Founded in 1817, the Senckenberg Gesellschaft für Naturforschung (SGN) is one of the world's leading research institutions in the area of biodiversity. Scientists from over 40 nations carry out cutting-edge research on an international level at its eleven sites across Germany. In Görlitz, the renowned Senckenberg Museum of Natural History is located in a historic town with a high quality of life.

The Senckenberg Gesellschaft für Naturforschung with its head institute in Frankfurt (Main) is looking to fill for the Senckenberg Naturkundemuseum Görlitz, department Zoology, section Mammalogy at its site in Görlitz as soon as possible a

PhD Position

“Bushmeat and associated infectious agents characterization”

(part-time position 65%)

About the project:

The recently funded (Volkswagen Foundation) project ‘Co-creating and evaluating behavioral change interventions for reducing the zoonotic risk associated with wildlife consumption (Behavior Change)’ is a joint project of Senckenberg Society for Nature Research, Marburg University, Daloa University and Centre Swiss des Recherches Scientifiques (CSRS), Côte d'Ivoire, and Ecole Inter Etats des Sciences et Médecine Vétérinares de Dakar, Senegal. In collaboration with the Helmholtz Institute for One Health (HIOH), Greifswald and their working group Ecology and Emergence of Zoonotic Diseases of the HIOH, Greifswald, we are offering this position.

West African wildlife, such as bats, rodents, primates, and ungulates are known reservoir species for infectious agents with zoonotic potential, including coronaviruses, ebola viruses, and pox virus, among others. Wild animals of these taxa are hunted in most West African countries, posing a potential threat for hunters and people handling and consuming these animal products.

We offer a PhD position within the “Behavior Change” project, which overall aims at understanding bushmeat consumption, associated risks and eventually explore alternatives to bushmeat in two African countries. The project is highly interdisciplinary, encompassing ecology, infectious research, social sciences and anthropology.

The PhD position advertised here will focus on the ecology and zoonoses aspects and will include sample collection, data production and analysis, and results publication. The PhD student will perform field work for extended periods of time in Ivory Coast and Liberia in collaboration with local project partners to collect bushmeat, flies, swabs and latrine samples from different markets and restaurants. Using a combination of molecular techniques, we aim at characterizing marketed bushmeat, and screen these samples for presence of infectious agents. Lab work will be performed in Ivory Coast and at HIOH, Germany.
The analyses of these samples will enable to shed light on one of the most critical and yet least characterized interfaces between wildlife and humans. Simultaneously, the characterization of the hunted species will provide indications for future conservation efforts. Ultimately the results produced will provide the background data that will be used by project’s collaborators within the “Behavior Change” project.

Your work will include the following aspects

- Perform extended fieldwork (>6 months) in Ivory Coast and Liberia, collecting a diverse set of sample types
- Collaborate closely with an African PhD student performing a parallel project and perform laboratory activities in Ivory Coast (>6 months)
- Use novel eDNA sampling techniques for bushmeat characterization
- Characterize the samples using next generation sequencing techniques
- Publication of results in international journals

Your profile

- Master’s degree in Veterinary medicine, Biology, Genetics, or a related subject
- Strong interest in applied molecular ecology
- Ideally you have previous field experiences in tropical countries
- Experience in working in a molecular lab environment
- Teamwork oriented and excellent communication skills with proficiency in written and oral English; proficiency in oral French (B1) is an advantage

We offer

- an attractive and diverse job in a globally recognised research institution
- an international, motivated and professional environment
- flexible working hours – support with childcare or caring for family members (certified by the “audit berufundfamilie”) – Senckenberg badge for free admission to numerous municipal museums – a collectively agreed annual special payment – collectively agreed holiday entitlement – company pension plan

Place of employment: Görlitz (Saxony); Greifswald (lab work)
Scope of employment: Part-time 65% (26 hours / week)
Type of contract: Limited for 48 months; starting as soon as possible, ideally as from September 1st 2023
Remuneration: According to a public service position, TV-L E 13

Senckenberg is committed to diversity. We benefit from the diverse expertise, perspectives and personalities of our employees and welcome applications from qualified candidates regardless of age, gender or gender identity, ethnic or cultural origin, religion and belief, sexual orientation and identity or disability. Applicants with a severe disability will be given preferential consideration if they have the same qualifications. Senckenberg actively supports the compatibility of work and family and attaches great importance to an equal and inclusive culture of cooperation.
You wish to apply?

Please submit your complete application package (including a brief cover letter detailing your research interests and experience (1 page), a CV and copies of your academic certificates, transcripts and grades) as one single PDF document mentioning the reference #08-23007 by 31st August 2023 to recruiting@senckenberg.de.

You can also apply through our online application form on our website.

Senckenberg Gesellschaft für Naturforschung
Senckenberganlage 25
60325 Frankfurt a.M.
E-Mail: recruiting@senckenberg.de

For specific questions about this role please contact:
Prof. Dr. Hjalmar Kühl, hjalmar.kuehl@senckenberg.de.

For further information about the Senckenberg Gesellschaft für Naturforschung please visit www.senckenberg.de.