Advertisement for a field biologist
Marion Island (sub-Antarctic)
- Ornithology -

The Marine Apex Predator Research Unit (MAPRU; Coastal and Marine Research Institute at Nelson Mandela University) in collaboration with the FitzPatrick Institute of Ornithology (University of Cape Town), is offering one suitably qualified candidate an opportunity to spend a year on sub-Antarctic Marion Island collecting field data on seabirds and avian scavengers to be used for conservation and academic purposes. This position is made available thanks to the South African National Antarctic Programme (SANAP; http://www.sanap.ac.za).

The post falls within the project '**Avian scavengers as indicators of recovery of an island biota**' led by Dr Maëlle Connan (Nelson Mandela University) and Prof. Peter Ryan (FitzPatrick Institute, University of Cape Town). The project stemmed from the proposed mouse eradication at Marion Island, which will happen within the next three years. It focuses on the three poorly known avian scavengers: Brown Skuas, Kelp Gulls and Black-faced Sheathbills, as well as some of the skua's prey, the burrowing petrels. This project aims at (i) filling identified knowledge gaps that are crucial for best planning of the eradication, and (ii) establishing baselines for the scavenger guild and their prey base, against which the impact of a successful mouse eradication can be measured in years to come.

MAIN DUTIES:

- Systematic counts and behavioural descriptions of the three avian scavengers that require dedication and careful note taking;
- Updates of population and breeding success data for some of the burrow-nesting species. This will require extensive walking over rough terrain under demanding environmental conditions;
- Tracking, tissue sampling and dietary assessment of Brown Skuas
- Assisting with ongoing monitoring of long-term study populations of seabirds on the island.

SPECIFIC ATTRIBUTES:

The successful applicant will need to manage and keep track of all aspects of the research. Office work will entail report writing and keeping meticulous records of all collected data and samples. It is thus essential that the candidate meet the following criteria:

- Strong academic background (minimum of a BSc Honours), with a possibility of working towards either an MSc or a PhD within the project (preference will be given to candidates with higher qualifications);
- Demonstrated history of field activity in demanding environments collecting biological data;
- Curious, self-motivated, well-organized as many different aspects need to be especially in summer;

- Computer literacy with experience in data management and report writing;
- Previous experience in handling birds including tissue sampling, tracking and ringing will be a distinct advantage.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:

The incumbent will execute duties at an Antarctic Base and adhere to the health, safety and environmental requirements of the managing authority for Marion Island, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. The successful applicant will spend 13 months (April 2022 to May 2023) on Marion Island. *There is no option to return to South Africa before May 2023*. The ability to work and live with small groups of people is thus essential. The base has e-mail and satellite telephone facilities, but these can be intermittent, so the applicant must be able to do without constant supervision or links to family and friends in South Africa.

Candidates must be physically very fit, mentally strong and enjoy the challenge of physically demanding work. In addition, the successful candidate may often be called upon to work long hours in extreme conditions on duties not directly related to core project functions.

Short-listed candidates will be subjected to screening and security vetting to determine their suitability for the position. Appointment is subject to a rigorous medical (physical and psychological) examination, which will be arranged for at no cost to the applicant.

SALARY:

The total remuneration package is R 233,200 for the duration of the contract (April 2022 – May 2023, including a potential bonus).

APPLICATION:

- Cover letter indicating eligibility for the post;
- Comprehensive CV, including contact details of at least three referees;
- Certified copy of ID.

Note: South African citizens or foreigners holding a South African permanent residency permit will receive priority. Preference will be given to previously disadvantaged individuals who are particularly encouraged to apply for this position.

If you have not been contacted by 15 December 2021, please accept that your application was unsuccessful.

Queries or Applications should be directed to Dr Maëlle Connan (maelle.connan@gmail.com)

Closing date: 15 November 2021