MSc Assistantship – Drivers of group size in a cooperative breeding carnivore

Department of Ecology, Montana State University

The successful candidate will develop a research project focused on the behavioral, ecological, and anthropogenic processes that shape group size of gray wolves in Idaho, USA. The student will build on existing research and a long-term (18 years) genetic dataset to assess how competition, prey, and human-caused mortality affect demographic processes and ultimately, group and population dynamics. The student will develop research questions and statistical models to assess the relative strength of these factors and identify how they are interlinked. The student will also conduct noninvasive genetic surveys for wolves in Idaho in collaboration with the University of Idaho's Gray Wolf Research Group (https://www.graywolfresearch.org/).

The student will begin by June 1, 2025 in Salmon, ID, as a member of the summer field crew to learn the study system and survey protocols from research specialists and current students on the project. The student would start classes on campus at Montana State University (Bozeman, MT) in Fall 2025. The student will be supported by a combination of Research Assistantships and Teaching Assistantships, including a stipend of ~$2400/month, plus tuition, tuition fees, and health insurance (insurance starting Aug 2025). The student will pursue a 2.5 year MSc at Montana State University in the Department of Ecology (https://www.montana.edu/ecology/), advised by Dr. Sarah Bassing (https://www.bassinglabecology.org/).

Required Qualifications:

- B.S. in wildlife science, ecology, zoology, or closely related field
- Average GPA of 3.0 in biology courses; 3.0 average in courses taken during the junior and senior years; and 2.5 average in chemistry, physics and mathematics courses
- A strong work ethic, drive, and motivation to succeed
- Aptitude for modelling and quantitative ecology
- Strong verbal and written communication skills
- Experience conducting field-based wildlife research, preferably in remote, mountainous areas and adverse conditions
- Ability to work independently and as a productive member of a research team

Preferred Qualifications:

- Experience programming in R and conducting statistical analyses
- Background or interest in genetics, population ecology, and animal behavior
- Experience working and communicating with wildlife management agencies and the public

Start Date: June 1, 2025

Application Deadline: We will begin reviewing applications on February 24, 2025 and will continue until a candidate is selected.

To Apply: Please send the following materials via email with "**Wolf MSc**" as the subject line to Dr. Sarah B. Bassing (sarah.bassing@montana.edu): (1) cover letter focused on the listed qualifications, as well as how this opportunity would help further your career goals and academic interests, (2) resume/CV with contact information for ≥3 references, and (3) unofficial copies of transcripts.