

Junior Ecologist Position on GPS-tracking project: Migratory Connectivity and Movement Ecology in Greylag Geese

A junior ecologist position is available at the newly established research group of the Fauna Management Unit Noord-Holland (FBE NH), in cooperation with the Netherlands Institute of Ecology (NIOO-KNAW) and the University of Amsterdam (UvA). The junior ecologist will lead a project on migratory connectivity and movement ecology in greylag geese, using GPS-tracking, accelerometry, and long-term ringing datasets. The goal is to study migration strategies, seasonal space use, and population exchange across breeding, moulting, summering and wintering areas in the Netherlands. Opportunities for further academic development will be provided.

Project description

Migratory birds are increasingly affected by rapid environmental change. Many migratory goose populations that were doing poorly half a century ago have since adapted to human-dominated landscapes and grown to large numbers. While a conservation success, this also leads to new conflicts. Large goose populations can negatively impact agricultural yields, reduce the quality of natural habitat for other (vulnerable) species, and pose risks to air safety.

Recent GPS-tracking studies show that greylag geese exhibit flexible and sometimes unexpected movement strategies, including shifts in migratory behaviour, moult migration, and movements across assumed flyway boundaries. This project will investigate migratory connectivity and movement ecology in greylag geese in the Netherlands using GPS-tracking, accelerometry, and long-term ecological datasets, focusing on the project aims 1) to identify and characterise moult migration strategies of greylag geese in Noord-Holland and Flevoland, 2) to determine where geese summering in Noord-Holland spend their wintering and breeding periods, and 3) to quantify exchange between breeding populations in Noord-Holland and Flevoland and those in neighbouring provinces. The student will address key questions in movement ecology and population connectivity with direct relevance for conservation and management, working closely with scientific and applied partners and making use of large-scale tracking datasets.

The candidate

Ideal candidates will have an MSc in ecology, biology, statistics, animal behaviour, or a related field. A valid driver's license is required. We are particularly looking for candidates with strong quantitative skills (e.g., R, spatial analysis, Bayesian or movement ecology methods), an interest in bird migration and fauna management, experience with ecological datasets and scientific writing, and good communication and collaboration skills. The successful applicant will be expected to publish in peer-reviewed journals and present findings at both scientific and stakeholder meetings. Dutch language skills are a plus.

About the FBE Noord-Holland and the research group

In the Netherlands, when human-wildlife conflicts arise, provincial Fauna Management Units (FBE) develop fauna management plans. These plans are based on scientific knowledge and aim to balance conservation and human interests. In 2022, the FBE Noord-Holland brought together 5 provinces to work on a combined basis for the provincial goose management plans. As part of the plan for Noord-Holland, a research program was launched to fill gaps in scientific knowledge and improve future management efforts. The research group at the FBE NH is unique, as FBE's do not traditionally perform research. It is also uniquely positioned to help bridge the gap between science and practice. The group collaborates with both national and international research groups, as well as with the various stakeholders involved in human-goose conflicts.

Working environment

The team at the FBE Noord-Holland is small and interactive. We aim to be at our office in the centre of Haarlem at least twice a week, working remotely on the remaining days. For this position, you are expected to also spend at least one day a week at the UvA and attend scientific meetings there. In addition, you will regularly attend meetings of the Waterbird group at NIOO-KNAW, in person or online, and will have the opportunity to work at the NIOO for up to 1 day per week.

This position may lead to a PhD degree. For this purpose, the FBE NH will ensure that the junior ecologist is enrolled in a graduate school and can follow relevant postgraduate courses and attend scientific conferences. Daily supervision will be provided by dr. Nelleke Buitendijk. Prof.

Bart Nolet, a senior researcher at NIOO-KNAW and a professor by special appointment at UvA, and Dr. ir. Emiel van Loon, associate professor at the UvA, will act as promotor.

Start date: As soon as possible.

Duration: This is a full-time position for 4 years, including an initial 1-year trial period. The duration of the position can potentially be extended by 1 year.

Salary: Starting salary will be €3,250 gross per month, with the opportunity for an annual performance-based raise.

To apply:

Please send the following documents (preferably as a single PDF) to onderzoek@fbenoordholland.nl:

- 1) Letter of motivation summarising your experience and interests,
- 2) Curriculum vitae (CV),

Interviews are planned for the 16th of July. Please indicate in your letter if you will be available on this date.

Application deadline: 5th of July