

MSc opportunity
African Coelacanth Ecosystem Programme (ACEP):
Interdisciplinary spatial solutions for marine conservation planning

Zooplankton biodiversity in relation to Critical Biodiversity Areas's (CBA's) and Marine Protected Areas's (MPA's) on the KwaZulu-Natal Coast:

Position:

The University of KwaZulu-Natal invites applications from students interested in taking on an MSc project on *Zooplankton biodiversity in relation to Critical Biodiversity Areas's (CBA's) and Marine Protected Areas's (MPA's) on the KwaZulu-Natal Coast: Implications for Conservation Planning*. The project is being coordinated by the University of KwaZulu-Natal and funded under the ACEP programme by the National Research Foundation (NRF) to the amount of R60 000 per year, full time for two years. The MSc student will be located at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Project description:

This ACEP project aims to build on the systematic conservation planning products developed by the SeaPLAN project, which identified critical biodiversity areas (CBAs) for protection on the South African east coast. It focuses on the continental shelf and shelf edge between Richards Bay and Port Edward where 5 CBAs were identified. A multidisciplinary team is conducting a high-resolution assessment of the seafloor characteristics coupled to ecosystem and species distributions and oceanographic processes. The oceanographic data will then be spatially imposed over this geological landscape, followed by the biological data, to provide an integrated categorisation of the continental shelf and shelf edge suitable for use in the marine spatial planning (MSP) and conservation analyses.

The Pelagic Work Package (WP) examines the biodiversity, composition and distribution of the zooplankton communities in relation to the physical oceanography and seabed features within and between the identified CBA's. Specific objectives for the Pelagic Work Package are:

1. To provide biological baseline data on plankton communities in the pelagic zone for integration into the multi-disciplinary spatial layers for marine conservation planning to support MPA expansion on the KZN coast.
2. Validation of existing CBA's and MPA's and proposed expansions of those areas by assessing the biodiversity, composition and abundance of zooplankton groups within and between the CBA's and MPAs.

Qualifications:

Applicants must hold a BSc (Honours) degree in biological sciences. A strong background in microscope work and zooplankton identification will be an advantage. Only South African citizens qualify.

Applications:

If you meet the requirements and would like to apply for the position, please submit your CV, full academic record, contact details of three referees, and a covering letter of motivation to Dr Shael Harris:

- e-mail: shaelh@worldonline.co.za
- Mobile: 082 8214261

Enquiries can be made telephonically to Shael (office hours) @ 082 8214261 or through email.

CLOSING DATE: 31st October 2016

Should you not have heard from us within 2 weeks of your application, please consider it unsuccessful.