

Vacancy: PhD position

Arctic meltdown affects tropical seagrass meadows via migrant shorebird

Global warming is most pronounced in the Arctic. Hence, Arctic-breeding migrants might carry over the ecological effects of climate change to their tropical wintering grounds. Although recently discovered, reductions in body size are already considered a universal response to climate change. Red knots (*Calidris canutus*), medium-sized shorebirds breeding as High Arctic as possible, are no exception to this rule. Over the past 30 years, their bodies have been shrinking, notably with respect to body mass and bill length. Preliminary analyses revealed that at their main wintering site (Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, West-Africa), small individuals with a short bill are now shifting niche by consuming readily accessible seagrass rhizomes instead of deeper buried shellfish. Here we will (A) experimentally unravel the coupling between body size and diet; (B) link survival rate to body size and diet; and (C) quantify the top-down effects of rhizome-grazing on seagrass.

Whilst the field work will be carried in Mauritania, the laboratory and desk work will mainly be carried out at the Department of Marine Ecology, NIOZ Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (Texel, the Netherlands; <http://www.nioz.nl>). However, in this MARES-EU funded project, regular visits will be made to the two partner universities, University of Aveiro (Portugal) and the University of Gdańsk (Poland).

Profile:

The subject is open to highly motivated students that have a background in (marine) ecology, preferably with affinities to birds. The proposed fieldwork in Banc d'Arguin will be embedded in large expeditions in which a consortium of international researchers is involved. Henceforth, the candidate should be a team player, but, at the same time, should be able to work independently under seemingly pleasant, but sometimes tough, field circumstances. Because this project involves Dutch, Portuguese and Polish partners, the regulations set by MARES-EU demand that candidates should have obtained their master degree outside the Netherlands, Portugal and Poland.

Employment details:

The candidate will be employed by NIOZ for a period of three years, under the collective agreement of Dutch universities and research institutions. This includes a gross monthly salary of 2,800 including an 8%-vacation bonus and end-of-year payment.

To apply:

<http://www.mares-eu.org/index.asp?p=1846&a=1846>

For more information:

<http://www.mareseu.org/index.asp?p=2174&a=1853&mod=phd&id=207>

E-mail <mailto:Jan.van.Gils@nioz.nl> for remaining questions