UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

Call for applicants for Master's Field Scholarship

A. Background

The East African Wild Life Society (EAWLS), in collaboration with the University of Nairobi, Wangari Maathai Institute (UON-WMI), and Wildlife Research and Training Institute (WRTI), with funding from the JRS Biodiversity Foundation, is implementing a three-year project focused on the Lake Ol Bolossat Ecosystem. Dubbed **"Unlocking Biodiversity Data to facilitate Designation of Lake Ol Bolossat as the 7th Ramsar Site in Kenya,"** the project aims to generate biodiversity data to inform conservation and management interventions within the ecosystem as well as facilitate the designation of Lake Ol Bolossat as the 7th Ramsar site in Kenya. Specifically, the project aims to:

1. Establish the ecological characteristics of Lake Ol Bolossat watershed;

2. Catalyze citizen participation and capacity in biodiversity research and monitoring for improved management of the Lake Ol Bolossat and;

3. Influence policy, scientific, and inclusive decision-making for improved biodiversity conservation and management of Lake Ol Bolossat.

The project encompasses biodiversity research and monitoring, capacity building of stakeholders (including the local community) in biodiversity research and monitoring, and stakeholder engagements at the local, county, and national levels to advocate for the sustainable management of the lake.

B. Project Rationale

Wetlands in Kenya are fast disappearing and their conservation and total economic value remain unknown. Despite Kenya having a robust policy on wetlands, the sustainable management of wetlands has remained a challenge due to inadequate and scant biodiversity information.

Lake Ol Bolossat is a critical biodiversity hotspot in Kenya, a designated Important Bird Area (IBA) and gazetted as a Wetland Protected Area. Despite these listings, the lake is under serious threat and is not given the very much-needed attention in terms of management and protection largely due to inadequate and scanty biodiversity data. The Kenyan Government has listed the lake among the priority wetlands to be designated as Ramsar sites by 2024. However, lack of adequate and

reliable biodiversity data is hindering the designation process, and affects the effective implementation and monitoring of the biodiversity conservation strategies and action plans. The project, therefore, aims to provide reliable baseline biodiversity information to support the designation of the lake as a Ramsar site. It also seeks to improve the overall management of the lake by providing information which will be used to review the Integrated Management Plan and to devise appropriate management strategies and actions.

C. About the Scholarship:

The scholarship aims to complement the comprehensive survey conducted with the support of the project in November 2023 covering socio-economic survey, land use and land cover analysis and various taxa including fish and water quality, plants, reptiles, amphibians, birds, fungi, invertebrates and mammals. We are seeking to support Masters field studies that would be conducted in Lake Ol Bolossat to either corroborate or fill the research gaps identified in the survey. The scholarship will support **FOUR Master's students** for six months. The successful candidates will be required to publish scientific articles in peer reviewed journals and upload datasets on open data access platforms including Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF). The scholarship is expected to start in **third quarter of 2024.**

D. Thematic Focus Areas for the Research

The scholarship will support field research in the following thematic areas:

1. Invasive Species
2. Invertebrates
3. Amphibians and Reptiles
4. Socio-economic
5. Micro Fungi
6. Land use and land cover change
7. Fish
8. Water quality

E. Scholarship Benefits:

The scholarship will cover field expenses, living costs, and data collection for a period of six months. It will also cover costs associated with publishing of the findings in scientific journals. However, it does **NOT** cover tuition fees.

F. Eligibility Criteria:

Eligible candidates must:

- Be registered for an MSc/MA at the University of Nairobi and have completed the first year of study in environmental studies, Climate Change,

limnology, conservation biology, environmental planning and governance, geography, or a related field.

- Demonstrate excellent research skills and interpersonal skills.

- Possess excellent written and oral communication skills.

- Have the ability to work well independently and as part of a group.

- Preference will be given to candidates with field experience in conservation and working with communities, but it is not mandatory.

- Be willing to volunteer and support WMI and EAWLS activities during the scholarship period.

- Be full-time students for the duration of the scholarship.

- Female students are encouraged to apply

G. Application Process:

Interested candidates should submit the following documents in a single PDF format to wmi@uonbi.ac.ke with "**Masters Field Scholarship**" as the subject line, with copies to info@eawildlife.org by **5.00 p.m.** Kenyan time on **30th April 2024**:

1. Detailed Curriculum Vitae (**not more than 4 pages**) with the names and contact details of two referees (one of which MUST be academic referee).

2. A motivation letter highlighting: a) Interest in wetlands conservation and longer-term career ambitions; b) Technical skills such as species handling, data collection, and spatial analysis; c) Experience (if any) in conducting fieldwork; d) Data analysis skills such as SPSS and R-Statistics; e) Registration with any professional organization; and f) Preference regarding which thematic area (D above) he/she wishes to research on.

Note: Hard copies will **NOT** be accepted, and incomplete applications will not be considered. Suitable candidates will be contacted after the closing date for interviews.

For inquiries, please contact us on info@eawilldife.org or wmi@uonbi.ac.ke or call on 0702351583/0721471082