



A **PhD Studentship** is available to work on

The impacts of tropical forest degradation and fragmentation on ant-plant mutualisms, and consequences for plant community dynamics

A highly motivated postgraduate student is sought to join a project exploring the shifts that occur in a mutualistic ant-plant network when tropical rain forest is logged, fragmented, and converted to oil palm plantation in Malaysian Borneo. The student will conduct field surveys for ant-inhabited trees, measure ant and plant fitness correlates, and perform experimental manipulations of the mutualistic communities, in particular in relation to forest regeneration. The studentship will provide the opportunity to collaborate with two cutting-edge large-scale manipulations of tropical forests: 1. The Stability of Altered Forest Ecosystems project (SAFE), the world's largest rain forest fragmentation experiment. 2. The Sabah Biodiversity Experiment (SBE), a project assessing the impacts of different diversities of tree planting on ecosystem functioning. There will also be opportunities to develop the project in a direction of the student's own choosing. Duties will include spending extensive periods of time in the field in Malaysian Borneo.

The successful applicant will join the Ant Research Group (<http://antscience.com/>) at the Institute of Entomology, Biology Centre Academy of Sciences, Ceske Budejovice, Czech Republic, under the supervision of Tom Fayle (<http://www.tomfayle.com/index.htm>). The laboratory is a dynamic, multinational group studying ant ecology, evolution and biogeography, and is embedded within the Department of Ecology and Conservation Biology, a world-class centre for interaction network research with regular publications in *Science*, *Nature* and other leading journals. The deadline for applications is **February 29th 2016**, with a start date of May 1st 2016. The student will receive a scholarship from the University of South Bohemia and employment on an ongoing grant for three years, sufficient to cover living expenses in Czech Republic. Applicants from all countries are eligible.

Required

- A master's degree (non-negotiable requirement for PhD study in Czech Republic).
- Interest in the ecology of insects or plants.
- 1st or 2.1 undergraduate degree in ecology or related subject (or equivalent).
- Enthusiasm for working in the field for extended periods of time in challenging conditions in tropical rain forest.
- Ability to work independently.
- Experience in the use of ecological statistical analyses.

Desirable

- Previous experience of tropical field work.
- Research experience with plant or insect ecology.
- Experience of molecular laboratory work, specifically DNA barcoding for species identifications.

To apply please send a CV, contact details for three references, and cover letter stating qualifications, previous work and motivation to Tom Fayle (tmfayle@gmail.com).