

Saving Marion Island's Seabirds

The Mouse-Free Marion Project



VACANCY ASSISTANT PROJECT MANAGER THE MOUSE-FREE MARION PROJECT

A. BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

Marion Island is the larger of the two Prince Edward Islands in the south-western Indian Ocean. The islands are globally important breeding sites for seabirds and other wildlife and were afforded Special Nature Reserve status by South Africa in 1995. House Mice, inadvertently introduced by sealers in the early 19th century, are having a devastating impact on the seabirds and ecology of the island.

Informed by the outcomes of a feasibility study and internationally agreed best practice, the South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) and BirdLife South Africa are collaborating on a project to eradicate House Mice from Marion Island – the Mouse-Free Marion (MFM) Project. BirdLife South Africa has established a special entity, the Mouse-Free Marion Non-Profit Company (MFM NPC), to help facilitate the implementation of the Project.

In 2021, the MFM NPC appointed a Project Manager (PM), an Operations Manager (OM), a Communications Officer/Project Assistant (COPA) and a Chief Philanthropy Officer (CPO) to progress the planning for the MFM Project. We are now intensifying efforts to raise the necessary funds and advance our planning for the eradication operation, currently envisaged for the winter of 2025.

To support these efforts, we are seeking applications for a highly qualified, dedicated and dynamic Assistant Project Manager to join the MFM Project Team in the delivery of project planning. This will be a fixed term position for two years, with possible extension depending on the project completion date.

B. JOB DESCRIPTION

The MFM Assistant Project Manager will support the Project Manager, MFM Project Team and Management Committee in developing and delivering a range of activities associated with the planning and preparatory work for the MFM Project. The MFM Assistant Project Manager will be based in South Africa and is not expected to travel to Marion Island as part of the operation.

The ideal candidate will have strong project management skills and experience, especially in the ecological and nature conservation fields, and a sound understanding of South African environmental legislation and regulatory processes associated with environmental projects. The scope of the work is wide-ranging, including a variety of planning and regulatory aspects, overseeing research and monitoring activities associated with the project, supporting fund-raising activities, and assisting with recruitment and training. As a result, the ideal candidate for this role will need to have elevated levels of emotional intelligence, diplomacy, perseverance, professional judgement and must be able to execute above-average attention to detail.

C. SCOPE OF WORK

The primary responsibilities of the Assistant Project Manager will include, but not be limited to:

1. Supporting the MFM Project Manager, Operations Manager (and Project Team) in the delivery of project planning as directed.
2. Working collaboratively with and under the direction of the Project Manager on all aspects of the management of the MFM Project.
3. Assisting with reviewing, refining, and implementing the suite of existing MFM Project planning documents, and the development and implementation of additional subsidiary project plans.
4. Helping facilitate and oversee the various regulatory processes to obtain the authorisations required for the MFM Project. These include a variety of environmental and other legislative, regulatory, and procedural requirements overseen by agencies including the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) and National Treasury, amongst others.
5. Assisting with the co-ordination and management of research and monitoring activities associated with the MFM Project.
6. Assisting with the management of budgetary, procurement, logistical and contractual aspects of the MFM Project.
7. Reporting on progress, as required, to the Project Management Committee, the Project Steering Committee, partner organisations and funders.
8. Preparing applications for funding from different funding agencies, philanthropic organisations and individuals, and assisting with and overseeing the associated management and reporting requirements.
9. Supporting efforts to develop and implement novel financing mechanisms, such as Conservation Bonds, to fund the MFM Project.
10. Liaising with relevant staff of the DFFE in the cooperative planning of the MFM Project.

D. REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS

1. An appropriate qualification and proven project management experience ideally involving large-scale, complex environmental projects.
2. Experience in projects involving invasive species management, or similar.
3. Demonstrated ability to develop, initiate and implement environmental project plans under demanding conditions.
4. Excellent leadership and communication skills. Well-developed relationship-management skills; an ability to communicate effectively with people and organisations in a multi-stakeholder environment.
5. A track record of working collaboratively with diverse groups.
6. A track record of delivering under pressure to tight deadlines without compromising on quality.
7. Ability to work independently, multi-task, problem solve, prioritise and take initiative while working as part of a team. Willingness to work long hours.
8. A sound understanding of South African environmental legislation and the regulatory processes related to environmental programmes.
9. Strong financial-management experience (project related).
10. Report-writing and data-management skills and an above average competency in written and spoken English.

E. REPORTING LINES AND PLACE OF WORK

1. The Assistant Project Manager will report to the Project Manager and through the Project Manager to the Project Management Committee.
2. The Assistant Project Manager will ideally be based in Cape Town. Other locations within South Africa may be considered.
3. The Assistant Project Manager should be suitably equipped to operate remotely (e.g. have a suitable laptop, cell-phone and access to Wi-Fi with enough bandwidth to function efficiently on-line, including up- and down-loading large files).

F. TERMS OF ASSOCIATION AND COMPENSATION

1. The contract period will be for an initial period of two years, with a possible extension depending on the project completion date and subject to mutual agreement. The contract will include a 3-month probation period.
2. Due to the international nature of the project, with some staff being based in the USA and New Zealand, the Assistant Project Manager must at times be willing to work flexible hours, with a minimum of working 8 hours per day, excluding a lunch break.
3. The implementation phase of the MFM Project is scheduled to take place in the winter of 2025.
4. Should planning or funding requirements not be met in time to meet this timeframe, the eradication operation may be postponed, with the possible requirement to extend this fixed term contract to align with the project timeframe.
5. The Assistant Project Manager will be expected to attend online meetings of the various project structures, and to assist with note-taking of these meetings.
6. The salary will be negotiated. Any operational, travel, accommodation and subsistence expenses in fulfilling the role will be covered, according to certain specifications.

G. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Applicants are to submit:

1. A detailed curriculum vitae with three contactable referees.
2. Copies of qualifications.
3. A copy of the applicant's identity/passport document.
4. A detailed motivation as to how the applicant sees her/his role in this post.

Please note:

1. Closing date for applications: 17 February 2023.
2. All applications will be treated in the strictest confidence.
3. Applicants will be required to attend an interview (possibly on-line) and be subjected to a verification process, which may include a relevant assignment.
4. The Mouse-Free Marion NPC Board reserves the right to obtain independent references.
5. The Mouse-Free Marion NPC Board reserves the right not to make an appointment.
6. Communication will be limited to shortlisted candidates only. You may assume that your application was unsuccessful if you were not contacted within six weeks of the closing date for applications.
7. The Mouse-Free Marion NPC Board subscribes to and applies the directions of the Protection of Personal Information Act.
8. The Mouse-Free Marion NPC Board subscribes to and applies the principles prescribed by the Employment Equity Act. Preference will be given to candidates from designated groups, in accordance with the principles of the aforementioned act and the employee profile.

Assumption of contract: April 2023
Closing date for applications: 17 February 2023

To apply, please e-mail your application to Dr Isabel Human, at isabel.human@birdlife.org.za, with the subject title MOUSE-FREE MARION ASSISTANT PROJECT MANAGER.

For further information, contact Dr Anton Wolfaardt, MFM Project Manager, on anton.wolfaardt@birdlife.org.za