THE PERCY FITZPATRICK INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN ORNITHOLOGY

Research Assistant Opportunity, FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Cape Town

Project: Can sociality buffer against the impacts of climate change?

We invite applications for a full-time, three-month research assistant opportunity associated with the Fitz, a world-renowned Centre of Excellence in ornithological research. The position is based at the Kuruman River Reserve (KRR), a large research station home to the Kalahari Meerkat Project and the Pied Babbler Research Project. The research assistant will support a Fitz PhD student working on the Hot Birds Project.

The project focuses on exploring the relationship between social behaviour and vulnerability to climate change, specifically the impacts of extreme heat on fitness and population persistence in animals in arid environments and the extent to which cooperative behaviours might mitigate negative consequences of heat stress. Fieldwork will be undertaken with the free-ranging, habituated population of Southern Pied Babblers (SPB: *Turdoides bicolor*) at KRR. Fieldwork will include behavioural observations, morphological measurements, and physiological treatments, ensuring exposure to a range of techniques in ornithology.

Location: Kuruman River Reserve, Van Zylsrus, South African Kalahari

Duration: 3 months (90 days) between October 2016 and January 2017

Remuneration: approximately R6,000 per month. Accommodation at KRR and local travel is included. The research assistant is expected to cover their own food costs and transport to the field site.

Working conditions: 5.5 days per week. Fieldwork starts at dawn and ends at dusk. Temperatures can exceed 40°C. The location is remote, but accommodates many researchers and volunteers from around the world.

Tasks and Responsibilities

- Perform behavioural observations of SPB across a range of daytime temperatures and group sizes. These observations will include focal animal observations and nest watches;
- Conduct stable isotope treatments with SPB across a range of daytime temperatures and group sizes. This will include taking body mass measurements and collecting faecal samples;
- Assist the PhD student with accessing nests and handling nestlings for morphological measurements and ringing nestlings;
- Collect life history and nest life history data on Southern Pied Babbler groups and individuals and maintaining the various Pied Babbler Research Project databases.

Prior experience with bird ringing and/or avian physiology and/or field-based animal behaviour observations will be an advantage. Most important, however, is passion, motivation, and dedication to fieldwork.

To apply, please send your CV and a short motivation letter to Amanda Bourne by 21 August 2016 (abourne.uct@gmail.com)