Graduate Research Assistantship in Ecology of Nonnative Ungulates in Hawaii

We seek a highly motivated Ph.D. student, or an exceptional M.S. student, to conduct novel research on the behavioral ecology of nonnative ungulates on the Island of Hawai‘i. This project is funded by the Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program (SERDP) of the Department of Defense and is being coordinated by the USDA Forest Service, Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry. The overall goal of the larger project is to explore how native forest rehabilitation and restoration can be used as a cost-effective management tool to reduce fuel loads, fire danger, and fire impacts while also controlling invasive plant establishment and spread. The successful candidate for this position will complement the overall project by designing and implementing a study focused on behavioral ecology of nonnative ungulates. Specifically, the candidate will conduct research designed to answer the following questions: What are the population sizes of nonnative, feral ungulate species (goats, sheep, and cattle) in different ecosystem types ranging from lowland dry forests to montane shrublands and grasslands, and do population sizes vary seasonally? Do ungulates preferentially use certain habitats, and does habitat selection vary seasonally? What is the effect of habitat selection on vegetation community structure and composition?

Primary duties will include assisting project leaders in designing and conducting research to address the questions outlined above. Specific duties include (i) compile and analyze existing data on nonnative ungulate population size and structure; (ii) design and develop field protocols for sampling behavioral ecology of nonnative ungulates; (iii) lead field campaigns for ungulate sampling, including the supervision of field crews; and (iv) compilation, analysis, and presentation of results in written and oral formats.

The graduate research assistant will be expected to (i) work independently under the supervision of the project leaders; (ii) create written reports and graphic presentations of research results for scientific meetings and journal publications; (iii) assist project leaders in writing research proposals to secure additional funding.

Minimum Qualifications: Regular graduate standing within University of Hawai‘i at Manoa; coursework and field experience in animal or wildlife ecology; ability to work alone and lead small field crews in remote and challenging field conditions; valid drivers license.
Desirable Qualifications: Familiarity with sampling methods for behavioral ecology of ungulates; experience with native and nonnative plant and animal species identification in Hawaii; experience with field data collection and analysis; experience with professional presentation of research results at scientific meetings and in peer-reviewed journal publications; experience driving a 4WD vehicle in remote terrain.

Minimum Annual Stipend: $16,824 (.50 FTE, 11-months) + full tuition exemption

Duration: January 1, 2009 – December 31, 2009 or June 1, 2009 – May 31, 2010 (Renewable on a yearly basis, dependent upon continued funding and satisfactory performance of assigned duties)

Application Materials: Send (i) letter of application stating how you meet the minimum and/or desirable qualifications to the contact address below; (ii) current CV (not resume) including education history, past and current job experience, list of undergraduate and graduate coursework pertinent to the job description (official transcripts not necessary), list of professional presentations and publications, and (iii) contact information (name, phone number, email, and mailing address) of three professional references. Electric submission via email (single document in PDF format) is preferred. Send email to litton@hawaii.edu and lepczyk@hawaii.edu with WILDLIFE R.A. APPLICATION in the subject field.

Closing Date: The announcement will remain open until a suitable candidate has been identified

For more info, contact:

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