MSc bursary available through the 'Research on Climate Change Adaptation in South African National Parks' programme

Investigating blue carbon budgets from saltmarshes in Knysna and Langebaan

Vegetated Coastal ecosystems, that encompass seagrass meadows, saltmarshes and mangroves, are known to capture and store carbon from the environment, yet regionally there remain numerous unanswered questions around estimates of stored carbon. Through this collaborative project (Prof Sophie von der Heyden / Dr Andrew Ndhlovu: Stellenbosch University and School of Climate Studies; Prof Janine Adams: Nelson Mandela University; Dr Wendy Foden: South African National Parks) we aim to 1. investigate the variability of blue carbon stored in different saltmarsh habitats, 2. develop an optimal sampling protocol that accounts for variability in carbon storage and 3. estimate a blue carbon budget from saltmarshes for the Knysna Estuary and Langebaan Lagoons. This project is a great opportunity for students who wish to gain more exposure in blue carbon and the impact of climate change on coastal ecosystems.

Students will be based at the von der Heyden Lab at Stellenbosch University, one of Africa's leading marine research groups specializing in the use of molecular and other tools to understand patterns and processes driving southern Africa's rich marine biodiversity. We are a dynamic lab, with a strong emphasis on research excellence as well as student training and support. Through the NRF-funded Project SeaStore, we investigate numerous anthropogenic impacts on seagrasses in the region, including thermal stress, microplastics and pollution; we have a strong focus on the restoration of seagrass meadows in South Africa.

You can find out more about the von der Heyden lab and marine research at Stellenbosch University here: www.vonderheydenlab.com or via our lab FB page. Applicants for this position will be hard-working, enthusiastic and independently motivated students, with an average of at least 65% for your Honours (or equivalent) degree. You will ideally need to have background in marine sciences, with a focus on ecology and have some laboratory experience and strong analytical/statistical skills. You need to be physically fit for working in the field.

Please direct all enquiries to Prof Sophie von der Heyden, svdh@sun.ac.za. For applications to be considered, include an academic transcript, CV and if applicable, details of field and laboratory experience. The bursary (R150,000 per annum for two years), is available for full-time study for South African citizens or permanent residents, although exceptional international (including SADC) students can be considered. The final candidate will need to apply independently to the SANParks 'Research on Climate Change Adaptation in South African National Parks' programme with the support of all supervisors.

Closing date for applications is 25th March 2023.