

A PhD Studentship is available to work on the topic:

Impacts of spatial variation in soil properties on plant diversity in relation to anthropogenic habitat change in Malaysian Borneo

A highly motivated postgraduate student is sought to join a project exploring links between soil dwelling social insects, soil properties and plant diversity in tropical rainforest. The student will focus on the part of the project linking soil properties to plant communities. We hypothesise that small-scale spatial turnover in ant/termite composition will result in strong spatial heterogeneity at this scale, hence increasing the range of soil property niches available to plants. Loss of soil dwelling social insects to logging and conversion to oil palm plantations reduces social insect diversity, and we hypothesise that this will reduce the ability of this arthropod group to support diverse plant communities via impacts on soil properties. The student will use a combination of field surveys for plants, assays for soil properties, field-based experimental manipulations to explore soil-plant links, and collaboration with ongoing long-term research being conducted in large scale permanent vegetation plots. Field work will be based in Danum Valley Field Centre, a world leading tropical field station. Duties will include spending extensive periods of time in the field in Malaysian Borneo. There will also be opportunities to develop the project in a direction of the students' own choosing, and to form collaborations with a range of international partners.

The successful applicant will join the Ant Research Group (<http://antscience.com/>) at the Institute of Entomology, Biology Centre Academy of Sciences, Ceske Budejovice, Czech Republic, under the supervision of Tom Fayle (<http://www.tomfayle.com/index.htm>) and Petr Klimes (<https://antscience.com/people/>). The laboratory is a dynamic, multinational group studying ant ecology, evolution and biogeography, and is embedded within the Department of Ecology and Conservation Biology, a world-class centre for tropical ecology research with regular publications in *Science*, *Nature*, *Ecology Letters* and other leading journals. The research facility is in Ceske Budejovice, a charming historical city in the south of the country, within easy reach of Prague and Vienna.

The deadline for applications is February 28th 2024, with an expected start date of 1st May 2024 (negotiable). The students will be employed on an ongoing grant from the Czech Science Foundation (3 years) and will enrol to PhD programme for the 4-year PhD course and receive a scholarship from the Faculty of Science at University of South Bohemia, which combined are sufficient to cover living expenses in Czech Republic, and will be registered on **the Ecosystem Biology and Ecology or Botany PhD programmes**. Applicants from all countries are eligible.

Required

- A master's degree (non-negotiable requirement for PhD study in Czech Republic).
- Interest in the plant ecology or soil science.
- 1st or upper second (2.1) undergraduate degree in ecology or related subject (or equivalent: <https://tinyurl.com/y2kcw2c8>)
- Enthusiasm for working in the field for extended periods of time in challenging conditions in tropical rain forest.
- Ability to work independently, manage small teams of assistants, and collaborate with other team members.
- Fluency in spoken and written English.
- Experience in the use of ecological statistical analyses.

Desirable

- Previous experience of tropical field work.
- Research experience with ecology/soil science.
- Experience with scientific publishing in the above fields.

To apply please send a **CV, contact details for three references, and cover letter** stating qualifications, previous work and motivation for this position to **Jana Liparova** (slancarova@entu.cas.cz). Please make sure to specify the title of the position you wish to apply for, as we are advertising two studentships on this project. If you would like to discuss the project further, please feel free to contact Tom Fayle (tmfayle@gmail.com).