MS Graduate Opportunity: Avian Research

The Avian Science Center (ASC; http://www.cfc.umt.edu/asc/), part of the Wildlife Biology Program at the University of Montana (UM), invites MS applicants to participate in research that aids in identifying the conservation of common loons in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE). The student will aid in understanding common loon demographics (e.g., nest density, nest success, and adult density) and the GYE population’s responses to anthropogenic activity and environmental changes. The student will use existing data, and participate in collecting field data (May-Aug, annually), to develop an integrated population model (IPM). Data on loons in the GYE has been collected since the 1990s through numerous organizations, including the Ricketts Conservation Foundation, US National Park Service, US Forest Service, and Wyoming Game and Fish Department. The student will use/develop an IPM to understand the mechanisms underlying loon population responses to disturbances (e.g., human recreational activity), targeted management (e.g., trail/lake closure), and environmental threats (e.g., climate change). Thus, an outcome of the student-led research is to help guide management efforts and the level of monitoring required to estimate key demographic processes annually. Applicants must have a high level of interest in quantitative ecology and conservation delivery. The student will work closely with numerous partners, including the Greater Yellowstone Common Loon Working Group. Thus, communication skills and interests are highly preferred. The anticipated start date is no later than May 2024. It includes an annual graduate stipend, tuition/fees, and health insurance.

Qualifications:
Applicant must have a Bachelor’s degree in wildlife biology, biology, ecology, statistics, or a related field. Strong quantitative skills and programming experience in R (or a strong desire to learn these skills) is highly preferred. Experience with watercraft, working in remote areas, and supervising field technicians is also desired. The position requires decision-making and communication skills and the ability to work with multiple natural resource stakeholders.

Diversity Statement: The University of Montana values leadership, engagement, diversity, and sustainability, because our institution is committed to respecting, welcoming, encouraging, and celebrating the differences among us. As members of the University of Montana community, we aspire to: (1) Respect the dignity and rights of all persons. (2) Practice honesty, trustworthiness, and academic integrity. (3) Promote justice, learning, individual success, and service. (4) Act as good stewards of institutional resources. (5) Respect the natural environment.

The Wildlife Biology Program has adopted a holistic approach to graduate admissions as part of our efforts to achieve a more diverse cohort of graduate students with varied experience, backgrounds, and expertise. Graduate admissions rankings will be based on GPA, demonstrated ability to learn necessary skills, achievements in research, outreach, education, and community activities, strong motivations for the degree, demonstrations of leadership, adaptability, accomplishments, as well as letters of recommendation.

How to apply:
Interested individuals should complete the first step of the application process by emailing Dr. Victoria J. Dreitz (asc@umontana.edu) the following information as 1 attached file (PDF is preferred) with “MS Common Loon” in the subject line. Applications will be reviewed as received until the position is filled.
1) Cover letter – briefly describe a) your interest/qualifications with the project as described above and b) being a member of the Avian Science Center at the University of Montana (max 1-page).

2) Statement of Purpose outlining the following:
   a) *Motivation* - describe your motivations for obtaining this graduate degree and highlight some of your professional goals. (300-word limit)
   b) *Accomplishment* - what accomplishment makes you most proud? For example, discuss a challenge you overcame and/or an initiative you led. (300-word limit)
   c) *Abilities* - provide a statement that illustrates your capacity to learn new skills, adaptability, willingness to challenge yourself, passion, and/or where you have been vital in bringing a project to completion. (300-word limit)

3) Resume/CV

4) Names and email address(es) for three references

5) Transcripts (unofficial are acceptable for stage)

6) Any additional information you feel is relevant to this position.

The top applicant(s) will be asked to apply to the Wildlife Biology Program within the UM Graduate School as the second step of the process. Application materials may or may not be the same as the first step of the process. This position can only be offered after applicants are accepted into UM’s Wildlife Biology Program.