands

Close to application deadline: 22 April 2015

Please visit following website: www.rug.nl/about-us/work-with-us/job-opportunities/overview?details=00347-02S0004H9P

Description of the project: 'Can large mammal migrations promote ecosystem resilience?' The Serengeti-Mara Region, East Africa, hosts the spectacular seasonal migration of 1.4 million wildebeest, forming the last remaining big migration in the world of its kind.

In the region, humans can potentially derive important benefits from this unique ecosystem through direct and indirect ecosystem services. However, poverty often restricts the access of people to resources other than acquired from their direct surroundings, resulting in an ongoing spiral of poverty and low human welfare, increasing human populations, loss of natural habitat (climate change, land use change, overexploitation), loss of biodiversity, deteriorating ecosystems services and again impairment of human welfare. This requires innovative solutions that encompass the entire socio-ecological-economic system. The large H2020 project AfricanBioServices was recently funded by the EU to address these questions. The aim of this project is to unravel how human population growth, land-use change and climate change affect human well-being and exacerbate poverty through their impact on key ecosystem services; and, on the basis of this, derive novel sustainable solutions to achieve the twin goals of biodiversity protection and the improvement of benefits that people derive from the unique Serengeti-Mara ecosystem. The project website: www.ntnu.edu/biology/african-bio-services provides more information on the project aims and its partners. Job description The PhD student will work, together with a postdoc, in assessing the causalities between biodiversity change and ecosystem services. Field work will take place in the Serengeti-Maasai Mara Ecosystem and associated agricultural areas in Tanzania and Kenya. Specifically, the project will explore the role of wildlife in improving the resilience of village lands towards large scale perturbations as wildlife fires and drought. The work includes experimental and observational work on the interactions of both wildlife and livestock with vegetation and soil processes in the savannas and rangelands of the Serengeti-Mara region. Its main aim is to explore if large mammal migrations can promote ecosystem resilience and associated benefits for human well-being. Quantifying vegetation diversity patterns and grazing impacts will be an important component of the work. The PhD student will be supervised by Prof Han Olff at Groningen, and includes close cooperation with the University of Glasgow (Dr Grant Hopcraft and Prof Dan Haydon) on the animal migration aspects, and with a postdoc at Groningen for aspects of ecosystem

organization.

Qualifications

We are looking for a highly motivated person with an MSc degree in ecology or equivalent, and with a strong background and interest in experimental and field-based ecology with conservation applications. The ideal candidate is able to work independently also under difficult conditions, has good knowledge of statistical analyses and geographic information systems, and has experience with experimental and observational field work and scientific writing. Good proficiency of the English language is required.

Benefits

The University of Groningen offers a starting salary of € 2,125 (salary scale PhD students Dutch Universities) in the first year, up to a maximum of € 2,717 gross per month in the final year, based on a full time position. This position requires residence in Groningen and must result in the completion of a PhD thesis within the 4-year contract period. The successful candidate will first be offered a temporary position of one year with the option of renewal for another three years. Prolongation of the contract is contingent on sufficient progress in the first year to indicate that a successful completion of the PhD thesis within the next three years is to be expected. Starting date for the position is 1 September 2015. How to apply Applications, including a letter of motivation, a curriculum vitae, a list of publications or manuscripts involved in (if any), a list of examination marks for both the BSc and MSc phase, and the contact information of two academic referees, must be submitted **before 22 April 2015**, Dutch local time by means of the application form (click on "Apply" below on the advertisement on the university website). Your application should contain: ~ a signed letter of intent outlining motivation, qualifications, experience and career goals ~ a curriculum vitae ~ a letter of motivation ~ the names and email addresses and phone numbers of two professional references (e.g. thesis supervisors) ~ in case when an MSc degree has not yet been obtained, submit an indication of when the degree will be completed. Unsolicited marketing is not appreciated.