MSc study opportunity

School of Animal Plant and Environmental Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand

**Avian Haemosporidian and Ectoparasite prevalence in South Africa: what drives emergence of disease?**

Despite its threat to avian diversity, little information is known about avian haemo- and ectoparasite prevalence especially in Africa. Avian malarial haemoparasites (Haemoproteus, Plasmodium, and Leucocytozoon spp) cause anaemia in bird populations across six continents. Due to the massive scope of this disease, understanding factors that affect avian malaria prevalence and transmission is crucial. Though believed to be endemic in African passerines, true burden of malaria parasitemia in their native hosts is unknown. Factor of note is land-use type, the diversity of which is linked to varying abundance and distribution of parasite hosts and vectors.

We have funding available to support a MSc student for 2 years (starting in January 2016) to study avian haemo- and ectoparasite prevalence in birds sampled at Kruger, Mapungubwe and Marakele National Parks, as well as in the adjacent settlement areas. The study will explore how; season, location, host traits and vector abundance affects avian haemosporidian (malaria included) and ectoparasite prevalence as well as investigate the impact of parasitism on host immunity and body condition.

Prospective students should have the following:

1. Good background in ecology and or microbiology
2. A valid driver's licence,
3. Good bird indentification skills,
4. Ability to do field and laboratory work independently

If you are interested in this MSc opportunity, please send a covering letter, CV, academic transcript and a statement of interest to: Dr Mduduzi Ndlovu (mdu.ndlovu@wits.ac.za).