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CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS



Volunteer research assistants: Monitoring of Critically Endangered lemurs in Kianjavato, Madagascar

Hiring Organization: Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium

Project Description: Investigators at the Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium (OHDZA) seek qualified and highly motivated volunteer research assistants to contribute to an on-going lemur monitoring program in southeastern Madagascar. Nine lemur species, several of which are critically endangered, are present in the remaining yet unprotected forest fragments, as is a rich variety of other endemics (birds, chameleons, tenrecs, etc.). The monitoring effort is led by OHDZA and its partner, the Madagascar Biodiversity Partnership (MBP; a Malagasy nongovernmental organization), and project involves following social groups of two Critically Endangered lemur species: the greater bamboo lemurs (*Prolemur simus*) or the black-and-white ruffed lemurs (*Varecia variegata*) in the mountainous terrain in the Kianjavato-Vatovavy landscape. The long-term goal of this project is to offer wildlife protection while gathering information on habitat usage, population dynamics, and territorial range.



The normal work schedule will be Monday through Friday in the field. Typically, as part of the lemur monitoring team, you'll have breakfast at the field station's dining hall and will heading to the field by 6:30am. You'll be joining a team of two or three field assistants who work to track a set of radio-collared lemurs, navigating the forest, identifying individual lemurs, and collecting behavioral and habitat use data. Depending on the location and behavior of the lemurs you are monitoring, your day can be done as early as 2:30pm or go to 4:30pm. Current volunteers and research assistants will train incoming volunteers on the standard operating procedures: collection of behavioral, feeding, and ranging data on multiple social groups; the collection of phenological data and herbarium specimens; assessments of the habituation process of additional lemur groups; and how to enter and transmit data so that the principal investigators are updated every two weeks. Some of the field personnel have basic English or French skills, but are more comfortable with Malagasy. However, as they work with an increasing number of volunteers, their language skills are rapidly improving which has allowed some to become fluent English speakers.

Ultimately, the goal for the MBP volunteer program is to improve communication between the field efforts and the MBP and OHDZA office staff. Volunteers should be prepared to operate as a project manager and conservation partner – you'll need to focus on a variety of tasks, such as: data collection standardization; ensure the team is on track to reach final goals; compile data into reports; scheduling guide rotations address minor personnel issues and

report concerning behavior; handle the weekly or monthly budget for the reforestation project and prepare budget reports; evaluate the functionality of the tasks at hand; compile and submit reports regarding field data, making interpretations as necessary; be proactive in responding to requests from Omaha regarding necessary information or pictures – these are often requested to complete grant reports and should be seen as a priority. The role of facilitating communication is paramount to the program success and volunteers must take this component very seriously.



The terrain of the Kianjavato region is very steep, thus adequate physical fitness in these conditions is required. The climate is typically very warm and humid, with a rainy season (late November through April), and a slightly cooler dry season (May through November). Precautions should be made to avoid tropical diseases (e.g., malaria, schistosomiasis) – volunteers should ensure that they have the proper vaccinations and malaria prophylaxis, which are the responsibility of the successful applicant.

Research is based at the field station which was established in 2009. Infrastructure upgrades are ongoing, however conditions are currently relatively rustic. Volunteers will sleep in self-provided tents under a fixed shelter which is shared with other volunteers, and meals are basic camp fare (be prepared to eat rice at each meal). Purified water is readily available. Solar power and a generator is present to power laptops, recharge batteries, etc. on a restricted basis. There is generally good cellular phone reception at the station and in some parts of the forest. Volunteers will need to obtain their own phones and will have to pay for their own calls (even international rates are reasonable). As of early 2016, KAFS will have limited internet connectivity.



Qualifications/Experience: As indicated, adequate physical fitness is required. We prefer volunteers with at least a BA or BSc in the biological or environmental sciences (including biological anthropology). Some independent research experience will be an advantage, as will work or travel experience in tropical countries. A willingness to work in isolated conditions, the ability to solve problems independently, and dedication to a positive and respectful working environment are required.



G. McBain



2017 Volunteer Cohort Schedule:

- January Cohort
 - January 9 – 12 arrival in Madagascar
 - April 3 – 6 departure from Madagascar
- March Cohort
 - March 13 – 16 arrival in Madagascar
 - June 5 – 8 departure from Madagascar
- May Cohort
 - May 22 – 25 arrival in Madagascar
 - August 14 – 18 departure from Madagascar
- July Cohort
 - July 31 – August 3 arrival in Madagascar
 - October 23 – 27 departure from Madagascar
- October Cohort
 - October 9 – 12 arrival in Madagascar
 - December 18 – 22 departure from Madagascar

2017 costs for participating in the MBP Volunteer program:

- \$210 USD non-refundable deposit (to secure your placement with the program)
- \$58.20 USD 90 day tourist Visa (payable at the airport upon your arrival)
- \$650 USD accommodation fees (includes airport assistance, travel costs to/from field station, tent site rental, and food)

For a more details, please visit the Madagascar Biodiversity Partnership at http://madagascarpartnership.org/home/volunteer_program2

Term of Appointment: •Entry is required under a 90 day tourist visa, thus volunteers are limited to a 90 day stay.

Application Deadline: immediately; the positions will be filled by the first qualified applicants. This is an on-going call for volunteers throughout 2016 and into 2017. **Volunteers that arrive before June 2016 may qualify for a special discount on the accommodation fees.** Please inquire about current vacancies.

Comments: Applicants should send a letter of interest, curriculum vitae, and contact information for two references to Dr. Ed Louis (genetics AT omahazoo DOT com).