



# Mountain Chicken Project Officer

Application Pack



*"Working together to save species from extinction."*



# The Project



The amphibian disease, chytridiomycosis, arrived on Dominica and Montserrat in 2002 and 2009 respectively, decimating populations of the islands' endemic mountain chicken frog. In response, we have established a European captive breeding programme and built a world's first semi-wild enclosure to test whether habitat manipulation can mitigate chytridiomycosis. To ensure long-term success, this project will significantly increase Montserratian conservation capacity and public engagement, develop a five-year conservation plan for this Critically Endangered species and facilitate knowledge sharing to enable replicability

# The Opportunity

As part of a new Darwin Funded initiative the Mountain Chicken Recovery Programme (MCRP) is seeking two enthusiastic aspiring or early-career conservation biologists to join the team. The successful applicants will have high self-motivation, proven academic ability, a passion for nature and will be willing to challenge themselves in this inter-disciplinary role.

The project is a collaborative effort between international zoos, universities, conservation NGOs and the governments of Montserrat and Dominica to conserve the Critically Endangered mountain chicken frog found only on the two islands. The MCRP is recognised as one of the world leading initiatives to counteract the deadly fungal disease chytridiomycosis, which has been described as the worst infectious disease threat to vertebrates.

At this stage in the project we are looking to develop and train young local conservationists who, by the end of the contract, will be capable of managing, leading and taking active roles in environmental conservation projects on island. Hired through the Montserrat National Trust, your time will be split between the MCRP and the Department of Environment. Whilst working with the partners you will be focusing on science-led

conservation interventions, monitoring, process development, community engagement and project management, whilst also developing essential practical skills in areas of forestry management and species monitoring relevant to working on Montserrat. As such, you must be motivated to engage in both intense fieldwork and desk-based study.

The roles advertised offer bespoke, targeted training opportunities to the successful candidates. Because of this It is essential for candidates to be passionate and driven to work in the wildlife conservation sector on Montserrat, and that they possess academic aptitude and a positive attitude towards the learning and personal development that will be required of the role.

## Terms and Conditions

<b>Start Date:</b>	As soon as possible
<b>Duration of Contract:</b>	2 years 6 months
<b>Probation Period:</b>	3 Months
<b>Gross Salary:</b>	Dependent on experience.
<b>Location:</b>	Montserrat, West Indies.
<b>Hours of work:</b>	This is a full time position requiring flexible working.

# Job Description



**Job Title:** Mountain Chicken Project Officer

**Reporting to:** Luke Jones, Mountain Chicken Recovery Programme Project Coordinator, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (Durrell)

**Key working Relationships:**

- Sarita Francis, Executive Director, Montserrat National Trust (MNT)
- Ernestine Corbett, Director of Environment (DoE), Ministry of Agriculture, Land, Housing & Development
- Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs & Sport

## **Purpose:**

- To train alongside and support the Mountain Chicken Recovery Programme (MCRP) and their on-island partners in all day-to-day activities, including: management and husbandry of the mountain chicken chytrid Saving Amphibians From Extinction (SAFE) haven and live food breeding facilities, project-based fieldwork, data collection, report writing, media management and outreach initiatives.

## **Deliverables and Tasks List:**

### **The contractee will be expected to deliver the following outputs:**

1. Assist in the monitoring, management and maintenance of a healthy semi-wild population of mountain chickens at the chytrid SAFE haven field site in Montserrat, ensuring all husbandry and welfare needs are met.
  - a. Conduct feeds, distribution monitoring and visual health checks on the mountain chickens.

