Conservation Research Assistant

An exciting in-country opportunity to support the conservation efforts of one of the leading sustainable development and conservation NGOs in Madagascar

Role Description

Location: Sainte Luce, Anosy Region, Madagascar
Timeframe: 12 months extendable
Probationary period: 3 months
Contract: Voluntary, unsalaried
Reporting to: Conservation Research Coordinator
Positions available: Three vacancies to be filled from June - August 2017

Ideal for a motivated, recently qualified individual interested in working within an established international and local research team to carry out fieldwork in a world-renowned biodiversity hotspot. Based in the stunning coastal village of Sainte Luce 40km north of Fort Dauphin, conducting research within the area’s fragmented littoral forest habitats and adjoining coastal habitats. This position affords the opportunity to contribute towards vital in-situ conservation and to participate in the writing of scientific publications. Research Assistants are responsible for leading international teams of short-term volunteers, collecting and analysing data accurately and contributing towards the holistic conservation approach encouraged at SEED Madagascar. This job role involves maintaining a balance between collecting valuable scientific data and ensuring our enthusiastic volunteers are happy and contribute sufficiently to the programme. After initial training the applicant will also work with the research team to assist in developing and expanding research projects and will be encouraged towards writing scientific paper. This is an excellent opportunity for a recent graduate to gain field experience and the necessary skills essential for a career in conservation.

Duties and responsibilities

The research assistant will work in collaboration with SEED Madagascar’s international and Malagasy staff in the following activities;

- Lead data collection in the field
- Monitor data collection in the field and ensure quality of data
- Assist in setting research objectives and ensuring these are consistently met
- Organise the logistics of the research projects when in the field, including equipment and resource management
- Supervise volunteers during their time in the field, ad-hoc problem solving.
- Assist in training volunteers in field research techniques
• Ensure good communication and team relations between volunteers, SEED staff and local staff
• Assist in the development of research projects, analysis of data and write up of research papers when required
• Any other tasks the Director of Programmes and Operations or Conservation Research Coordinator deem necessary within the broad remit of this role

**Person Specification:**

• Demonstrate sound knowledge and keen interest in conservation issues
• A qualification in a related discipline
• Specialist knowledge of either primatology, herpetology, botany or environmental education is desirable
• Able to or willing to learn to safely handle and identify reptiles and amphibians
• Previous experience of collecting data
• Working knowledge of GPS and/or GIS is an advantage
• Good IT skills
• First aid certificate
• Ability to grasp and carryout instruction in challenging environments and maintain a good sense of humour
• Previous experience living or working in a developing country would be an asset
• High level of communication skills and ability to develop excellent relationships within the team
• A good degree of initiative, self-motivation and commitment
• Ability to motivate others
• Excellent organisational and time management skills is a must
• Excellent written communication skills
• Ability to work under pressure and be flexible, empathetic and accommodating
• Ability to work as part of a dynamic and multicultural team
• Good degree of fitness for working in difficult terrain under tropical conditions
• Ability to spend long periods of time in basic camping conditions
• Able to commit for a period of one year minimum

**Pay and conditions:**

Food and local transport will be provided whilst on projects. All other costs will need to be covered by the candidate, including accommodation when not in the field.

**Application process:**

Anyone interested in applying for this position should send a detailed CV and a cover letter explaining how their skills and experience match the requirements in the role description to the Conservation Research Coordinator Jamie Neaves, at jamie.neaves@seedmadagascar.org. The position will remain open until appropriate candidates are found.

More information on the work of SEED Madagascar can be found at www.madagascar.co.uk
Context of the post within the SEED Conservation Programme:

The SEED Conservation Programme (SCP) accepts international volunteers to help conduct research on the unique flora and fauna of Madagascar’s last remaining fragments of littoral forest. Our research programme focuses on the endemic/endangered communities of Sainte Luce, with a particular focus on lemur research, herpetological study and the monitoring of endangered palm species. Current projects include the long term monitoring of lemur and herpetological fragments, amassing ecological evidence whenever information is lacking, and compiling population densities and spatial/temporal distribution maps. We are currently developing a variety of new projects, including a turtle conservation programme, a comprehensive forest structure study, and undertaking data collection for marine fisheries sustainability.

Habitat sampling and assessment is also a regular activity, alongside the collation of species inventories for each of the nearby forest fragments, with a particular emphasis on the reptile and amphibian, bird and small mammal communities. The SCP team works very closely with the local community to implement lasting community conservation initiatives, such as environmental education in village schools, conservation through English lessons and through the training of local eco-tourism guides.

SEED Madagascar is recruiting a motivated and dynamic individual to work as part of our expanding research team. The successful applicant will help conduct a diverse array of field research on the flora and fauna of Sainte Luce’s littoral forests. The individual will be expected to train and supervise groups of volunteers in research methodologies, ensuring accurate collation of scientific data and managing the day-to-day schedule for the programme. This job role involves maintaining a balance between collecting valuable scientific data and ensuring our enthusiastic volunteers are happy and contribute sufficiently to the programme. After initial training the applicant will also work with the research team to assist in developing and expanding research projects and will be encouraged towards writing scientific papers.