



Mampifandray Ny Tontolo.
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CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS



Volunteer research assistants: Conservation 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 conservation 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). Through this project, volunteers will participate in two important conservation efforts: habitat restoration and lemur monitoring. During a 12-week tenure, volunteer cohorts will split their time in half, spending 5 weeks with one of two lemur monitoring programs and 5 weeks with the community-based reforestation effort. There would be a week where volunteers would need to train with the other team, and about a week in the capital city upon arrival or before departure.



The **lemur monitoring 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, when working with 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.





The **community-based reforestation initiative** reached an important five-year milestone of planting **ONE MILLION TREES** in partnership with local communities in December 2016. This grassroots reforestation effort reconnects and expands natural habitats over the mountainous terrain around Kianjavato while sustainably benefiting the 14,000 area residents. With new grant funding and growing interest from neighboring villages, the reforestation program continues to expand. As a volunteer, you'll have a dynamic daily work routine; you may be working at the primary field station or at the multiple tree nurseries; you could be collecting seeds within an established forest; or at a field site preparing for a community planting event. Duties may include sorting compost, placing seedlings into growing bags, organizing the tree inventory, transplanting trees with the local community groups or school children. The ultimate goal of the reforestation program is to plant one million trees as a means to establish corridors between forest fragments and restore ecosystem services. In order reach this substantial goal, there is a need for streamlining the reforestation effort – from seed collection, germination, and transplantation – and this is where the volunteers can make a significant and lasting contribution to the project.



The work schedule for the reforestation volunteer may vary, but will operate during daylight hours, Monday through Friday, with members of the reforestation team and nursery staff arriving at the job site around 7:00am. You will typically work with three other volunteers and a team of knowledgeable Malagasy field guides. The reforestation team consists of rotating OHDZA employees, Malagasy MBP field assistants and graduate students, along with numerous nursery managers and assistants from the local community. Current volunteers and the nursery staff will show incoming volunteers their procedure for growing seedlings and related activities in the nurseries, while the reforestation field personnel will demonstrate procedures for planting in the landscape.





For all volunteer programs, you will work with at least one other volunteer and a team of knowledgeable Malagasy field guides or nursery personnel. While some MBP employees have basic English and French skills, many others are more comfortable with Malagasy, especially some of the nursery staff based in remote villages. 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.

Kianjavato: 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.



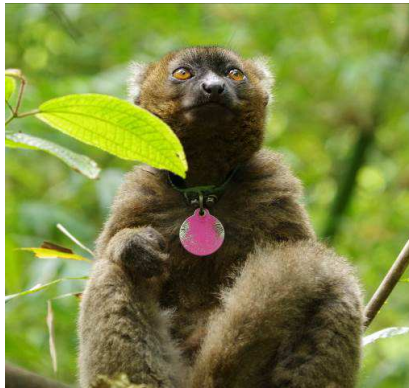
Research is based at the field station which was established in 2009. Infrastructure upgrades are ongoing; however, conditions are currently relatively rustic. Volunteers will sleep in self-provided tents under a fixed shelter which is shared with other volunteers, and meals are basic camp fare (be prepared 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). The field station has no shared Wi-Fi, however, there are ways for you to create your own personal hotspot, largely by bringing an unlocked, Wi-Fi capable device, and purchasing a SIM card and plan that allows for data connectivity. Pretty amazing that you can have phone and internet when you are in rural Madagascar!



Qualifications/Experience: We prefer volunteers with at least a BA or BSc in the biological or environmental sciences, tropical restoration and forest management experience is a plus. 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 is vital.



2018 Volunteer Cohort Schedule:

January Cohort

- o January 8 – 11 arrival in Madagascar
- o April 2 – 5 departure from Madagascar

March Cohort

- o March 12 – 15 arrival in Madagascar
- o June 4 – 7 departure from Madagascar

May Cohort

- o May 21 – 24 arrival in Madagascar
- o August 13 – 17 departure from Madagascar

July Cohort

- o July 30 – August 2 arrival in Madagascar
- o October 22 – 26 departure from Madagascar

October Cohort

- o October 1 – 4 arrival in Madagascar
- o December 17 – 21 departure from Madagascar

2018 costs for participating in the MBP Volunteer program:

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

For a more details, please visit the Madagascar Biodiversity Partnership at <http://madagascarpartnership.org/volunteering/>

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 in an on-going call for volunteers throughout 2018. 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).

