



MSc opportunity in marine science at Rhodes University

Project title: Population and conservation status assessment of East African dugongs, *Dugong dugon*

Researchers: Dr Vic Cockcroft, Dr Shelley Edwards, Prof William Froneman, MSc candidate (to be named)

Project Description: The dugong, *Dugong dugon*, is one of four extant Sirenian (sea cow) species, and is the only species in the monotypic genus *Dugong*. Although it has a fairly wide distribution along the coastal regions of the Indian Ocean and on the eastern coasts of Australasia, its conservation status is highly variable ranging from vulnerable to critically endangered (Marsh et al. 2002). The species has undergone a dramatic decline in numbers since the 1960s, with a large population remaining off the coast of Mozambique. Currently, the IUCN status of East African dugongs is being reviewed. This research will play an integral role in determining the future conservation status of East African dugongs. The proposed MSc will investigate the population structure and gene flow and the movement patterns of dugong populations off the Mozambiquan coast, using a combination of molecular techniques and stable isotope analysis. The data collected and analysed will be used, in conjunction with previously published works, to assess the conservation status of the Mozambiquan populations of dugongs.

Enquiries: Interested applicants should submit their CV's to Dr Shelley Edwards (s.edwards@ru.ac.za) or Professor PW Froneman (w.froneman@ru.ac.za) and ideally should have a background in molecular techniques.

References: [1] Marsh, H., Penrose, H., Eros, C., Hughes, J. 2002. The dugong (*Dugong dugon*) status report and action plans for countries and territories in its range. UNEP.

Closing date: 31 March 2022
