



PhD Opportunity in Plant Invasion Ecology: South American Tussock Grasses (*Nassella*) in southern Africa

INTRODUCTION

The South American tussock grass genus *Nassella* is invasive in South Africa, with three currently identified species: *N. trichotoma*, *N. tenuissima* and *N. neesiana*. *Nassella trichotoma* is the most widespread and troublesome species in South Africa: it has historically been most problematic in the bimodal/summer rainfall Eastern Cape mountains (from the Sneeuberg across to the Drakensberg). By 1985 it had invaded about 70,000 Ha, with a projected invasion potential of 44 million Ha (36% of South Africa). The recent discovery of a major *N. trichotoma* invasion in Golden Gate Highlands National Park, eastern Free State, suggests that *Nassella* may be a much greater problem in our sub-arid to mesic montane grasslands than is currently realised, with implications for Lesotho and Swaziland.

Given the poor current state of knowledge on the distribution *Nassella* in southern Africa, including the drivers of invasiveness, its impacts, potential responses to climate change, and management needs, the Afromontane Research Unit (ARU) and Department of Plant Sciences at the University of the Free State (UFS)'s Qwaqwa Campus, in association with various invasion research partners, is advertising for a **PhD Candidate** for fulltime study at UFS, Qwaqwa. The value of the award is R80,000.00 per annum.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- South African and international applications are welcomed.
- Available for full-time research; this project does not lend itself to part-time research.
- The minimum requirement is a Master's degree in a relevant discipline (preferably with SAQA accreditation for non-South African Masters degrees).
- The candidate should be self-motivated, be fit (think mountains!), be willing to spend extensive time travelling, be comfortable with extensive field time in remote mountainous regions, and have a drivers licence.
- Prior experience in invasive species ecology, montane grassland ecology and/or modelling species responses to climate change would be preferable.
- Applicants may not hold full-time salaried employment during the tenure of the award.
- To commence as soon as possible.

REQUIREMENTS

- Motivation letter, articulating the applicant's career ambitions and scholarly motivation, as well as details of her/his major scholarly/academic accomplishments to date.
- Full Curriculum Vitae (CV) including a list of all research publications (if any).
- Full transcripts of academic record.
- Copy of degree certificates.
- Copy of ID document (copy of passport in the case of non-South African applicants).
- Signed letters of recommendation from two academic references.

The appointment will reflect the UFS's equity and diversity imperatives, including those for gender, racial/cultural and intellectual diversity. A bursary is currently available for this position, and will be awarded on a competitive basis, taking into account the applicants' academic achievements and research potential.

Application deadline: 15 May 2018

To apply, or ask for further details, contact:

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