PhD Position in Ecology

The Institute of Landscape and Plant Ecology at the University of Hohenheim in Stuttgart (Germany) seeks a PhD student in plant invasion ecology. Preferred starting date is 1 March 2018 with a duration of three years. The position is part of a research project funded by the Eliteprogramme for Postdocs of the Baden-Württemberg Stiftung. The project is led by Dr. Christine Sabine Sheppard and focuses on the performance of, and interactions among, multiple co-occurring plant invaders.

Responsibilities

Biological invasions are a major driver of global change. Communities increasingly contain multiple alien species, and thus it is essential to better understand the combined impacts of multiple invaders on biodiversity. Alien species may compete with each other, which may result in “invasional interference” reducing the overall impact. Alternatively, one invader may benefit from the presence of another, which could potentially lead to “invasional meltdowns”. Understanding the type of interactions among multiple co-occurring alien species is not only of great importance for effective management decisions but will also advance ecological theory of community assembly. This project investigates the strength of negative, neutral or positive interactions across a wide range of ruderal annual invasive plant species in Germany. Furthermore, the project aims to determine how mechanisms of competition or facilitation relate to patterns of phylogenetic relatedness and functional trait similarity among plants to enable generalizations beyond the study system. To address these aims, the major tasks of the PhD student will be to plan, conduct and analyse multi-species common garden experiments. In these experiments, performance of the alien study species will be investigated in various pairwise interaction and community composition scenarios.

Requirements

We are seeking a highly motivated student with a MSc (or equivalent) degree in ecology or a related discipline. The applicant should have a solid background and deep interest in ecological research, should be well organised, self-dependent and have good communication skills. The applicant should also have some previous experience with experimental plant ecology and have good knowledge of statistical data analysis (preferably using R). English language proficiency is required (both spoken and written), whereas knowledge of German is not mandatory.

Additional benefits

We offer a position in a young and dynamic international research group (led by Prof. Dr. Frank Schurr). Using a broad methodological spectrum, our group aims to better understand and
forecast biodiversity dynamics under global change (see also https://ecology.uni-hohenheim.de/67896?&L=1). The University of Hohenheim is located on a beautiful campus situated in the Southern German city of Stuttgart, which offers a rich cultural life and attractive surroundings (Swabian Alb, Black Forest).

Salary and conditions are according to public service positions in Germany (TV-L E13; 50%; see http://oeffentlicher-dienst.info/tv-l/west).

Application

For further information and to submit applications please contact Dr. Christine Sabine Sheppard (christine.sheppard@uni-hohenheim.de). Applications should include a motivation letter, CV, certificates and the names and contact details of two potential referees in a single PDF document.

The University of Hohenheim is an equal opportunity employer and particularly encourages applications from women.

Application deadline is 31 January 2018.