



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Natural
and Agricultural Sciences



DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY AND ENTOMOLOGY

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS ON MARION ISLAND (THREE POSTS): KILLER WHALER (X1) AND SEALERS (X2) for 2023-2024

In pursuit of the ideals of excellence and diversity, the University of Pretoria wishes to invite applications for the above-mentioned vacancies. The University of Pretoria's commitment to quality makes us one of the top research Universities in the country and gives us a competitive advantage in international science and technology development.

BACKGROUND:

The University of Pretoria's Marion Island Marine Mammal Programme (MIMMP) research project "*Marion Island Marine Mammals in Changing Environments: Individual Heterogeneity and Population Processes*" will again have positions vacant for biologists/zoologists with an interest in marine mammals. Marion Island is situated in the southern Indian Ocean halfway between South Africa and Antarctica. Marion Island is the terrestrial base of southern elephant seals *Mirounga leonina* (SES), sub-Antarctic fur seals *Arctocephalus tropicalis* (SAFS), Antarctic fur seals *Arctocephalus gazella* (AFS) and killer whales *Orcinus orca* (KW). The MIMMP has been conducting long-term monitoring of these top predators for over 38 years at Marion Island, which allows us to measure the response of these animals to environmental change in the region. **Three mammalogist positions** are available for conducting research on Marion Island for the approximately 15-months contract (March 2023- May 2024).

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Killer whaler (1 position): Monitoring and data collection of killer whales and assistance with seal work. Activities include behavioural observation, photographic mark-recapture, satellite device deployment, biopsy sampling and measurement. Field work will encompass 65% of the time and the remaining time is dedicated to office and laboratory work for sample management and data analysis. A large proportion of time will be dedicated to assisting with seal work too (see below).

Sealers (2 positions): Monitoring and data collection of three seal species (see www.marionseals.com). Activities include censusing, mark-recapture, satellite device deployment and removal, weighing, sampling, measuring, observation. Field work will encompass 75% of the time, with a lot of walking (4000 – 6000km) in gumboots during the contract time frame. Remaining time is dedicated to office and laboratory work for sample management and data analysis. A proportion of time is allocated to assisting with dedicated killer whale observations (see above).

All three positions involve undertaking **fieldwork under very rigorous conditions** (cold, wet and windy 95% of the time). Meticulous observation, note-taking and record-keeping abilities are important. Be able to manage large electronic datasets. Be able to manage electronics, (e.g. satellite relay data loggers) and a storage facility. Opportunity for postgraduate studies upon return from the island under the supervision of the Principal Investigator is possible.

Note: The incumbents will execute duties at a sub-Antarctic base and adhere to the health, safety and environmental requirements of the managing authority (Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, DFFE). The successful applicants will spend a full year (April 2023 to May 2024) at Marion Island.

There is no option to return to South Africa before May 2024. The ability to work and live with small groups of people is thus essential. Although the base is equipped with intermittent e-mail, fax and satellite telephone

facilities, the applicant has to be able to do without 'being constantly connected' and be highly self-motivated. The location may affect both the physical and mental well-being of the incumbent, their family and close relationships. Candidates must be physically fit, mentally strong and prepared for constant physically challenging and satisfying work. In addition, the successful candidates may often be called upon to work long hours in extreme conditions on duties unrelated to their function. Short-listed candidates will be subjected to screening and security vetting to determine their suitability for employment. Appointment to these positions is subject to a rigorous medical (physical and psychological) examination, at no cost to the applicants.

REQUIREMENTS:

BSc (Hons) or higher degree in Biological/Environmental field (preference will be given to applicants with higher qualifications). Computer literate with experience in data management and report writing. Well versed in MS Office (or related) software programmes (e.g. Excel). Basic understanding of population ecology and of statistics (i.e. evidence of at least successfully passed undergraduate courses in these or related subjects). Must be physically fit, mentally strong, able to swim, NOT COLOUR BLIND or hearing impaired (partially or fully) and enthusiastic about research. Additionally, for the Killer Whaler position: Evidenced experience with photography and firearm use. Experience with image manipulation/photographic software (e.g. Lightroom, Photoshop).

The annual remuneration package per position is ~ **R 247 000 for contract timeframe (inclusive of benefits)**.

In applying for this post using the link: <https://www.marionseals.com/field-assistant-applications> , applicants are requested to attach ONE COMBINED electronic copy (in pdf form) of:

- a covering letter stating why you are eligible for this post
- a comprehensive CV

Correspondence will be limited to successful candidates only who will be requested to submit additional paperwork, such as hard copies of certified qualifications and ID documents. If you have not been contacted within one month after the closing date of the advertisement, please accept that your application was unsuccessful. **Note:** Foreign applicants will be considered if they significantly outcompete South African applicants or for specific purposes related to research within the MIMMP's collaborative network. It is the applicant's responsibility to have foreign qualifications evaluated by the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) and be in possession of/ or willing to acquire a relevant working visa. The Marion Island Marine Mammal Programme is committed to fair, excellence driven appointments.

CLOSING DATE: 07 November 2022 – applications will only be accepted through the online system before midnight SAST on 07 November 2022

ENQUIRIES:

Ms Michelle Thompson – 012 420 4573

Email : michelle.thompson@up.ac.za

Website: www.marionseals.com

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.