

PhD Position in Terrestrial Vertebrate Ecology
University of Victoria, Victoria, B.C., Canada



Project Title: Mammalian predators and prey on islands

The introduction of mammalian predators on islands is one of the principal causes of biodiversity losses worldwide. This has focused attention on the physiological, behavioural and life history traits of island prey that make them peculiarly naïve to mammalian predators. Mammalian predators on islands may disproportionately affect their prey due to the combination of both: the paucity or absence of predators that prey on them; and a relative abundance of food, e.g. in the form of easily captured naïve prey. Whereas recent work suggests not just naïve prey but marine nutrient inputs may contribute to the abundance of food on islands, little attention has been paid to the paucity or absence of predators of the predators on islands. This is surprising as most mammalian predators on islands implicated in biodiversity losses are medium-sized, or 'mesopredators', and 'mesopredator release', due to the persecution of larger mammalian carnivores, has been implicated in biodiversity losses in continental ecosystems. The objective of this research is to address questions concerning mammalian introductions and extirpations, prey naïveté and mesopredator release in a model archipelago, specifically B.C.'s Gulf Islands. Work will entail surveys identifying which species are present, genetic analyses and archival searches to determine which have been introduced and which extirpated, isotopic analyses to establish the potential importance of marine nutrient inputs, and behavioural and physiological experiments to determine whether mesopredators have begun to 'forget' about their predators. The research will be conducted in collaboration with Parks Canada to assist in conservation planning concerning the Gulf Islands National Park (www.pc.gc.ca/pn-np/bc/gulf/index_E.asp).

Supervisor and collaborators

Dr Michael Clinchy (supervisor), UVIC, <http://web.uvic.ca/~mclinchy/>

Dr Rudy Boonstra, University of Toronto, www.uts.utoronto.ca/~cns/boonstra.html

Dr Bryan Neff, U of Western Ontario, <http://publish.uwo.ca/~bneff/>

Dr Liana Zanette, U of Western Ontario, www.lianazanette.com

Requirements

Applicants should have an MSc in a subject related to the ecology of terrestrial vertebrates or a BSc followed by at least 2 years of relevant field experience.

Funding

Financial support is available for a truly remarkable candidate though applicants possessing their own scholarship or fellowship will be considered first (e.g.: NSERC CGSD or PGSD www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/PG-CS/BellandPostgrad-BelletSuperieures_eng.asp; NSF GRFP, www.nsfgrfp.org). Canadian and international candidates are welcome to apply.

Application

Start date: May or September, 2010

Applicants should send electronic (preferably PDF) copies of a cover letter that includes whether you have your own funding, your CV, transcripts (web-based, i.e. 'unofficial' versions are fine), a 2-page statement of research interests, and the names and contact information for three references to: Dr Michael Clinchy at mclinchy@uvic.ca