

PhD position: Social organisation and vocal communication in wild zebra finches



Location Wageningen, the Netherlands and Fowlers

Deadline **Mon 27 May 2024**

We offer a 4 year PhD Position (1.0 FTE) to undertake research on social organisation and vocal communication in wild zebra finches within the Behavioural Ecology chair group at Wageningen University, the Netherlands in cooperation with Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia.

Project details

The aim of this project is to determine the nature of multi-level societies and the role of vocal signalling in their dynamics, using wild zebra finches in the Australian arid zone as model. Zebra finches are the best-studied avian model organism under laboratory conditions, yet their social organisation and communication in nature are poorly understood. Here we will use a long-term monitored Australian field population at the Fowlers Gap Research Station in NSW Australia, to determine their social organisation using automatized solar-powered radio tracking, combined with various bioacoustics approaches as well as breeding data.

This unique field project will provide key advances in our understanding of social organisation and communication in animals breeding under ecologically challenging and unpredictable climatic conditions. It will also open new doors for understanding social functions of elaborate signals and for laboratory studies on behavioural mechanisms using ecologically relevant conditions. The project will also include the opportunity to conduct aviary studies at the University Bielefeld (Germany), where the social environment can be experimentally controlled and tested. The field work in Australia will start in September 2024 by tracking juveniles and their parents to determine the social structure during the song learning period by the offspring. This field period also offers the opportunity to address additional related research questions which will be developed with the candidate. As a PhD candidate, you will play a pivotal role in organizing and conducting the field and aviary research.

The project is supervised by Dr. Lysanne Snijders, Dr. Chris Tyson at Wageningen University in collaboration with Dr. Sabine Kraus at Bielefeld University, with the overall project being embedded in the research groups by Prof. Marc Naguib in Wageningen and Prof. Simon Griffith at Macquarie University in Sydney. The field research will be conducted at a well-established zebra finch population at Fowlers Gap Research Station in New South Wales, Australia.

You will work here

The research is embedded within the chair Behavioural Ecology ([Behavioural Ecology Group - WUR](#)), which is led by Prof. Marc Naguib ([prof.dr. M \(Marc\) Naguib - WUR](#)). You will be co-supervised by Dr. Lysanne Snijders and Dr. Chris Tyson.

Your qualities

You have:

- a MSc-degree in Biology with specialization in Animal Behaviour / Behavioural Ecology or equivalent experience;
- strong experimental and analytical skills;
- good organisational skills;
- good (written and spoken) communication skills in English;
- proven ability to collaborate with others;
- the ability and willingness to conduct and organize extensive ornithological fieldwork at a remote location;
- the willingness to travel internationally, to attend conferences and visit other institutes;
- A valid driving licence;
- For this position your command of the English language is expected to be at C1 [level](#). Sometimes it is necessary to submit an internationally recognised Certificate of Proficiency in the English Language. More information can be found [here](#).

We offer you

Wageningen University & Research offers excellent [terms of employment](#). A few highlights from our Collective Labour Agreement include:

- Partially paid parental leave;
- working hours that can be discussed and arranged so that they allow for the best possible work-life balance;
- the option to accrue additional compensation / holiday hours by working more, up to 40 hours per week;
- there is a strong focus on vitality and you can make use of the sports facilities available on campus for a small fee;
- a fixed December bonus of 8.3%;
- excellent pension scheme.

In addition to these first-rate employee benefits, you will receive a fully funded PhD position and you will be offered a course program tailored to your needs and the research team.

The gross salary for the first year is € 2.770 - per month rising to € 3.539,- in the fourth year in according to the [Collective Labour Agreements for Dutch Universities \(CAO-NU\)](#) (scale P). This is based on a full-time working week of 38 hours. We offer a temporary contract for 18 months which will be extended for the duration of the project if you perform well.

There are plenty of options for personal initiative in a learning environment, and we provide excellent training opportunities. We are offering a unique position in an international environment with a pleasant and open working atmosphere.

You are going to work at the greenest and most innovative campus in Holland, and at a university that has been chosen as the "[Best University](#)" in the Netherlands for the 19th consecutive time.

Coming from abroad

Wageningen University & Research is the university and research centre for life sciences. The themes we deal with are relevant to everyone around the world and Wageningen, therefore, has a large international community and a lot to offer to international employees.

Our team of advisors on Dutch immigration procedures will help you with the visa application procedures for yourself and, if applicable, for your family.

Feeling welcome also has everything to do with being well informed. Wageningen University & Research's [International Community](#) page contains practical information about what we can do to support international employees and students coming to Wageningen. Furthermore, we can assist you with any additional advice and [information](#) about for example helping your partner to find a job, housing, or schooling. *Finally, certain categories of international staff may be eligible for a tax exemption on a part of their salary during the first five years in the Netherlands.*

Do you want more information?

For more information about this position, please contact Marc Naguib or Chris Tyson (marc.naguib@wur.nl or chris.tyson@wur.nl).

For more information about the procedure, please contact Noorien Abbas, corporate recruiter, noorien.abbas@wur.nl.

Do you want to apply?

You can apply directly using the apply button on the vacancy page on our website which will allow us to process your personal information with your approval.



This vacancy will be listed up to and including the **27th of May 2024**.

Equal opportunities

Wageningen University & Research (WUR) employs a large number of people with very different backgrounds and qualities, who inspire and motivate each other. We want every talent to feel at home in our organisation and be offered the same career opportunities. We therefore especially welcome applications from people who are underrepresented at WUR. A good example of how WUR deals with inclusiveness can be read on the page working at WUR with a [functional impairment](#).

We are

The mission of Wageningen University & Research is “To explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life”. Under the banner Wageningen University & Research, Wageningen University and the specialised research institutes of the Wageningen Research Foundation have joined forces in contributing to finding solutions to important questions in the domain of healthy food and living environment. With its roughly 30 branches, 7,600 employees (6,700 fte) and 13,100 students and over 150,000 participants to WUR’s Life Long Learning, Wageningen University & Research is one of the leading organisations in its domain. The unique Wageningen approach lies in its integrated approach to issues and the collaboration between different disciplines.