

Volunteer Positions on the Crazy Ant Strike Team at Johnston Atoll National Wildlife Refuge

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Reefs National Wildlife Refuge Complex, is seeking 2-3 volunteers for a 6-month field camp on Johnston Island starting in Honolulu in March/April 2011.

Johnston Atoll National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is located in the central Pacific Ocean, 717 nautical miles west-southwest of Honolulu. The refuge is managed for 14 species of breeding seabirds and 5 species of wintering shorebirds, and for its coral reef and diverse marine organisms, including the threatened green turtle. The atoll comprises four small islands (696 acres), which constitute the only land area in over 450,000 square miles of ocean. The emergent land associated with this refuge provides critical, rat-free habitat for central Pacific seabird populations; its coral reef ecosystem is an important marine resource.

The refuge currently has a small camp of 4 human inhabitants. President Calvin Coolidge recognized the atoll's importance as a wildlife site and designated Johnston Island a National Wildlife Refuge back in 1926. In 1934 President Roosevelt added a military mission to the area and for the next 70 years the government used the atoll in a variety of capacities; as a base during Viet Nam, for the testing of nuclear weapons, and for the storage and destruction of chemical weapons. During the 1950's and 1960's several thousand people lived at Johnston. The main island at Johnston was originally about 64 acres, however, it was enlarged in various dredge and fill operations to its present size of about 640 acres. The dredging destroyed some of the extensive coral reefs but much remains. The military has ended their mission at Johnston and departed the atoll in 2004 after several years of clean-up activities. Now Johnston has been returned to the wildlife that had it in the beginning and where there once were buildings, seabirds are again. Johnston Atoll NWR is also part of the newly created Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument. For more information see <http://www.fws.gov/johnstonisland/> In January 2010, an infestation of *Anoplolepis gracilipes*, or yellow crazy ants (YCA) affecting approximately 70 acres of 640-acre of Johnston Island.

Yellow crazy ants, named because of their manic behavior when disturbed, have wreaked havoc on ecosystems and bird habitats in other parts of the world; therefore the presence of this infestation is cause for great concern. Local impacts to wildlife already observed on Johnston Island include the apparent desertion of the entire affected area by ground nesting birds that previously occupied those areas (red-tailed tropicbird and wedgetailed shearwater) and a possible reduction in density and numbers of tree-nesting bird species inside the area colonized by YCA (red-footed booby and white tern). The potential for even greater impacts to the terrestrial ecosystem at Johnston Atoll is great if the infestation of YCA is left unchecked.

A 6-month field camp has been working since August 2010, to eradicate the invasive ant. Duties performed by this and future camps include: 1) in Honolulu; packing and preparing gear, food, and all items necessary for the camp; and 2) on-island include; maintaining pesticide bait stations, monitoring and enforcement of quarantine measures, monitoring ant and bird populations, bike and camp maintenance. The camp consists of 4 people led by a biologist with extensive remote camp experience.

As a volunteer you will have the opportunity to live in this remote setting. You will be surrounded by birds and sea life. Johnston is a remote site where all but emergency access is by ship, which takes 3-5 days to transit from Honolulu. On the island, transportation will be by foot or bicycle. Living conditions are primitive and require sleeping and resting in 12x14x6 ft personal tents and a bunker will be used for communal/food storage and prep/working. Bathing is done in sea water. Contact with the island is relatively good and includes slow internet access. However, this can not be guaranteed and communication could be limited to text only e-mail with no internet. No resupply or ship visits during the 6-month camp are anticipated. Volunteers will be expected to work at least 40-50 hours/week, 6 days/week. However, this does not necessarily mean 8-5 M-F as some projects will necessitate working evenings or consecutive days.

Primary responsibilities will include: Ant bait application and monitoring Entomological surveys Seabird, shorebird, and sea turtle surveys Data collection and management Weekly and summary reporting Camp establishment/disestablishment Camp maintenance and chores Requirements: Easy going attitude, strong work ethic, ability to work and live with a small group of people every day for 6 months straight without a break. Ability to be a self-motivating, independent, reliable, and courteous team member. Must be able to walk 10 miles per day in hot and humid conditions, lift 70 lbs, comfortable with insecticide use, and ride a bicycle. Much stooping and bending will be required to maintain the bait stations. Weather conditions can be harsh with strong winds, gales, and hot sun. Since travel to the island is by boat, and at times in high surf conditions, the possibility of capsizing exists. Applicants must be able to swim. All Strike Team members must follow all pesticide and safety protocols. Direct medical attention is at minimum 1-3 days away. Safety in this remote setting is of primary concern and all individuals are expected to work together as a team to maintain good communication at all times. Prior experience in the following is recommended: invasive species control, shorebird and seabird identification and monitoring, entomological surveying, GIS use and mapping, data management, and pesticide application.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will provide: housing and a living stipend in Honolulu (precamp staging and post camp breakdown and debrief), transportation between Honolulu and Johnston, onisland quarantine clothes, and food and housing on Johnston.

Applications will be evaluated as they arrive and the positions will be filled quickly. Please submit a cover letter, resume, and at least 3 references to: Lee Ann Woodward <lee_ann_woodward@fws.gov> and Jen Tietjen <jtginseng@hotmail.com>



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