PhD position at the University of Potsdam and Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology

Background

Innovation is the ability to produce new behaviours or to apply novel solutions to old problems, introducing novel variants into a population's behavioural repertoire. While individual animals often produce innovations, only a few of these novel behavioural variants are transmitted, maintained, adopted and integrated in the population's repertoire. The interplay between individual innovation propensity, behavioural/cognitive make-up of the innovator and observer(s), as well as the strength of their bond, could determine the spread and maintenance of innovations in a population, which could lead to the establishment of local traditions and cultures.

In this project we aim to analyse the interplay between personality, innovation propensity and spread of innovations in house mice (*Mus musculus domesticus*) living under semi-natural conditions. We will determine the influence of individual (e.g. rank, sex) and social profile of innovator and observer in the spread of innovations across the population, to increase our understanding of the role of individual characteristics in the diffusion of innovations within populations. We will also investigate the evolutionary importance of innovativeness by assessing the impact on natural and sexual selection.

To strengthen our team and conduct this project, we are looking for a

PhD candidate/Scientific Researcher (f/m/d)

This project was jointly developed by the University of Potsdam and the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology, and is fully funded by the German Science Foundation (DFG) for a period of 3 years (36 months) with a salary of 65% TVLöD-13.

The Institute for Biochemistry and Biology (IBB) is the largest institute within the Faculty of Science of the University of Potsdam. The research activities of the IBB range from Molecular Biology, to Plant and Systems Biology, to Ecology and Evolution. Within the IBB, the Animal Ecology Group employs different ecological, life-history and behavioural tools to better understand the evolutionary adaptation of animals to their environment. The Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology in Plön (Schleswig-Holstein) consists of three departments: Evolutionary Genetics, Evolutionary Theory, and Microbial Population Biology. It conducts basic research to explain fundamental processes in evolutionary biology, such as ecological adaptations, the origin of sexuality, or the evolution of cooperativity.

We expect from you

- A successfully completed university degree (Master degree) in the field of animal behaviour, cognition or comparable.
- Proven experience in collecting and analysing data from direct behavioural observations.

- Excellent knowledge of English and prior experience in the production of scientific texts.
- Very good competence in working with animals.
- Experience in data analysis with R.
- Prior experience in conducting social network analyses is desirable but not required.
- Good self-management and solution-oriented work style, very high communication skills and teamwork ability.
- Enthusiasm for working in an international environment.

We offer you:

- An exciting interdisciplinary and international working environment.
- Assistance with immigration and employment paperwork by our Welcome Centre.
- The opportunity to conduct your PhD in this program, be involved in all parts of the project and have the resulting papers contribute to your doctoral thesis. You will be employed in the Animal Ecology research group at the University of Potsdam, while the data collection will take place at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology in Plön, where the infrastructure necessary to this project is located.
- Full integration in the activities of the Animal Ecology Group (UP) and Behavioural Ecology of Individual Differences (MPI) Research Group, and the chance to enjoy the vibrant international research environment of both institutions.
- Possibility to conduct the last year of the program either in Potsdam or Plön.

Application

Applications can be sent via email starting now until 21st January 2022. Applications should consist of one PDF document including:
- Cover letter stating your interest in the PhD project and a summary of your experiences relevant for the project.
- Names of three potential referees with contact information (affiliation, e-mail, phone number).
- Curriculum Vitae.
- Copies of academic degree certificates and high school diploma (including marks).
- Any documents certifying further skills (e.g. workshops visited, completed courses, etc.) relevant for the project.

Suitable applicants will be contacted and asked to provide a short essay about a topic relevant to the project. Interviews for the position will be held afterwards, around the beginning of February 2022, probably as a video call.

Both the University of Potsdam and Max Planck Society are committed to building a diverse workforce and strive for gender equity and diversity. We welcome applications from all backgrounds. We strongly encourage women, severely disabled people, and biologists from historically underrepresented and marginalized groups to apply for this position.

Questions and applications can be directed at Dr. Anja Guenther (guenther@evolbio.mpg.de) and Dr. Valeria Mazza (vamazza@uni-potsdam).