**PhD position Optimizing the Function of Salt-Marches for Fish in the Wadden Sea (1.0 FTE)**

**Organization**

Optimizing the function of salt-marches for fish in the Wadden Sea

The University of Groningen is a research university with a global outlook, deeply rooted in Groningen, City of Talent. Quality has been our top priority for over four hundred years, and with success: the University is currently in or around the top 100 on several influential ranking lists.

The Faculty of Science and Engineering (FSE) is the largest faculty within the University. We offer exclusive education and research in a wide range of science and engineering disciplines, from classical disciplines such as mathematics, astronomy and mechanical engineering, to interdisciplinary fields such as artificial intelligence, pharmacy and nanoscience. Our community has an open and informal character with students and staff from around the world. Do you want to become part of it?

Research environment:  
Research will be performed in the Conservation Ecology group at the Groningen Institute for Evolutionary Life Sciences (GELIFES), which comprises several other strong, internationally recognized research groups in the field of marine biology and ecology.

This PhD position is embedded within the “Swimway” project, which is funded by Waddenfonds, Ministerie van LNV, Rijkswaterstaat and the three northern Dutch provinces. The research will be conducted in close collaboration with Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Wageningen Marine Research/Wageningen University, the Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research, the Waddenvereniging and Sportvisserij Nederland. In this project, 4 PhD students will closely collaborate and address different questions regarding Wadden Sea fish and nature management. Other collaborations will involve a broad range of stakeholders in the Wadden Sea area, including NGO’s and fisheries organizations.

**Job description**

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The Wadden Sea is a UNESCO world heritage site, renowned for the most extensive intertidal mudflat system in the world. In the ‘Swimway’-project, we will empirically test potential conservation and restoration measures to restore and improve the fish community in the Dutch Wadden Sea. This sub-project aims to describe the value of salt-marches for fish, and test how different management strategies influence this value. The edges of the Wadden Sea have been heavily modified by human activities: transforming soft complex and heterogeneous habitats that are potentially important fish nurseries, into artificial hard substrates or simplified homogenous and managed land-reclamation plots. You will investigate whether the simplification of the shore line have led to a poor nursery function for fish, and if we can design management strategies that improve such a function.

You will do this by empirical studies, where we: 1) compare effects of water retention and vegetation management of salt marches for fish; 2) test ways to enrich the function of artificial borders as nursery for fish; and 3) perform small scale experiments in connection with a food-web survey, to understand consequences of changing fish communities for the salt-march ecosystem. You will complement these activities with seasonal samplings of fish from natural gradients of hydrodynamics, morphology and salinity across the Wadden Sea. The latter is important to be able to evaluate and adapt the results of the management experiments to a Wadden Sea wide context. Your research will result in clear recommendations for nature managers regarding the management and development of salt marches as valuable habitats for fish.

**Qualifications**

• you hold a MSc degree (or will graduate before appointment date) in Biology, Marine Biology, Ecology or Environmental Science  
• you have experience with fieldwork and designing field experiments  
• you are a real team player, willing to work with a diverse group of researchers, technicians and project stakeholders  
• you have excellent communication skills and are motivated to disseminate results to both scientific peers and a broad audience  
• you are willing to consider your research in a conservation perspective  
• you have strong quantitative skills  
• you have an excellent command of the English language (oral and written)  
• you have the ability to work independently in challenging environment  
• you have a proactive, inquisitive, enthusiastic, creative and self-reliant mind-set  
• you are strongly motivated to obtain a PhD degree

**Conditions of employment**

The University offers you in accordance with the Collective Labour Agreement for Dutch Universities:  
• a salary of € 2,325 gross per month in the first year, up to a maximum of € 2,972 gross per month in the last year for a full-time position  
• a full-time position (1.0 FTE)  
• a holiday allowance of 8% gross annual income  
• an 8.3% year-end bonus.

How to apply  
Do you meet our qualification criteria? If yes, you may apply for this position until 8 January 2020 24:00 pm / Dutch local time by means of the application form (click on "Apply" below on the advertisement on the university website).

Interviews will take place on 23 January

Please add the relevant vacancy number as indicated above in your application and include a cover letter, curriculum vitae, and contact information of three academic referees.

The University of Groningen is an equal opportunity employer and we value diversity at our organization. We do not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status or disability status. Our selection procedure follows the guidelines of the NVP Recruitment Code and the European Code of Conduct for recruitment of researchers from the European Commission.

NVP: <https://nvp-plaza.nl/download/?id=7714>   
European Commission's European Code of Conduct: <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter/code>

Unsolicited marketing is not appreciated.

**Information**

For information you can contact:

* Britas Klemens Eriksson ([b.d.h.k.eriksson@rug.nl](mailto:b.d.h.k.eriksson@rug.nl))
* Ingrid Tulp (ingrid.tulp@wur.nl)
* Wouter van der Heij (vanderHeij@waddenvereniging.nl)

Please do not use the e-mail address(es) above for applications.