University of Zurich[UZH]

Public Job advertisement

URBAN VERVET PROJECT

The Urban Vervet Project: Due to the anthropogenic impact on the world's ecosystems, species diversity of non-human animals on a global scale is declining, yet some animals are thriving in human altered environments. As a scientific discipline Urban Evolution and Urban Ecology are growing into timely and substantially important topics contributing to our understanding of evolutionary adaptations to these rapidly changing habitats, as well as behavioural responses due to arising selection pressures. One of a few primate species that manage well in urban ecosystems are the vervet monkeys (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*). The Urban Vervet Project studies the behaviour, life history, cognitive causes, and consequences of an urbanized population of vervet monkeys at the Simbithi Eco Estate in Kwazulu-Natal South Africa.

Postdoc Position/ University of Zurich, Switzerland

(salary level Category 18 Level 3, 70-80%)

Job description: We are seeking a highly motivated team member interested in animal urbanisation and behavioural ecology to join the Urban Vervet Project. The position is based within the research group of Dr. Sofia Forss at Animal Behaviour unit of the Department of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies at the University of Zurich. Using vervet monkeys as a primate model species of successful adaptation to anthropogenic habitat changes, the project aims to study *to what extent urban environments are truly cognitive demanding for those species successfully utilizing them?* Most urban invaders, including innovative ones like primates, are potentially exapted to exploit the novel opportunities created by urban environments. To shed light on this question, the project identifies habitat challenges in a newly established site featuring semi-urban vervet monkeys and study their cognitive flexibility. For this position, we are looking for a postdoctoral researcher to focus on data analyses and writing of publications. This work will include existing data sets (field experiments & behavioural observations), statistical evaluation of the monkeys' travel routes and foraging routines through both GPS data and with a fast-accumulating citizen science data set, generated with the help of the human residents sharing their habitat with the Simbithi monkey population. The successful candidate will also be involved in a few months' fieldwork at our study site (Simbithi Eco Estate) and has the potential to bring in own expertise and inputs to the project. The position will start April 1st 2024.

Informative links:

The Urban Vervet Project- https://urbanvervetproject.weebly.com/
Research Group Dr. Forss - https://www.ieu.uzh.ch/en/staff/member/forss_sofia.html & https://www.sofiaforss.com/
Simbithi Eco Estate - https://www.simbithi.com/

Your Qualifications & Responsibilities: Since the core of the position involves statistical analyses of existing data, the successful candidate will have extensive experience in quantitative data analysis using programming. Strong programming skills (R, Python) and an interest in challenging analytical problems are required, and experience with GPS data is desirable, but not necessary. Independence and the ability to initiate and implement research ideas is expected, as well as a strong interest in writing and publishing research papers and present research outputs at conferences. Applicants should have a PhD in biological sciences, and/or the equivalent degree in statistical, computational sciences with a strong interest in animal behaviour and evolutionary mechanisms. As a postdoc in our department, you will be expected to actively engage with and contribute to the scientific community within the Animal Behaviour Group and the institute of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Sciences, as well as possess a collaborative attitude within the Urban Vervet Project and work closely with our onsite manager and a team of international students. Strong written and oral English skills are required.

What we offer: The opportunity to pursue a one-year postdoc project under the funding from the Swiss National Science Foundation and join the research group led by Dr. Sofia Forss, integrated within the larger Animal Behaviour Group of Zurich University. Whilst based in Zurich, you will be offered the opportunity to spend time at the study site of Simbithi, located just outside Durban at the east Coast of South African province Kwazulu-Natal. You will enjoy support for your

own independent research work and further qualifications in science in a research environment composed of an international, diverse, and committed team. The university of Zurich offers great support for early career researchers through its graduate campus program, where you can further develop your academic skills. The position is set at 70-80% to ensure your have sufficient time for other obligations and challenges emerging during the postdoctoral phase. We support a family-friendly work environment.

Applications: All applicants regardless of sex, nationality, ethnic or social background, religion or worldview, disability, age, sexual orientation, or gender identity are encouraged to apply. Please send your application, in English, by email, including the following documents (combined into one PDF file), to sofia.forss@ieu.uzh.ch by January 7th 2024:

- Cover Letter (max 1 page)
- Research statement (max 2 pages) describing your research experience and future interests, as well as how your scientific interests relate to the proposed research project. Describe a few scientific questions that you would like to research regarding animal urbanization and adaptation to novel habitats.
- Curriculum vitae (CV), including publication list
- Academic degrees (MSc & PhD)
- Contact information for 2 reference persons

We are looking forward to get to know you & receive Your application, if you have any further questions, please contact Sofia Forss (sofia.forss@ieu.uzh.ch)

Sofia Forss, PhD
Research Group Leader
Department of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies
University of Zurich
Winterthurerstrasse 190
CH-8057 Zurich
www.ieu.uzh.ch
Phone +41 44 635 52 79
Fax +41 44 635 54 90