

Funded Postgraduate opportunity to study small mammal or parasite ecology

A two-year MSc position in ecology is available under supervision of Dr. Heike Lutermann at the Department of Zoology & Entomology, University of Pretoria.

I am looking for an enthusiastic and dedicated postgraduate student to study the factors affecting small mammal dynamic and their ectoparasites communities. Identifying and understanding the drivers of spatiotemporal patterns of parasites distribution is key for any management actions. These depend on the interactions between parasites and their hosts as well as the environment and are highly dynamic. They are governed by fluctuations in abiotic factors (e.g. temperature, rainfall) as well as changes in host and parasite populations. The knowledge of both host and parasite biology is required to identify the mechanisms behind the observed patterns. However, currently little biological information is available for many small mammal species and their ectoparasites in South Africa. Depending on the preferences of the applicant the focus of this MSc will either be on the space use and demography of a common small mammal host or on the demography and dynamic of its ectoparasite community.

Requirements:

We seek a highly motivated student with an interest in small mammal and/or parasite ecology and a passion for research satisfying the following criteria:

- Completed tertiary studies equivalent to an Honours degree in Biological Sciences, Entomology, Ecology or Zoology
- Excellent writing and numerical skills (strong statistical background recommended, e.g. experience in R)
- Willingness, self-motivation and adequate physical fitness to conduct field work
- Ability to work both independently and as part of a small team
- South African citizen or permanent resident

Experience in catching and sampling small mammals as well as sampling ectoparasites would be beneficial but is not essential.

The successful applicant will receive a tax-free bursary from the NRF of ZAR 40,000/year for two years. Additional funds are available to attend one scientific meeting/year held in South Africa.

Queries and written applications (in English) should be submitted per email to Dr. Heike Lutermann (hlutermann@zoology.up.ac.za) by **28th February**. To apply, please and must include a **cover letter** outlining your research interests and suitability for the position, a **CV** (including the names and contact details of three academic referees) and copies of **academic transcripts** that indicate eligibility for the award of an Honours degree.