

Paid Full-Time Research Assistant Position “The Evolutionary Origins of Friendship”

Job Description

We are currently seeking a self-motivated and independent **Research Assistant** to collect behavioral data on the free-living rhesus monkey colony of Cayo Santiago, Puerto Rico. Our project investigates how we benefit from social bonds and social connections from an evolutionary perspective. Thus, the data collection at Cayo Santiago is just one component of a larger project investigating cross-species comparisons of social connection across many species of primates.

Generally, research assistants collect behavioral data on a large group (> 200 individuals) of rhesus monkeys. They will also be responsible for uploading and managing their data on a regular basis. However, other research assistantship tasks can include assistance with things such as behavioural experiments, recording of vocalizations, and acquisition of field supplies. Finally, research assistants will assist with the annual capture-release season (October – December), during which blood is collected and DNA is isolated. Research assistants will therefore be fully trained in the handling of anesthetized animals and biological samples.

Research assistants must travel daily (Mon – Fri) to Punta Santiago (where they will take a 5-minute boat ride provided by the University of Puerto Rico to reach Cayo Santiago island). A typical day begins early and consists of approximately 7 hours of walking in the forest and coast of the island, followed by 1 hour of data entry. The work is physically demanding as the terrain is uneven and often unshaded.

Assistants will not be allowed to collect data for publication independent of the funded research project – e.g. for their own theses. However, we encourage assistants to work with us co-authoring papers based on or stemming from the data they assist in collecting. This is therefore an excellent position for anyone interested in pursuing a future graduate degree.

Qualifications

Applicants should have an Undergraduate or Masters degree in biology, anthropology, psychology, zoology or a related discipline. Applicants should be able to communicate in English (fluency in Spanish is also helpful, but not a requirement). The successful candidate can receive the bulk of their initial training in either English or Spanish, depending on their preference. Previous experience collecting behavioural data on primates and/or other animals is ideal but not a requirement. Previous laboratory experience is helpful, but not necessary. Applicants should be in good physical health, should work well with others, and generally be energetic, responsible and have a keen interest in animal behaviour. Field work can be tiring, frustrating, and both physically and mentally challenging. Applicants should be prepared to approach these challenges with enthusiasm and a positive attitude.

Term of appointment

Applicants must be willing/able to commit to a 1-year contract to be considered. We anticipate positions will commence as early as June 1st, 2021, dependent upon the successful applicant's completion of paperwork and medical clearance to gain access to the field site.

Salary/Funding

Research assistants will be paid a full-time salary. Assistants will be employees of the University of Puerto Rico and will receive any benefits associated with a position of this type. Funding exists for a total of 5 years, and thus there may be the option for contract renewal following the 1st year, depending upon performance.

Support (travel, meals, lodging)

No additional funding for accommodation, travel, or living expenses will be provided.

Application deadline

We are currently receiving applications and will continue to do so until 7 April 2021.

Contact

Please send an email to Dras. Lauren Brent (l.j.n.brent@exeter.ac.uk) and Alyssa Arre (alyssa.arre@upr.edu). Attached to the email, please include:

1. Letter of interest. Please state why you are interested in this position and what qualifications you possess that make you particularly well suited to it.
2. Your CV. Include all relevant field courses, coursework, and field experience.
3. The contact information (including email addresses) for two people able to comment on your past experience, skills and training. Reference letters are not required with applications – referees will only be contacted for the top-candidates, following an initial screening process.