

Buck Island Sea Turtle Research Program Research Assistant Vacancy Announcement 2018

Buck Island Reef National Monument (BIRNM), located on the island of St. Croix, US Virgin Islands, is seeking applicants for the position of Sea Turtle Research Assistant (intern) to conduct sea turtle research and monitoring. This will be the 31st year of the Buck Island Sea Turtle Research Program (BISTRP), a long-term monitoring, research, and conservation project supported by the National Park Service (NPS), Buck Island Reef National Monument. BIRNM is a nesting beach for hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), green (*Chelonia mydas*), leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), and loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) sea turtles.

This project will begin in mid-July and extend for 12 weeks into early October 2018 (applicants must state availability in their cover letter). If selected, interns are expected to stay the length of the project. This is a highly competitive project that is **physically and mentally intense**, aimed at individuals who want to make ecology/resource management their career. Access to the island is by boat only, where there are minimal facilities. Ability to navigate rugged terrain, work in adverse weather conditions, and amongst biting insects and poisonous and spiny plants is essential. Shifts last up to 12 hours and require interns to work effectively on a nocturnal schedule. Interns work equally effectively as a team and individually.

Interns will provide assistance to the NPS staff in the collection and processing of field data. A mixture of methods will be used: night duty and day patrols. Night duty focuses on working with animals during the laying process. During this time, all nesting turtles will be encountered; biometric data will be collected on turtles, physical data will be collected on nest locations, and animals will be tagged (inconel and PIT). Imperiled nests will be relocated to mitigate risk and increase hatch success. Nests will be excavated to determine hatch success. Night work will last in shifts up to 12 hours and will be labor intensive. Day patrols will be conducted in the early morning and require accurate assessment of the previous night's nesting activities from tracks left in the sand alone. Nests that hatch will be excavated to estimate hatching success and beach productivity. Throughout the project interns will be required to perform equipment maintenance, data entry, and quality assurance/quality control on the long-term dataset.

Interns are also responsible for weekly daytime monitoring of beaches at The Buccaneer Hotel, their residence, recording activities using GPS. Interns will also conduct outreach to hotel guests on a daily basis as well as during scheduled beach walks discussing the BISTRP program and sea turtle ecology. In addition to BISTRP objectives, interns will provide assistance to NPS staff and collaborators with a wide-variety of ongoing projects including forest restoration, deployment of acoustic and satellite tags, and a sea turtle nest temperature study. In addition, interns may have the opportunity to conduct snorkel surveys for foraging sea turtles and/or assist in sea turtle stranding response incidents.

Interns will receive two meals/day and lodging from The Buccaneer Hotel at no cost to the interns. A small weekly stipend will be allotted to each intern (\$100), and travel costs will be covered by the NPS. Interns need to seriously consider their finances before applying to these openings; it will not be possible to work locally while conducting intern duties.

Qualifications Required - Must:

- Communicate effectively in English, orally and in writing
- **Have biology training/background**
- Collect data and maintain records precisely according to standardized protocol
- Have previous field work experience lasting at least one month
- Enter and analyze data (written and computer database format)
- **Be in excellent physical shape**
- Be able to persevere under stressful conditions
- Work outdoors, day and night in isolated conditions, and in adverse weather.
- Walk in the sand up to 10 kilometers/night; climb rocks; stoop, kneel and stand on soft substrate and in cramped conditions.
- **Have a strong work ethic**
- Be able to work all night and on weekends
- Be able to lift and move heavy objects
- Operate and maintain communications equipment properly (cell phone, hand-held VHS radio, marine radio)
- Be able to swim; crew a boat in open water conditions
- **Have a valid US driver's license**

Desired Qualifications- Please comment on applicable skills and experience in your cover letter:

- Experience working with Microsoft Access and Excel
- Familiarity with statistics and competency in statistical software
- Experience using GPS information to create maps in ArcGIS
- Communicate conservation and science objectives to the public
- Interest in documenting science and research for social media and public awareness posts
- Previous experience conducting nesting sea turtle saturation tagging and monitoring

To apply, send a cover letter stating your interest in and qualifications for the project, a resume or CV summarizing your experience, and contact information for three references to the email address below. The document(s) you submit should include your last name and document type in the file name. Email is preferred, but postal mail/fax is accepted. Deadline for application: **2 March 2018, no applicants will be considered after this date.** If selected for interview you will be contacted in mid-March, **please do not make follow up inquiries.**

Email: Tessa_Code@nps.gov

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