

## POST-GRADUATE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY

### INITIAL EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST SOUGHT

"Increasing the understanding of the breeding and feeding ecology of the Manumea (*Didunculus strigirostris*) and the Ma'oma'o (*Gymnomyza samoensis*) in Samoa to aid species recovery."

David Butler Associates, based in Nelson, New Zealand has received funding from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)[1] through Conservation International's Pacific Islands Programme for a 3-year project to undertake research on two of Samoa's most threatened bird species. The Government of Samoa developed recovery plans for these species in 2006 and the research is directly aimed at plan objectives to find out vital information needed to design programmes for their recovery.

We initially offer one PhD scholarship to start in 2010, as detailed below, and request Expressions of Interest from students for this.

There should be opportunities for shorter-term MSc research once the project is up and running (late 2010 or 2011) and we also invite students to also begin correspondence on this.

#### PhD Scholarship:

#### Research required

The student is expected to carry out research that will contribute significantly to the project's objective as in its title. He/she will most likely work on one of the species, rather than both, following individuals carrying radio-transmitters to obtain detailed information on breeding or feeding ecology or both. There will be an emphasis on working closely with local village communities who own the land occupied by the birds

Project staff have undertaken some preliminary work identifying a suitable study area for the Ma'oma'o and successfully trialling netting techniques. Further work is needed to identify an area for the Manumea and a student wishing to work on this species may be expected to also collect information on other pigeons and doves to generate sufficient data.

#### Support offered

The project can provide an annual scholarship of NZ\$27,000 for 3 years together with 3 return economy flights from New Zealand. There is a significant budget available for equipment based on the provision of high mist-net rigs, radio transmitters to place on birds, and remote cameras to

photograph nests. Vehicle support will also be provided.

The student will also receive support and mentoring from the project manager, Dr David Butler who spent 3 years in Samoa as its national Biodiversity Adviser in the mid-1990's and has worked on several conservation projects since, and from a project advisor Dr Ralph Powlesland, a Department of Conservation scientist with many years experience of research on birds. Several conservation professionals in Samoa are also expected to provide local support. The student is expected to have a University supervisor with interest and experience in this or a related research area. Dr Ulf Beichle, Germany, will also be involved in research on the Manumea.

Initial Expressions of Interest:

The following information should be provided:

. Name and contact details

. Research outline - A detailed research proposal is not required at this stage, but the student is expected to identify which species they wish to work on and which particular aspects are of most interest to them within the outline given.

. University and supervisor (if known) - If you already have a university and prospective supervisor lined up please provide details. If not, the project team will be able to put you in touch with lecturers from several Universities who have already expressed an interest in involvement in this project.

. Relevant skills and experience - This will be a challenging project working with rare birds alongside local communities in a tropical environment. The successful student is expected to have prior experience in field research in a remote location, ideally with birds, and to demonstrate an interest in/experience of working with indigenous communities.

Please send your expression of interest (EoI) together with an updated CV to David Butler at [d.butler@xtra.co.nz](mailto:d.butler@xtra.co.nz) or 588, Brook Street, Nelson, NZ. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you would like further information before completing your EoI.

Your EoI should be received by 19 February 2010. Applications received after that date could be considered until a successful applicant has been identified.