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**Post Doctoral Research Assistant**

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| **Job grade** | **Post Doctoral Research Assistant** | **Reports to** | **Javier Sanchez Romano, Research Fellow in One Health** |
| **Directorate** | **Science** | **Function** | **Research** |
| **Contract** | **[4 years Fixed term contract]** | **Location** | **Regent’s Park** |

**Responsibility for resources**

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| **Direct line reports** | **Staff** | **Responsibility for other resources** | **N/A** |
| **Financial resources** | **No budget responsibility** |

**Our vision and mission**

The Zoological Society of London (ZSL) is an international conservation charity, driven by science, working to restore wildlife in the UK and around the world. Our vision is a world where wildlife thrives and every role, every person in every corner of ZSL has one thing in common – we are all conservationists, and passionate about restoring wildlife.

**Purpose of the role**

The purpose of this role is to advance science and the conservation of ecosystems in the Western Congo Basin, while supporting the delivery of the ZSL-led Biodiversity Landscape Fund (BLF) project funded by the UK Government. Your focus would be on zoonotic diseases in the Western Congo Basin (i.e., Cameroon, Gabon and Republic of the Congo), contributing to the development of disease-resilient landscapes within a One Health framework.

The successful candidate will focus on the ecology of zoonotic pathogens, particularly those associated with bats and rodents, while collaborating with local communities and consortium partners to integrate human, animal, and environmental health perspectives. This position will involve fieldwork in the region, including wildlife sampling, pathogen surveillance, and community engagement.

The holder of this role is expected to produce outcomes that will contribute to the research reputation of IOZ (Institute of Zoology) and that will support the definition and implementation of ZSL’s conservation strategies.

**Key responsibilities**

* **Conduct field research:** Undertake fieldwork activities in the Western Congo Basin, including wildlife sampling (focusing on bats, rodents, and other relevant species), camera trapping, and environmental data collection. This may also involve sampling from bushmeat in wildlife markets.
* **Zoonotic pathogen surveillance:** Design and implement studies to investigate zoonotic pathogens.
* **Data analysis and interpretation:** Analyse ecological, molecular, and social science data to understand disease dynamics, species distribution, and human-wildlife interactions in the region.
* **Community and stakeholder engagement:** Collaborate closely with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) to integrate local knowledge and ensure equitable, participatory approaches in research. Support knowledge-sharing with consortium partners and stakeholders.
* **Collaboration and networking:** Build strong working relationships with ZSL colleagues and external partners, contributing to consortium meetings and cross-disciplinary projects.
* **Dissemination of research:** Publish findings in high-impact, peer-reviewed journals and present research at national and international conferences. Contribute to science communication efforts, including public outreach and policy briefings.
* **Capacity building and training:** Contribute to training and capacity building efforts in the region by supporting local partners, researchers, and conservation practitioners, e.g., in field techniques, data management, and/or laboratory diagnostics.
* **Project Management:** Assist in the recruitment and supervision of postgraduate students, contribute to project reporting, and ensure that research milestones and deliverables are met on time.

The duties and responsibilities described are not a comprehensive list and additional tasks may be assigned from time to time that are in line with the level of the role.

**Person Specification**

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| Experience | |
| Essential | * A PhD in a relevant field and experience working in the area of One Health research. * Proven track record of publishing high-quality, peer-reviewed research in relevant areas. * Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively with transdisciplinary teams, including local communities and governmental organizations. |
| Desirable | * Experience conducting field research in remote or challenging environments. * Experience working with zoonotic pathogens, particularly those associated with wildlife (e.g., bats, rodents). * Experience conducting social sciences research e.g. questionnaires, surveys, interviews in communities and with other stakeholders. * Experience with molecular techniques such as next-generation sequencing (NGS) or metagenomics. * Previous experience working in the Congo Basin or similar ecosystems. * Familiarity with bushmeat markets and associated health risks. * An appreciation of the current challenges associated with the conservation of biodiversity in Western Congo Basin |
| Knowledge and skills | |
| Essential | * Strong knowledge of zoonotic diseases, and the One Health framework. * Excellent scientific writing skills with the ability to produce high-quality publications and reports. * Ability to communicate confidently and clearly with a wide range of people, including effective report writing, presentation, and training skills. |
| Desirable | * Fieldwork skills, including wildlife sampling techniques and/or use of camera traps. * Experience working across natural and social science disciplines. * Proficiency in data analysis, e.g., statistical modelling and interpretation of ecological or epidemiological data, or qualitative data processing and analysis (e.g., NVIVO for surveys, interviews and other qualitative data, etc). * Skills in social science data collection, such as conducting interviews, surveys, or community consultations. * Knowledge of GIS or spatial analysis tools. * Proficiency in French or local languages spoken in the Congo Basin. |
| Additional requirements | |
| Essential | * Willingness and ability to travel regularly to field sites in the Western Congo Basin, sometimes under challenging conditions. * Strong commitment to ZSL’s values, including collaboration, inclusivity, ethical conduct, and conservation impact. * Ability to manage multiple priorities and adapt to unexpected challenges in field and project settings. * Commitment to health and safety policies and promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion in research. |