Field researcher (ecologist) position available on sub-Antarctic Marion Island (March 2020 – May 2021)

Modelling wind patterns and their ecological impacts

Through funding from the South African National Antarctic Programme, a field researcher position is available as part of the annual overwintering expedition to the remote and isolated sub-Antarctic Marion Island. This project is examining wind as a driver of ecological patterns and processes, focusing on improving our understanding of the impacts of changing wind speed and direction in one of the windiest regions of our planet.

Post: 1 field researcher (ecologist), based on sub-Antarctic Marion Island
Remuneration: ± R213 000 (including benefits) for 14 months

The successful candidate will conduct ecological research on the plant species of Marion Island. Specifically, the field researcher will monitor and maintain a set of microclimate loggers, and will survey plant community composition and quantify plant functional traits across a range of environmental conditions. Opportunities for further post-graduate studies under the supervision of the project's Principal Investigator exist for the successful candidate after completion of this post in Department of Plant and Soil Sciences at the University of Pretoria.

Minimum qualification and requirements:

- Candidates must have a minimum of a BSc (Hons) degree. Candidates completing their degrees in December 2019 will also be considered. Degrees should be in a Biological or Environmental field (including, but not limited to, ecology, botany or zoology).
- Candidates must be computer literate with experience in data management and report writing. Proficiency in MS Excel is essential as applicants must be able to manage large electronic datasets. Candidates must also have good organisational skills.
- Candidates must be experienced with data analysis and competent with standard statistical software (i.e. evidence of at least a successfully passed undergraduate course in this or related subject). Competency in R and spatial analyses (or proven mathematical and programming skills) are highly preferable.
- Candidates must have good knowledge of terrestrial ecology (i.e. evidence of having passed a post-graduate ecology module and/or having conducted a research project on this topic), and must have experience with plant identification.

Recommendations:

- Candidates need to be physically fit, mentally strong and enthusiastic about research.
- Candidates should be experienced with fieldwork, with previous experience working in physically challenging conditions being a distinct advantage.
- Experience working with data loggers (including the installation, maintenance and monitoring thereof).
- Experience working and navigating in remote and/or rugged environments is essential. Experience living and working with a small team also beneficial.

- Experience with plant ecological techniques (including vegetation surveys and monitoring plant performance) and plant functional trait measurement.

Expedition Requirements:

- Successful applicants will undertake fieldwork, sometimes for long hours, under very rigorous conditions (cold, wet and windy weather most of the time).
- Fieldwork will encompass c. 70% of the time on the island, with the remaining time dedicated to office and laboratory work, including management and analysis of data.
- The ability to work and live with small groups of people is essential. Note that the isolated conditions can be psychologically challenging for candidates and their families.
- Appointment to these positions is subject to a rigorous medical examination, which will be arranged at no cost to short-listed applicants.
- Successful applicants will spend 13 months (April 2020 to May 2021) on Marion Island and will adhere to the health, safety and environmental requirements of the managing authority (Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries). *There is no option to return before the end of the expedition – successful candidates will remain on the island for 13 months continuously.* The well-equipped research station has e-mail and telephone facilities, although periods without communication with the outside world are probable.

Duties include installing and maintaining microclimate loggers, conducting vegetation surveys, mapping species distributions, collecting and measuring plant leaf samples, and running and maintaining field experiments. Note that these duties may evolve during the course of the year.

This position is open only to South African applicants. Applicants should submit a **detailed CV** together with **a list of three potential academic references**, **a cover letter** indicating eligibility for the post**,** and **copies of their qualifications, academic record and ID** via Google Forms (https://tinyurl.com/Marion2020). For queries contact Prof le Roux by email (peter.leroux@up.ac.za) or by phone (012 420 6761). Interviews will be conducted in mid-November 2019, and short-listed applicants should be willing to travel to Pretoria for interviews and competency tests. **Short-listed candidates will undergo rigorous competency tests** to ensure adherence to requirements, specifically with regards to fitness, field skills, and data management and processing. **Closing date for applications: 25 October 2019 at 16h00.**

The University of Pretoria is committed to equality, employment equity and diversity. In accordance with the Employment Equity Plan of the University and its Employment Equity goals and targets, preference will be given to candidates from under-represented designated groups. The University of Pretoria reserves the right to not fill the advertised position.