**PhD Studentship: Linking above- and below-ground food webs and ecosystem functioning across a tropical forest modification gradient**

Biological Sciences, University of Southampton

Start date: 1 October 2018

PhD Supervisor: Dr Becky Morris co supervisor: Dr Bjorn Robroek

Application Deadline: 10th August 2018

**PhD Description:**

A 3-year funded PhD position is available to investigate the linkages between above and below ground food webs across a tropical forest modification gradient based at the Stability of Altered Forest Ecosystems (SAFE) site in Sabah, Borneo. These linkages may determine the functional consequences of changes in biodiversity resulting from forest degradation and fragmentation. The focus of the PhD will be on the direct and indirect mechanisms through which insect herbivores impact soil functioning. The candidate will design and conduct observations, mesocosm experiments and field manipulations to measure insect herbivore-induced inputs into the soil and investigate the consequences of alterations to above-ground biodiversity and ecosystem functioning through ‘top-down’ effects on soil diversity and functioning.

The successful candidate will have a 2:1 degree and preferably a Masters degree in a relevant subject; and ideally proven experience of carrying out research in challenging tropical conditions. A keen interest in ecology is essential, as well as a willingness to spend extensive periods in Borneo at the well-established SAFE site.

The main supervisor will be Dr Becky Morris (community ecology; network ecology; insect ecology), and the co-supervisor Dr Bjorn Robroek (plant-soil interactions; plant community ecology; global change ecology).

The project is funded for 3 years and welcomes applicants from the UK and EU who have or expect to obtain at least an upper second class degree in Biological Sciences or allied subjects. Funding will cover fees and a stipend at current research council rates of £ 14,777 per annum for 2018/19.

**Due to funding restrictions this position is only open to UK/EU applicants**

Applications for an MPhil/PhD in Biological Sciences should be submitted online by August 10th 2018 at: <https://studentrecords.soton.ac.uk/BNNRPROD/bzsksrch.P_Login?pos=4973&majr=4973&term=201819> Please place Dr Becky Morris’ name in the field for proposed supervisor.

General enquiries should be made to Dr Becky Morris at r.j.morris@soton.ac.uk. Any queries on the application process should be made to pgafnes@soton.ac.uk

The University of Southampton and Biological Sciences both hold an Athena Swan Silver Award, demonstrating their commitment to provide equal opportunities and to advance the representation of women in STEM/M subjects: science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine.   Due consideration will be given to applicants who have taken a career break.  University benefits include onsite childcare facilities, state-of-the-art on-campus sports, arts and culture facilities, a full programme of events and a range of staff discounts.