

Volunteer Field Assistant Required

Social Behaviour in Tropical Paper Wasps

End of June/Early July – Early August 2013



A volunteer field assistant is required to help with a field-based project on social behaviour in social wasps. The position is a fantastic opportunity to gain tropical field experience working in a vibrant research group, from the Institute of Zoology, Zoological Society of London (<http://www.zsl.org/science/ioz-staff-students/bell.2041.AR.html>) and the University of Bristol (<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/biology/people/seirian-r-sumner/index.html>). The project is concerned with the evolution of castes (queens and workers) in *Polistes* paper wasps. These are a well-studied genus of social insects representing the early stages of social evolution where castes lack morphological differences, but have clear behavioural roles. Our study species is the tropical *Polistes canadensis*, found in Central and South America. It builds small nests (c20-60 females) that lack an envelope, so individually marked wasps can be easily observed and castes can be manipulated. The 2013 field site is based near the Smithsonian Tropical Research Station at Galatea, Colon, Republic of Panama and the field season will run from the end of June until the beginning of August.

The work involves marking wasps, conducting censuses and behavioural observations and simple manipulation experiments. Assistants are generally expected to be graduates with a good degree in the biological sciences, background in and keen interest in behavioural ecology and/or social evolution. Experience gained on the project will be especially useful for those about to commence a field-based MSc or PhD project. Applicants should be fit, enthusiastic, hard working, and happy with living shared accommodation and working in uncomfortable conditions. Previous experience of working on social insects and/or in the tropics would be an advantage. A clean driving license and some basic knowledge of Spanish is also desirable. The applicant should be comfortable and must be able to commit to the full field season. NB these wasps do sting if provoked!

All work-related costs in Panama will be paid, including accommodation. In addition the assistant will receive a minimum of £500 towards travel costs (e.g. air ticket). More details are available from Dr Seirian Sumner (seirian.sumner@bristol.ac.uk) and/or Emily Bell (emily.bell@ioz.ac.uk). Applications should include CV (with email addresses for two referees) and a covering letter explaining why you would like to work on the Project. Applications should be submitted by e-mail to **Emily Bell** by **Thursday 20th June 2013**. Shortlisted applicants will be notified by email, and will be invited for interview either in person or over skype/phone soon afterwards. Applicants must be available to travel to Panama immediately after the confirmation of their appointment from their skype/phone interview.