Cooperative breeding in Damaraland mole-rats \textit{(Fukomys damarensis)}

Voluntary research assistant needed
Starting between March and July 2017 for 6 months

We are looking for voluntary research assistants to help with our research on the completely subterranean, highly social Damaraland mole-rat \textit{(Fukomys damarensis)} in the Kalahari.

\textbf{Position 1: Behaviour and Physiology – mainly laboratory based}

This position entails assisting in several studies on social evolution and hormonal effects on social behaviour of mole-rats. We are interested in the effects of hormonal variation on allo-parental care and the effects variation in the social environment on behaviour and physiology in mole-rats. The research assistant will be involved in all steps of the experiments and will mainly work in the laboratory with our captive mole-rats which are housed in large semi-natural tunnel systems. The responsibilities include behavioural observations, hormonal measures (blood sampling, urine sampling), obtaining morphological measures by X-Ray, and hormonal manipulations. The laboratory is situated in the Kuruman River Reserve in the southern Kalahari, Northern Cape province of South Africa.

The successful applicant will work in a team of 5-10 persons and will receive extensive training to acquire the skills needed for the above mentioned data collection. The research station is also the home of several other projects studying meerkats (www.kalahari-meerkats.com), cape ground squirrels, pied babblers, forktailed drongos and hornbills resulting in a stimulating scientific environment. Around 20-30 research assistants are based at the station year round. Research assistants will learn a range of skills such as remote sensing of behaviour, endocrine sampling techniques, behavioural observations, data handling and management.

Applicants should be enthusiastic, willing to work hard and keen to get involved in a research project in a remote location.

\textbf{Position 2: Ecology – mainly field based}

We are conducting a capture-mark and recapture study in which the voluntary research assistant can play an important role. Entire groups of mole-rats will be captured and individually marked. Morphological measurements and tissue samples will be obtained before the release of the animals. The field work is physically demanding (long hours, heavy digging to capture mole-rats) and weather conditions are very challenging (heat during the day, very cold during the night). Field work will make trapping during the night necessary. The assistant will mostly be working along one more experienced scientist but will need to work independently at times. This position requires working in a very small team in a remote location on free ranging animals and the trapping season will last for 3 months (starting in March or April 2017)

In both positions accommodation is provided, and research assistants are paid a monthly allowance to cover their personal costs and food. Domestic travel to the field site can be covered but we cannot provide an international airfare, travel insurance, or visa fees for applicants from overseas.

Applications received until the 22nd of January 2017 are ensured full consideration. Later applications may be considered. Please indicate whether you apply for position 1 or 2 or both positions.

Please apply to or contact for further information:
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