

## Crazy Ant Strike Team Crew Leader CAST VI Expedition to Johnston Atoll

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Research Corporation of the University of Hawaii are now accepting applications for the crew leader of The 6<sup>th</sup> Crazy Ant Strike Team (CAST VI) Expedition to Johnston Atoll National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Johnston Atoll 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 in addition to its diverse coral reef and marine organism assemblages, including the threatened green turtle. The atoll comprises four small islands (696 acres), which constitute the only land area in over 750,000 square miles of ocean. The emergent land associated with this refuge provides critical, rat-free habitat for central Pacific seabird populations and its coral reef ecosystem is an important marine resource. The refuge is uninhabited except for the 5 members of the strike team.

In January 2010, an infestation of *Anoplolepis gracilipes*, or yellow crazy ants (YCA) was found affecting approximately 130 acres of the 640-acre 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 wedge-tailed 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 substantial if the infestation of YCA is left unchecked. Efforts have been ongoing since August of 2010 and YCA numbers have been reduced by 99% and the seabirds have begun to return. A crew leader is being sought to lead a team of volunteers to continue the eradication effort and destroy the last 1% of the ants remaining on the island, monitor the returning seabird populations and conduct other management activities.

Candidates for the Crew Leader position will need to be available in early May to assist with trip preparation followed by an approximate 6-month deployment to the CAST field camp starting in early June. The crew leader will be responsible for training and supervising a crew of 4 volunteers in the performance of management activities, biological monitoring, research investigations and facility maintenance. The primary goal of the CAST VI expedition will be to continue eradication efforts of the last 1% of the YCA. Responsibilities will include but are not limited to:

- Fine tune monitoring techniques for presence-absence of YCA.
- Following standard operating procedures and protocols.
- Develop, institute, and evaluate biosecurity (quarantine) protocols to prevent the spread of YCA.
- Eradicate ants using a combination of commercially available formicides in bait stations and other application methods.
- Evaluate the ecological impacts of YCA within and outside the infested area before and after ant eradication efforts.
- The submission of weekly Situation Reports to Project Managers
- The creation of a technical report on methods to eradicate yellow crazy ants from island ecosystems.

- Additional biological monitoring of seabird, shorebird, and sea turtle populations.
- Training and supervising volunteers in all the skills and techniques necessary in the performance of biological field work and remote living.

The ideal candidate will have experience in remote camping, supervising crews, conducting biological surveys, application and safe handling techniques of non-restricted pesticides, maintenance of photovoltaic systems, generators, bicycles, and other camp related equipment.

It is imperative that candidates consider that Johnston is a remote site where all but emergency access is by ship, which takes 3-5 days to transit from Honolulu. No re-supply or ship visits during the 6-month camp are anticipated. On the island, transportation will primarily be by foot or bicycle with 1-mile daily commutes to the work site. Living conditions are primitive and consist of 12x14x6 ft personal sleeping tents while a bunker is used for communal/food storage/kitchen and office areas. Bathing and washing is done in sea water. Contact with the island has proven to be reliable but is limited to slow internet access. However, this internet access cannot be guaranteed and team members must be prepared in case communications become limited to text only e-mail with no internet browsing capability. 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.

CAST members will be expected to work at least 48 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 and these hours include general maintenance tasks required for general upkeep of a field camp. Pay scale is equivalent to a GS-7 position.

Requirements: Must be Available from May-Dec 2013. Must possess a bachelors or higher degree in a biological science or natural resource management related field. At least 24-months of biological field work experience. Ability to maintain facilities such as photovoltaic systems, propane appliances, bicycles. Must be able to walk 10 miles per day, lift 70 lbs, be comfortable with insecticide use, be able to swim and ride a bicycle. Much stooping and bending will be required to maintain the bait stations-candidates need to be fit and able to work in hot humid conditions. Weather conditions can be harsh with strong winds, gales, and hot sun. All Strike Team members must follow all pesticide and safety protocols. Most possess a valid driver's license and passport that does not expire before Jan 2014.

Prior experience in the following is preferred: remote camping experience, invasive species control, shorebird and seabird identification and monitoring, entomological surveying, familiar with GIS tools and ArcMap software, data management, pesticide application, and technical report writing.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will provide: housing in Honolulu (pre-deployment staging and post camp breakdown and debrief), transportation between Honolulu and Johnston, and food and housing on Johnston.

The position will be open until filled but interview are scheduled to begin April 2nd. Submit a cover letter, resume and at least 3 references to both:

[Stefan\\_Kropidowski@fws.gov](mailto:Stefan_Kropidowski@fws.gov)

[LeeAnn\\_Woodward@fws.gov](mailto:LeeAnn_Woodward@fws.gov)