



PhD Position in Ornithology

(salary level TV-L E13, 65%)



“The pre-migratory flight behaviour in a songbird migrant”

Institute of Avian Research “Vogelwarte Helgoland”, Wilhelmshaven, Germany

A PhD position in the behavioural ecology of migratory songbirds is available at the Institute of Avian Research “Vogelwarte Helgoland”, a non-university research centre in the portfolio of the Lower Saxonian Ministry of Science and Cultural Affairs. The position runs from January 2021 to December 2023 and is embedded in the project on “The pre-migratory flight behaviour in a songbird migrant – spatiotemporal characteristics and potential delayed fitness consequences” funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

The successful candidate will focus on three main objectives: i) The spatial and temporal patterns of the pre-migratory flight behaviour in juvenile and adult songbirds. ii) Do breeding events and the pre-migratory flights have delayed fitness consequences through the start of autumn migration and the return to the breeding area? iii) The genetic basis for the pre-migratory flight behaviour. The field study will be conducted with the northern wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*), a trans-Saharan songbird migrant, using the breeding population on the German Wadden Sea island Norderney. The combination of an array of radio receiving stations (Motus, <https://motus.org/>) in the North Sea and radio-transmitters running for > 1 year will enable the candidate to record the spatiotemporal characteristics of the pre-migratory flights, the start of autumn migration and subsequent breeding area arrival timing in unprecedented detail. The realization of this project will provide detailed knowledge about the pre-migratory flights under natural and laboratory conditions that are essential for a holistic understanding of bird migration.

Main responsibilities

- conducting field studies on Norderney from early April to end of June during three years,
- analysing highly complex radio-tracking data derived from a large-scale array of multiple radio receiving stations (using R),
- statistical analyses of multifaceted and large data sets (including circular data, using R),
- formulating and solving scientific problems and interpreting research results,
- collaborating with other scientists of the Institute of Avian Research, the Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg and beyond
- writing scientific publications and presenting results at international conferences

Applicant's profile

We seek a smart and highly motivated student with

- a university degree in a relevant discipline with specialization in behavioural ecology, movement ecology, migration or tracking of animals,
- strong interest in and experience with biological/ornithological fieldwork, including preferable bird ringing,
- high motivation for intensive fieldwork on Norderney from early April to the end of June each year,
- strong experience with the statistical software R (including modelling and programming),
- general interest in bird migration, movement ecology questions and orientation/navigation,
- ability to work both independently and creatively and as part of a team and
- excellent oral and written communication skills in English and at least basic communication skills in German

Position

The position is available from January 2021 to December 2023 and paid according to TVL E13 (<http://oeffentlicher-dienst.info/tv-l/west/>) with 65% of the regular work hours. The place of work will be at the institute's headquarters in Wilhelmshaven and on Norderney.

The Institute of Avian Research is an equal opportunity employer, determined to increase the proportion of women in successful scientific careers. If equally qualified, disabled applicants will be preferably considered.

Applicants must send **a single pdf file** (max. 10 MB) via e-mail containing a cover letter with a statement of motivation, CV (with academic education/degrees, professional experience, fellowships/awards, conference contributions, experience with R and further relevant skills), concise statement of research interests, the names and addresses of two professional referees and copies of transcripts and degree certificates **by 15 October 2020** to heiko.schmaljohann@ifv-vogelwarte.de. We will start looking at the applications as soon as they are submitted and will consider further applications until the position is filled. For further questions, contact PD Dr Heiko Schmaljohann via e-mail.

Please note that applying by email is not entirely secure and may pose a privacy risk. The sender assumes full responsibility.