

A **PhD Studentship** is available to work on

Testing impacts of ant-plant protection mutualisms on plant community dynamics in Papua New Guinea

A highly motivated postgraduate student is sought to join a project exploring the effects of ant inhabitation of trees on plant community dynamics. Usually proximity to adult conspecifics reduces survival of plant seedlings due to sharing of natural enemies between adult trees and seedlings. We seek to test the hypothesis that for plants regularly inhabited by ants that protect them from herbivory, proximity to adult trees is beneficial due to ant partner sharing. We will also explore whether this process is likely to affect the dynamics of entire plant communities. The student will conduct field surveys for ant-inhabited trees, measure ant and plant fitness correlates, and perform experimental seedling transplants. There will also be opportunities to develop the project in a direction of the student's own choosing. Duties will include spending extensive periods of time in the field in Papua New Guinea.

The successful applicant will join the Ant Research Group (<http://antscience.com/>) at the Institute of Entomology, Biology Centre Academy of Sciences, Ceske Budejovice, Czech Republic, under the supervision of Tom Fayle (<http://www.tomfayle.com/index.htm>), Petr Klimes (<https://www.entu.cas.cz/en/staff/profile/424/>), and Vojtech Novotny (<https://www.plantanimalinteractions.com/>). The laboratory is a dynamic, multinational group studying ant ecology, evolution and biogeography, and is embedded within the Department of Ecology and Conservation Biology, a world-class centre for interaction network research with regular publications in *Science*, *Nature* and other leading journals. The deadline for applications is **December 28th 2018**, with a start date of March 1st 2019. The student will receive a scholarship from the University of South Bohemia and employment on an ongoing grant for the 4-year PhD course, sufficient to cover living expenses in Czech Republic. Applicants from all countries are eligible.

Required

- A master's degree (non-negotiable requirement for PhD study in Czech Republic).
- Interest in the ecology of insects and/or plants.
- 1st or upper second (2.1) undergraduate degree in ecology or related subject (or equivalent).
- Enthusiasm for working in the field for extended periods of time in challenging conditions in tropical rain forest.
- Ability to work independently and manage small teams of assistants.
- Fluency in spoken and written English
- Experience in the use of ecological statistical analyses.

Desirable

- Previous experience of tropical field work.
- Research experience with plant or insect ecology.
- Experience with basic ecological molecular lab work relating to use for species identification
- Experience with scientific publishing in the above field

To apply please send a CV, contact details for three references, and cover letter stating qualifications, previous work and motivation to Tom Fayle (tmfayle@gmail.com). Please also feel free to get in touch to discuss the project further.