PhD Fellowship for research on Namibia’s Desert-dwelling elephant and giraffe

The proposed project will look at the interaction between the mega-herbivores (principally elephant and giraffe) in the ephemeral rivers (Hoanib, Hoarusib and Khumib Rivers) of arid northwest Namibia. The project will primarily focus on resource use and competition between the two species, but will also investigate the interaction with other fauna.

A PhD fellowship opportunity is available for an independent and self-motivated student who has a 1st Class Honours degree in Biological Sciences and has an Australian Government Postgraduate Award. This project will be supported in Namibia by the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) and the student will enrol in a PhD programme at University of New South Wales.

In addition to studying resource use and competition between the two mega-herbivores of Northwest Namibia, the successful applicant will use computer-assisted photographic mark-recapture methods to update and study the population dynamics of the elephant and giraffe populations in Namibia’s north-western rivers. There is also an opportunity to work with collaborators on further characterising the structure of the populations and to collaborate with Namibian students. The results from the project will be used to assist communal conservancies and Namibian stakeholders in developing Local and National Action Plans to help insure the survival of these threatened populations.

We are seeking applicants with demonstrated ability to work independently in a developing country. Must be highly self-motivated and detail oriented. Preferably, but not mandatory is, experience with mark-recapture analysis, ability to produce publication quality scientific writing, 4x4 experience, ability to live for extended periods in remote areas and previous experience in Africa.

The successful applicant will receive limited fellowship support from GCF and University of New South Wales. The candidate must enrol in a PhD programme within the School of Biological Earth and Environmental Studies (BEES), University of New South Wales and receive an Australian Government Postgraduate Award.

Interested applicants should send an expression of interest and CV directly to Dr Keith Leggett (k.leggett@unsw.edu.au) and Dr Julian Fennessy (julian@giraffeconservation.org).

Applicants will be expected to commence their PhD research in mid-2015. Promising applicants will be contacted by February 2014 and shortly thereafter and invited to formally apply to the program, interviews (if required) will be held in March 2015.