Cape Ground Squirrel Project
Kalahari Research Trust/University of Zurich

Open position for a 12-month volunteering as a field assistant!
Starting from June 2023 onwards

More info: https://kalahariresearchcentre.org/volunteering/
Contact: cgsproject@hotmail.com

The Project
The Cape Ground squirrel Project is a long-term project for the past eleven years, numerous ground squirrel groups in the South African Kalahari Desert have been intensively studied with life history, morphological and behavioural data. These data are used to investigate how altered rainfall-drought cycles in combination with increased temperatures are predicted to impact individual animals and population dynamics of species. To determine if climate changes influence body conditions and survival of Cape ground squirrels, we analyse the life history, behavioural and body mass data at an individual level in relation to seasonal changes. Understanding the level of behavioural plasticity of species in an arid environment can provide insight into survivability of animals exposed to increasing temperatures and decreasing rainfall resulting from climate change.

What we offer
Training for volunteers includes correct procedures relating to habituation of squirrels, data collection, captures for morphological measurements under veterinary supervision, in field ultrasound scans of suspected pregnant females, and necessary administrative duties. Accommodation and food will be provided. We also provide (limited) basic satellite internet connection, with a usage allowance per month, any extra usage would be at the volunteer’s own cost. A basic student stipend will be given every month. A volunteer is expected to work 5 days a week with two full days off a week. The expected duration of stay is one full year with three weeks of holidays allowed.

Thinking of applying?

- Successful applicants usually have a good degree in the biological sciences and interest in animal behavioural studies.
• Although having about 30+ people living in the reserve, applicants should have the ability to work and live with a team of 2-3 people and be able to also work alone, for extended periods of time. Furthermore, applicants will rarely be able to leave the reserve.

• Applicants should be physically fit, hardworking, mentally strong, prepared for physically challenging work and long days in field.

• In addition, the successful applicant may often be called upon to work longer hours on duties unrelated to their primary work, but for research station maintenance and communal living.

• Due to the isolated location of the site, conducting field work in often extreme weather (high temperatures in summer, and low temperatures in winter), and being away from friends and family for long periods, both the physical and mental comfort of the applicant may be affected. The applicant should thus be self-sufficient, self-motivated, and passionate about their work.

• As it takes some time to learn the necessary field skills, we will consider in priority applicants who are able to stay for 12 months, and applicants should be in possession of a valid driving license.

• Due to Covid-19 restrictions, we require new applicants to be fully vaccinated before arrival. Depending on changes to the pandemic situation, quarantine upon arrival may be necessary and would be fully provided for in self-contained accommodation.

• To apply: All applicants should provide a single PDF document containing their CV and a relevant cover letter detailing their experience and interest for the position. Send your application to cgsproject@hotmail.com.

Apply before March 31st, 2023

Photo by Kitty Fouvet