



VACANCY: POST-DOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOW

The Endangered Wildlife Trust is one of the largest biodiversity conservation NGOs in southern Africa and has a vacancy for a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow. This position is to ensure the strategic conservation of the globally endangered Pepper Bark Tree, *Warburgia salutaris*.

Purpose: Project background

The project is being implemented by the Endangered Wildlife Trust as part of an existing strategic project that includes securing priority land for conservation in South Africa's Soutpansberg Mountains in the Limpopo Province, where the Pepper Bark occurs.

The Pepper Bark is widely used in traditional medicine throughout southern Africa and is traded extensively in medicinal plant markets and retail outlets. Despite the distribution of over 40,000 seedlings by conservation agencies such as the South African National Parks (Kruger National Park) and other organisations over the years, the species is considered extinct outside protected areas across most of its distribution range. As with many medicinal species, loss of habitat heightens risks to the long-term survival of the Pepper Bark outside protected areas.

The Endangered Wildlife Trust has thus embarked on an integrated project to protect Pepper Bark habitat and ensure appropriate management of populations in the western Soutpansberg.

The project includes four strategies:

1. Conducting strategic research to understand the geographic priorities, conservation needs and mitigation options for the conservation of the species in the western Soutpansberg;
2. Formal proclamation of priority properties with viable populations, and restoration of their habitats through the clearing of alien plants within the western Soutpansberg;
3. Working with local Traditional Health Practitioners (THPs) to improve the management of the Pepper Bark through the provision of seedlings and information regarding the substitution of leaves for bark as an effective ethno-pharmacological agent, as well as identifying key threats and potential management options to reduce local population extinctions;
4. Conducting a comprehensive re-assessment of the global IUCN red listing for the species as the current assessment is almost 20 years old.

The Post-Doc fellow will be responsible for the implementation of strategies (1), (3) and (4), with inputs from the EWT Soutpansberg Protected Area and People in Conservation teams.

The successful applicant will be appointed by the EWT but will also be registered in the Department of Ecology and Resource Management, School of Environmental Sciences, at the University of Venda. A steering committee will be established to ensure effective coordination of project activities.

Primary responsibilities

The incumbent will be responsible for:

- Conducting a population assessment of Pepper Bark Tree populations as well as possible harvesting impacts on properties in the western Soutpansberg, as well as research to identify possible threats, and conservation needs and priorities.
- Surveying all relevant landowners to understand threats and conservation needs on priority properties.
- Assessing the regeneration potential of the Pepper Bark populations in the Soutpansberg.
- Supervising the clearing of alien plants in Pepper Bark habitats.
- Conducting a survey of local and regional medicinal plant markets to determine the volumes and prices of bark that are harvested, as well as potential sales of leaves.
- Meeting with local THPs to determine their current usage of the Pepper Bark and conducting extension and educational activities to enhance local cultivation if they are willing to do this, as well as explore options for the substitution of leaves for bark.
- Conducting a comprehensive re-assessment of the global IUCN red listing for the species.
- Writing up results of assessments in scientific papers for submission to accredited journals.
- Implementing any administrative, project management and reporting tasks required by the EWT, the funder, and participating universities.
- Contributing to any additional requirements that will enhance the conservation of the Pepper Bark Tree.

Qualifications, experience and skills criteria required:

- A PhD in a relevant field (ethno-botany, natural resource management, botany, habitat management)
- An understanding and experience of working with medicinal plants, preferably in the Venda area
- Strong analytical and writing skills, including synthesising, analysing and writing-up data, reports and papers
- The ability to be independent and self-motivated, and to conduct remote fieldwork in mountainous areas
- A valid driver's licence and driving experience
- Excellent organisational skills, and the ability to supervise small labour teams
- Scientific publication list

Additional requirements that would be advantageous:

- Venda speaking
- Experience in alien plant management
- Experience in conducting interviews and working with Traditional Health Practitioners and/or medicinal plant markets

Interpersonal skills:

- Disciplined, self-motivated, innovative and energetic.
- Excellent staff management skills.
- Excellent communication and networking skills.
- The ability to work both independently and as part of team.
- Strong people skills and an approachable manner.

Post-Doc value and project duration

- This is a one-year position starting on 1 April 2020 and ending on 31 March 2021.
- The incumbent will receive a stipend of R25,000 per month (tax inclusive) over and above project running costs but may apply for an additional grant with permission and oversight of the EWT.

Application Process:

To apply, applicants should email the following to emmac@ewt.org.za:

- A covering letter including a short description of the applicant's expertise and research interests, and how these relate to the position;
- A CV, including a publication list;
- Copies of post-graduate academic transcripts as well as certified copies of degrees, certificates and/or awards and
- Contact details of at least two academic referees (email addresses and telephonic contact details).

Selection process:

- Only eligible and complete applications will be considered.
- Telephonic or Skype/Zoom interviews will be conducted with shortlisted candidates.
- The successful candidate will be expected to start as close to 1 April 2020 as possible.

Applicants who have not been contacted within 10 days of the closing date must please assume that their applications were not successful. The EWT reserves the right not to make an appointment. All applications will be treated in the strictest confidence. **Closing date for applications is 21 February 2020**