Masters opportunity in the department of Zoology and Entomology

The Great Fish River Nature Reserve (GFRNR) is home to two tree Euphorbia species, namely *Euphorbia tetragona* and *E. triangularis*. These two Euphorbia species are important taxa in the Great Fish Thicket vegetation type. However, in the late 1980s, park management noted an increase in the mortality of the tree euphorbia species in the reserve, with the increase in mortality ascribed to black rhinoceros foraging activity. Mortality from black rhinoceros foraging has subsequently declined and tree euphorbia in the reserve are likely surviving the high density of black rhinoceros by remaining in refugia that are inaccessible to the megaherbivores. However, these refugia are accessible to baboons, which are observed to damage Euphorbia species by eating the growth meristem out of trees. Notably, not only are these species iconic on the landscape, but they are also listed on appendix II of CITES, suggesting global concern over the genus as a whole. Thus, the proposed study will investigate the potential impact of baboons on these plant populations to provide a better understanding of the conservation of tree euphorbia's in the GFRNR.

As part of this research focus, we are looking for a full-time Masters candidate to investigate the impact of baboon on tree Euphorbia in the GFRNR. The project is fully funded and a bursary of R80 000.00 per year is available for 2 years (2020 – 2021). The successful candidate can also apply for National Research Foundation bursary. The successful applicant will be registered in the department of Zoology and Entomology, Rhodes University, Grahamstown and supervised by Dr Nokubonga Mgqatsa and Dr Craig Tambling, University of Fort Hare.

**Requirements:**

- A BSc honours in Zoology, or another cognate discipline with a good understanding of ecology;
- Excellent academic record;
- Written and oral proficiency in English;
- Able to work independently under potentially harsh field conditions;
- Be available to start the Masters programme early next year (2020)

Interested candidates should email the following to n.mgqatsa@ru.ac.za

- Curriculum vitae with two contactable academic referees, motivational letter and academic record.

**Closing Date: 31 October 2019**