PHD BURSARY AVAILABLE FOR 2021

ZOOLOGY & ENTOMOLOGY DEPARTMENT & AFROMONTANE RESEARCH UNIT, UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE (QWAQWA CAMPUS)

Morphological adaptation to aridity and altitude in African striped mice

The Afromontane Research Unit (ARU), University of the Free State (UFS), is an active and growing mountain research hub situated at the foot of the Maloti-Drakensberg in the eastern Free State Province, South Africa. The vision of the ARU is to become '*A Continental Leader in African Mountain Research, with an immediate focus on the Maloti-Drakensberg*'. The ARU Mission is to encourage the development of a cohesive, multi-disciplinary Community of Practice for southern African mountains.

Some species tolerate evolutionary and anthropogenic climate change better than others. The question of species resilience is central to research in evolution and conservation, particularly in the context of global climate change. Biological models can be particularly relevant to address this question in a natural context. For example, different lineages of the diurnal African four striped mouse, genus *Rhabdomys* occupy highly distinct habitats from semi-deserts to Fynbos and high mountain grasslands, offering an opportunity to use cutting-edge 2-D and 3-D geometric morphometric approaches to both diagnose cryptic species and unravel mechanisms of adaptation to both high elevation and degrees of aridity in this rodent lineage.

The University of the Free State is offering a PHD position for the project above, based on data obtained from existing museum collections and new field studies throughout South Africa and Namibia. Opportunities for training and international exposure will be provided in France through collaboration with a leading French evolutionary ecologist. The successful candidate will be expected to work independently.

BURSARY DETAILS

• The bursary is valued at ZAR 80,000.00 per year (with top-up possible) renewable for up to three years, pending adequate annual progress; project funds will be provided.

• Commencement: 1st January 2021 or soonest thereafter.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

• Candidates should have completed their Masters study

• Applications from South Africans and international candidates will be welcomed.

• Candidates may not hold full-time salaried employment during the tenure of the award.

• Willing to spent extensive time in remote areas with limited communications and under often challenging conditions.

• Willing to learn new techniques such as 3D morphometrics.

• Willing to travel internationally and in possession of valid passport.

• Sound understanding of principles of systematic biology.

• It is strongly preferred that the recipient has a valid drivers' license.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

• Motivation Letter.

• Full Curriculum Vitae (CV) (including a list of academic outputs to date).

• Full transcripts of academic record.

• Copy of MSc degree certificate.

• Copy of South African identity document or Passport (international candidates).

• 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 suitable experience.

Application Deadline: 30th September 2020

Contact Person:

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