- b. Maintain (and improve where necessary) predator-proof fencing and heating technologies at the field site. Conduct habitat manipulations and ensure bi-weekly provision of bathing sites.
  - c. Conduct and report on in-depth monthly mountain chicken health checks including, but not limited to, morphometric analysis, *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* swabbing and microbiome sampling.
  - d. Monitor and report on enclosure usage, breeding activity and other areas of scientific interest at the field site.
  - e. Collect data on the above and ensure they are managed to high standards within existing databases.)
2. Assist in the management and maintenance of self-sustaining breeding populations of invertebrates on Montserrat, capable of supporting the semi-wild mountain chicken population's dietary needs.
  - a. Train with, work alongside and assist DoE staff in running and managing the facility.
  - b. Maintain the facility to ensure sufficient output necessary to feed semi-wild mountain chicken population.
  - c. Coordinate with local partners to continue capture of wild insects to ensure viable captive breeding populations and to serve as supplementary food, where necessary, for mountain chickens held at the field site.
3. Monitoring
  - a. Work with local Durrell, MNT, DoE and international staff in the monitoring of mountain chickens within the enclosure, including collection of skin swab and morphometric data as required for assessment of the interventions.
  - b. Work with local Durrell, MNT, DoE and international staff to monitor sites of scientific interest to the project.
  - c. Work alongside DoE and other partners to conduct environmental and endemic species surveys as required.
  - d. Conduct at least one survey of each historical transect during each year of the contract.
  - e. Carry out infection surveys of tree frogs at the study site and a comparison site (Sweetwater ghaut) during each year of the contract.

- f. Assist MNT & DOE staff in managing field databases to incorporate data from the above.

#### 4. Outreach

- a. Assist Durrell, MNT and DoE in the development and implementation of regular environmental and project-based outreach initiatives to local schools and the community, in keeping with the goals set during the MCRP outreach workshop 2020.
- b. Assist in the development and implementation of trail markers and sign postage for national hiking trails in Montserrat.
- c. Facilitate and assist in the training of volunteers and youth ambassadors associated with the project.

#### 5. Reporting and Engagement

- a. Assist MCRP Project Coordinator in preparing monthly reports to the wider MCRP.
- b. Support Durrell's Conservation Science Manager, MCRP Project Coordinator and MNT in reporting to grant funders on work carried out in Montserrat.
- c. Write blog posts and social media updates, co-ordinate with partners where necessary (e.g. Durrell, MNT and DoE media staff)).

#### **Role Details and Benefits:**

- Role based in Montserrat, West Indies, working with both the MNT and DoE.
- The MCRP will act as the core focus of work and training with regular opportunities to transfer and develop skillsets further through working with other species and projects with both MNT and DoE.
- Bespoke training programme for the position including potential for international training opportunities.
- Access to project vehicle and fuel allowance for project-based activities where agreed to by MCRP Project Coordinator.
- Uniform allowance for field clothes and boots.

# Person Specifications



## Requirements:

- Montserrat or CARICOM national, resident in Montserrat
- Grade C School leaving Certificate with a minimum of three (3) O'Levels: English, Mathematics and one Science subject; additional subjects/qualifications would be an asset.
- A passion for the natural environment, working with wildlife, and a firm understanding around the need to conserve it
- Willingness and ability to undertake fieldwork (often during the hours of darkness) and community outreach activities
- Good verbal and written communication skills
- Good numeracy skills
- Literate in the use of Microsoft Office programs (primarily Excel, Word and PowerPoint)
- Ability to live and work in Montserrat
- A positive attitude towards learning and personal development

## Desirables:

- Proven experience volunteering or working with environmental projects
- Competency in collecting and managing scientific data
- Experience in communications and report writing
- Valid driving license
- Ability to manage time and deliver high quality results
- Excellent people skills; ability to work with others

# How to Apply



Applications should consist of the following:

- Covering letter confirming your interest and how your experience and skills refer to the role.
- Full C.V.
- Contact details for two referees (who will not be approached without your permission).

Applications should be submitted electronically to:

**[mnt@montserratnationaltrust.ms](mailto:mnt@montserratnationaltrust.ms)**

Please mark your application as '**Mountain Chicken Project Officer Application**'

The closing date for Applications is **Friday 28th August 2020**.

In your email please include a personal statement (not more than 300 words) which provides an insight into your career goals and aspirations, and the mutual benefits you hope will be achieved by joining the team.