

VACANCY: Research Director, African Elephant Research Unit

The Employer

Knysna Elephant Park (KEP) is seeking to recruit a Research Director for the on-site African Elephant Research Unit (AERU). He or she will become part of the management team of KEP, which has provided a home for orphaned and unwanted elephants since 1994. KEP aims for constant improvement towards the best possible quality of life for the elephants, including in tourist interactions, and established AERU in 2009 to help achieve this; originally just an internal research department, AERU has since become a non-profit trust collaborating with researchers across the globe. AERU's primary mission is to improve the welfare of captive African elephants by conducting non-invasive, primarily behavioural research (at KEP and beyond) and publishing the findings in peer-reviewed journals.

The Role

The Research Director has overall responsibility for AERU's activities, including:

- Directing and co-ordinating research projects
- Analysing data, writing up and publishing results
- Managing a small team of staff
- Overseeing a well-established volunteer program and ensuring volunteer satisfaction
- Supervising undergraduate and postgraduate research students
- Reporting research findings and welfare insights to the rest of the KEP management team
- Promoting and representing AERU, building relationships with other organisations

This vacancy represents a rare opportunity to direct research on habituated elephants in a naturalistic environment where 24/7 observation is possible. You will directly influence the care of KEP's elephants, helping KEP to inspire and educate visitors while developing AERU into a globally respected voice for captive elephant welfare.

Requirements

Essential:

- PhD in animal behaviour, zoology, conservation biology or a closely related science
- Strong scientific background, demonstrated by published research in peer-reviewed journals
- Management and leadership experience; able to inspire and motivate others
- In-depth knowledge of the study of animal behaviour, behavioural methods, ethograms etc
- Understanding of and respect for elephants; background knowledge of captive elephant management
- Experience with statistical analysis; competence with SPSS, R or similar
- Competence with Windows computers and programs, particularly MS Excel
- Ability to handle multiple projects under pressure, while recognising areas of need for new research
- An open-minded attitude to captivity, with a strong commitment to the welfare of captive wild animals
- A collaborative and flexible approach, but able to work fully independently on own initiative
- Dedication, integrity, reliability, and willingness to go 'above and beyond'
- Fluent written and spoken English

Desirable:

- Experience of leading research projects from concept to publication as first author
- Experience of managing a whole organisation or department
- Field experience with large mammals, especially elephants
- Experience of living in Africa, particularly South Africa
- Knowledge of hormones and hormone sampling
- Experience with animal-related volunteer projects catering to international volunteers

This is a full-time permanent position, to start as soon as possible. On-site accommodation will be provided.

Please send a CV and cover letter to hr@knysnaelephantpark.co.za