



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Mouse-Free Marion (MFM) Project

Field Assistants

(March 2027 – May 2028)

BirdLife South Africa (BLSA), through the Mouse-Free Marion (MFM) NPC, invites applications from suitably qualified Field Assistants to spend approximately one year on sub-Antarctic Marion Island (April 2027 to May 2028). Two positions are available to undertake field research and monitoring that will inform the planned mouse eradication in 2029.

The successful candidates will play a key role in advancing one of the world's most ambitious island restoration initiatives. Working as part of the Mouse-Free Marion team, they will contribute to our understanding of selected aspects of mouse biology on Marion Island.

This is a rare chance to live and work on one of the world's most extraordinary and remote islands while contributing directly to the conservation of a globally important ecosystem. The role will take you across Marion Island's dramatic and untamed landscapes, from rugged coastlines to remote inland plateaus, in support of a pioneering conservation effort. While the work is physically demanding and may involve hiking up to 20 km per day in challenging sub-Antarctic conditions, it offers an unparalleled opportunity to contribute to a project with meaningful conservation impact.

Further background on the Mouse-Free Marion Project is available from <https://mousefreemarion.org/> and below.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Duties will include being part of a team conducting an aerial baiting trial during the annual relief period in April and May 2027, followed by a year of fieldwork to support operational planning for the eradication scheduled for 2029. Responsibilities will include assessments of mouse distribution, abundance, reproductive status and morphology, analyses of and reporting on data, basic equipment maintenance, and assistance with project preparations prior to departure for Marion Island in April 2027. In March 2027, the Field Assistants will assist with preparatory work (procurement, packing and preparation of equipment) for field activities.

INHERENT REQUIREMENTS

The successful applicants will be responsible for implementing all aspects of the MFM Project work programme on Marion Island. This includes field work, data collection and analysis, record-keeping of all collected data, and reporting. The successful applicants should meet the following criteria by having:

- Either a B.Sc. (Hons) degree in conservation biology, ecology, or a related field; or equivalent prior learning and experience, of which the competency level must equate to this qualification requirement.
- Demonstrated experience of fieldwork collecting biological data in demanding environments, and of data analysis.
- Meticulous observation, good note-taking and record-keeping abilities.
- Proficiency in MS Office suite or an equivalent.
- Physical fitness and robust mental resilience to maintain motivation under challenging circumstances at a remote and isolated location.
- Willingness to use, and preferably experience with, lethal methods (snap traps) of mouse capture, autopsy, and collection of morphometric data.
- Willingness to handle rodenticide bait while adhering to appropriate health, safety and environmental protocols.
- Good organisational skills and the ability to work independently as well as part of a diverse team, demonstrate reciprocity and adapt to unexpected challenges.
- Field experience working with rodents, including trapping and dissection.
- Adaptability and a willingness to work with applications and software for field equipment such as trail cameras and data loggers.
- Experience with the organisation and management of large volumes of data, basic statistical analyses, and scientific writing.
- Report-writing abilities.
- The ability to work and live with small, diverse groups of people in an isolated and sometimes socially complex environment for extended periods is essential.
- A demonstrated passion for and commitment to conservation and the protection of biodiversity

It is advantageous to have:

- Prior experience of working on a sub-Antarctic island.
- Experience of ecological survey techniques and navigation in rugged terrain.
- Experience conducting laboratory experiments and maintaining laboratory equipment.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Appointment is provisional on passing medical (physical and psychological) examinations. The MFM NPC will cover the cost of these examinations.**
- **Any appointment will be contingent upon the availability of ship berths and the receipt of all necessary approvals from the South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.**
- The successful applicants will spend 14 months (April 2027 to May 2028) on Marion Island. There is no option to return to South Africa before May 2028.
- The successful applicants must adhere to the health, safety and environmental requirements of the Management Authority for Marion Island, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, and with those of the MFM NPC as employer.
- The base on Marion Island has limited email and satellite telephone connectivity, which can be intermittent. Applicants must therefore be capable of working effectively, independently, and with a high degree of self-reliance in an environment where regular communication with family, friends, and colleagues may not always be possible.
- The role will require extensive walking over rough terrain under demanding environmental and weather conditions. Applicants must be physically very fit, mentally strong and enjoy the challenge of physically demanding fieldwork.
- Applicants will function as part of a small annual team (~20 people) based on the island, and contribute to regular common duties associated with the effective running and upkeep of the base.
- In support of MFM Project collaborations focused on the long-term impacts of House Mouse eradication, the successful candidates may be required to undertake duties beyond their core project work. These may include assisting with invertebrate and plant surveys, routine seabird and marine mammal monitoring, and other operational or scientific activities as required.
- The MFM NPC reserves the right not to appoint a candidate to this position.

REMUNERATION

SALARY: The remuneration package for this fixed-term contract is a monthly, all inclusive, gross salary of R21,500. The contract further provides for a performance-based 13th cheque, subject to the review and approval of the MFM NPC, resulting in a total potential contract remuneration of up to R344,000 (for the 15-month period: March 2027 to May 2028). Food, accommodation, work-related travel expenses, training, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are all provided.

SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

Deadline for applications: **Friday 6 November 2026.**

South African citizens, and applicants who already hold the necessary authorisation to work in South Africa, will be given preference. Given the limited timeframe available to finalise appointments and associated logistics, it may be challenging to accommodate international applicants who do not currently possess a valid South African work visa.

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

The following information is required, with all attachments submitted as PDFs:

- Cover letter motivating why you consider yourself suitable for the post, outlining relevant experience and giving your reasons for applying.
- Detailed CV, including contact details of at least three referees.
- Copies of qualifications (including grades, for undergraduate degrees).
- Copy of ID document.

Correspondence relating to these positions will be sent to short-listed candidates only.

Short-listed candidates will be invited to participate in online interviews as part of the final selection process, and may be required to undergo competency assessments.

For queries contact Dr Anton Wolfaardt, the MFM Project Manager, at anton.wolfaardt@birdlife.org.za or Dr Sue Tonin, the MFM Assistant Project Manager, at sue.tonin@birdlife.org.za.

BACKGROUND TO THE MFM PROJECT

Marion Island has no indigenous terrestrial mammalian predators. House Mice were inadvertently introduced there more than 200 years ago, and have since become a fundamental threat to the island's ecosystem. A warming and drying climate has created more favourable conditions that have permitted significant population increases of House Mice, which are causing widespread ecological damage through predation on invertebrates, damage to vegetation, and fatal attacks on vulnerable seabirds such as albatrosses and petrels.

To address this critical conservation problem, BirdLife South Africa and the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment established [the Mouse-Free Marion Project](#) in 2020. The project aims to eradicate mice from Marion Island using aerial distribution of rodenticide bait, a proven conservation approach that has successfully restored hundreds of islands worldwide. Successful eradication will help safeguard this breeding site for hundreds of thousands of threatened and endangered seabirds, and support the long-term recovery of the island's biodiversity.

As part of ongoing preparations for the planned eradication operation, the project continues to undertake research, monitoring and field trials to refine operational planning and establish baseline ecological data. The 2027 aerial baiting trial forms a key component of this preparation.